

MEASURING SUCCESS

1 Samuel 16:6-7

INTRODUCTION:

- A. None of us have the divine ability mentioned in our text - to look upon the heart of another
- B. The best we can do is to inspect the fruit of the heart and go from there. Yet, when we do so we are to "judge righteous judgment" Jhn 7:24
- C. Whether we care to admit it or not, all of us measure the success of others. Such success is relative to whatever standard is employed (material, parental, political, spiritual, etc.)
- D. We must be careful when making such assessments and be sure that the criteria we employ are in accord with God's word
- E. Think with me about three criteria used for measuring success as they relate to God's word

DISCUSSION:

I. WHAT A PERSON HAS: POSSESSIONS

- A. The world often measures a person's greatness in terms of his temporal acquisitions
 - 1. Having the "right" things is a high priority in the world
 - 2. The bumper sticker: "Life is a game. The person who dies with the most toys wins"
- B. In some cases, the greatness of one's worldly possessions may point toward the greatness of the individual as a person, but often times it does not
 - 1. Wicked people hold most of the wealth in the world
 - 2. It is rare for a rich person to be righteous Matt 19:23-24
 - 3. Possible to be rich physically & poor spiritually Rev 3:17-18
 - 4. Possible to be rich spiritually & poor physically Jas 2:5
- C. At best, this world's goods are fleeting "vanity" Eccl 5:10-17
 - 1. Apart from God, material possessions are empty and wearisome Eccl 2:26
 - 2. Become merely "the janitors of our possessions" (Thoreau)
- D. There is far more to life than what we own materially Lk 12:15

II. WHAT A PERSON DOES: ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A. The world often measures a person's greatness in terms of his temporal activities
- B. Doing the "right" things is a high priority in the world
- C. In some cases, the greatness of one's worldly accomplishments may point toward the greatness of that individual as a person, but often it does not

- 1. It is possible to have accomplished great things temporally, but very little spiritually Acts 26:28-29
- 2. It is possible to have accomplished great things spiritually, but very little temporally 1Cor 1:26
- D. The rush to build an impressive "resume" often breeds a competitiveness that is inconsistent with personal greatness
- E. From a spiritual standpoint, actions and activities are certainly important, more so than possessions Matt 7:21; 2Cor 5:10

III. WHAT A PERSON IS: CHARACTER

- A. God's priority is not focused on our having the right things or doing the right things, but rather on being the right person
- B. Character is what we are when no one (except God) is looking
 - 1. Conscience
 - 2. Attitudes
 - 3. Values
 - 4. Principles
- C. You have heard the expression "Everything that glitters is not gold." The truly great person may or may not have a "glitter", but there is no such thing as true personal greatness without the "gold" of godly character
- D. Whatever may or may not be our possessions & accomplishments it is godly character in the inner person that matters most 1Pet 3:3-4
 - 1. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he Prov 23:7
 - 2. Out of the heart proceed evil things Matt 15:18-19
 - 3. The purpose or goal of God's teaching has to do with the heart 1Tim 1:5
 - 4. For the faithful Christian, the inward man is renewed day by day 2Cor 4:16-18
- E. The two greatest commandments have to do with character Matt 22:36-40

CONCLUSION:

- A. The lesson of Ecclesiastes is that the ultimate good in life is not in acquiring or accomplishing
- B. The quality life involves pursuing a right spiritual relationship with God Eccl 2:9-11, 12:13-14
- C. Are you pursuing the "quality life" that has a promise beyond anything that this world has to offer

(outline by Gary Henry - revised by jlh)