

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

A GOOD TESTIMONY AMONG NONBELIEVERS

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church. Even if you do not aspire to a position, your practice should be the same if you want to be a maturing, godly man.

Our next characteristic is the subject of First Timothy 3:7,

1 Timothy 3:7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

I like the way Paul refers to nonbelievers. They are “outside.”

- They are “outside” the church, not part of the elect.
- They are “outside” of the promises of God.
- If they remain unsaved they will be left “outside” of the new heaven and the new earth.

We’re inside! We’re in! I believe the Bible substantiates the position that if you are genuinely born-again you cannot ever be lost. If you sin God will discipline you, perhaps even severely and to the point of ending your life prematurely.

The mature Christian man understands that nonbelievers are on the outside looking in. They are looking at you and judging your “testimony.” The word means *evidence given* and can be translated *record* or *report*. A record or a report is simply the statement of facts. In its purest sense it is unbiased.

I want to establish the meaning of the word so that we understand we are not talking about a nonbelievers personal opinion about us. It would be an impossible task to please every nonbeliever so that they thought “good” of us.

- For one thing, nonbelievers don't really understand spiritual things. They're in no position to render judgment.
- For another thing, nonbelievers are often used by the devil to antagonize or oppress us.

A record or a report is just the facts. What we did, what we said, how we acted and reacted. In theory the record or report would be the same no matter who was jotting it down - a believer or a nonbeliever.

The "testimony" of a maturing Christian man is qualified by the word "good." It can be translated by the following words: virtuous, valuable, balance, surpassing, suitable, commendable, and admirable.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be virtuous. In its simplest form, virtue means conforming to certain principles. So a virtuous Christian would be one whose conforms to the Scriptures, whose walk is becoming more Christ-like every day.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be valuable. One of the definitions of valuable is to be of use or of service. A valuable Christian is someone who is of use serving others.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be balanced. Fox News likes to declare itself "fair and balanced." I think they do a pretty good job. So should we. We can have our opinions but we must support them by a fair and balanced application of our worldview as Christians.

More than that, in terms of our testimony I think people need to see that we carefully consider everything. We don't hold prejudices. Sure, we're biased and we believe the Bible. But in a reasonable way that can be defended.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be surpassing. Exceeding... excelling... extraordinary. In terms of living your Christian life you ought to be doing it as if it really mattered.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be suitable. You ought to act appropriately, do what is fitting.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be commendable. Worthy of confidence is one aspect of being commendable. People should be able to count on you.

If someone, anyone, reported the facts of your life, the acts and attitudes, they ought to be admirable. People don't have to agree with you to admire your commitment to the things you love and believe in.

The opposite of a "good testimony among those who are outside" is said to be a "fall" into "reproach" among them. That is, they give the nonbeliever opportunity to reproach the Lord who you are following.

Nonbelievers are always looking to reproach the things of the Lord because they are being convicted of their sins. Most of the time they are stretching the truth, accusing you of hypocrisies that are untrue. The point here is to not live in such a way that you "fall" into a genuine "reproach."

Someone else is paying attention to your testimony. It's the "devil" who is said to be setting "snares" for you. I have in mind one of those traps in which your foot is caught and you are hoisted up off the ground, left hanging. In our case everyone passing by sees you hanging there and shakes their head at the sight of your failed testimony. You are held up to ridicule, scorn, and contempt.

The world is watching you - both the world of men and the world of demons. You have another audience, too:

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

In the end you'll have an audience of one as you stand before the Lord. Live for that moment.