

Outline

Introduction

On Monday night when UCLA beat Arkansas, I heard one commentator state about one of the Bruins: "He reminds you of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar." I thought about that for a moment. What weight must be placed on a kid when he or she hears something like that. There is a standard that you have to live up to. When that guy shoots a hook shot, it will have to look like Kareem's. When he plays he needs to reflect this persona. The same is true in any sport. I have seen many baseball players career ruined because one person labelled them "the next Nolan Ryan" or "the next Pete Rose." The kids get into mind that they have to live up to that persons ability and name. After a-while of failing they will either learn that they are never going to live up to that standard and redirect their abilities to be themselves or they continue failing and eventually quit. Christians have that same pressure if you would. They have a standard to live up to, a standard that far exceeds a Jabbar, Ryan, or Rose. It is the standard of the Lord God Almighty. Christians do not compare themselves with mere men. God has asked us to be like Him. If the standard set by man is difficult to live up to, the standard God sets up is impossible to live up to and yet, He commands us to be pure, holy, and perfect as He is. Frightening.

God never compares us to others. He only compares us to Himself and the sad news is that "all have sined and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23). The good news of the Gospel is that "but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Romans 4.24). He keep us pure by continually cleansing us and empowering us to do His will. We will look at what purity isn't, what it is, and how to maintain it.

1. Purity isn't Legalism

- a. When Jesus came, Israel was in bondage to the Pharisaical rules and regulations.
 - i. do this but not that type of rules
 - ii. a system that was impossible to keep
- b. These led to frustrations with God, man, and themselves
 - i. with God because these men represented God
 - ii. with men because they failed to keep the law they espoused
 - iii. with themselves for they knew what evil was in their lives
- c. They were looking for the coming Saviour. Someone who would deliver them from the bondage of legalism and bring them to the purity that Ezekiel spoke of:

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36.25-27).

- i. they flocked to John the Baptist with the question: How can I enter

- d. When this is said and done, we shall see God.
 - i. When He returns (1 John 3)
 - ii. Today in
 - (1) people
 - (2) creation
 - (3) our lives

Conclusion

When I was younger all the kids you to say they wished they were a little taller or faster or, something else, that way they could play basketball better or run track quicker. I used to say the same thing: If only I were taller, I could be a better basketball player. I am six foot and I kept saying I need five more inches. If I were six five I would be good. I did this because I saw Magic, Michael, and gang were all that tall or around that height. Then I look and see Spud Webb and Muggsy Bogues. These people are five to seven inches shorter than me and still play in the NBA. I felt deflated. All my excuses seemed to go out the window. I kept saying height would make the difference. It's not true. Height would make it easier. I needed to practice and train more. I didn't want to so I chose to blame my non-ability on something I couldn't change. If I really wanted to be better at basketball I would have to change my view of discipline and training.

With all that we have said in mind: do you need to change your view of spiritual discipline and training. Take this week out to study the Word of God and as God to help you maintain purity by being with Him. A suggested reading would be 1 Timothy 3. I realize this is for elders but it is equally valid for all believers. As you read, ask yourself this question: How would this quality be worked out in my life?

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