

# The IRS Scandal and You

Written by Bill Perkins

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I've had the privilege of being audited by the IRS on three separate occasions. In each instance the auditor found a legitimate mistake an accountant had made and a payment had to be made. No big deal. Right? Well, not exactly. It was a big deal because a lot of records had to be assembled and our accountant had to review them and prepare us for the audit. Anytime you're dealing with an agency that has the power to take all you have it's not a pleasant experience.

But we got through it with only a small scratch. Still, not a fun experience. I'm sure it would have been harder had I not believed the system was even-handed and fair. That is no longer the case. We now know that the IRS has been used to target and traumatize people because of their political beliefs. Someone somewhere gave an order that violated the law. Someone somewhere carried out those orders.

## Someone Somewhere

It seems people in the government need to be monitored just like the rest of us. I've got a friend who discovered one of his employees had been embezzling money from his company. She had been doing it for years. Nobody suspected until her work was audited. A few years ago I stumbled over the fact that a man with an impressive ministry had been misappropriating funds--like \$300,000.

Except for a strange set of God directed circumstances, he would have gotten away with it. Years ago I learned that a pastor-friend was sexually involved with a woman who wasn't his wife. I never would have questioned his character if the woman hadn't told her pastor who told me.

## David and Peter Did It Too

It would be easy for us to shake our heads at such deplorable character. And we might if it weren't for the fact that David committed adultery and murder and kept it a secret until confronted. And then there was Peter, the Lord's disciple, who said he would never deny Jesus, and then he did, not once, but three times.

But wait, it's worse than that. All of us have pretended we were different, or better, than we appear. I don't mean we've committed fraud or adultery, but we've put on a mask behind which we've hidden a few character flaws.

## Prone to Duplicity

So where am I going with this? I think to a good place. We all need to recognize the fact, yes, it's a fact, that we're prone to duplicity. We're prone to hypocrisy. Once we see this, and embrace it, we can prevent it. How? By diligently examining our words and deeds. We must look for a gap between what's going on in our head and heart and what we say and do.

A man of integrity has eliminated the breach between what he says he believes (Biblical ethics) and what he says and does. He is truly the same on the inside as he appears to be on the outside. We must do this on a personal basis and within our companies, churches and government agencies.

## **Nothing to Hide**

One thing about Jesus that repeatedly frustrated his enemies was their inability to catch him doing something wrong. While he often disregarded their customs and ignored their prejudices, they never saw him lie or cheat. He consistently practiced the highest standard of ethics. He once said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus could look at the entire moral code of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments, and say, "Those are the ethics I hold to and throughout the course of my life I have kept them perfectly." On one occasion he asked his enemies, "Who of you can prove Me guilty of sin? If I tell the truth, why don't you believe Me?" (John 8:46). And while their most brilliant legal experts followed Jesus around looking for some infraction of the law, they never found one. Jesus never feared exposure because he had nothing to hide. With him what you saw was what you got ... literally.

The good news is that we too can live without a fear of exposure. Not by being perfect. Or, pretending to be perfect. But by being authentic. And when we see a gap between our belief and our behavior--we pursue Jesus and ask him, working in us, to close it.

## **Buck the Tide**

So what about the three government scandals that are rocking Washington DC and the country? Someone somewhere needs to buck the tide and tell the truth. They need to expose their own wrongdoing, if they were guilty, and that of anyone else involved. Even if the anyone is someone very important.