
Words of Truth

Not Thinking Of Oneself More Highly Than One Should

By: Brian A. Yeager

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).

Have you ever met a person whom resembles the Pharisee Jesus cited as an example in the text quoted above? Have you yourself ever acted like that Pharisee referenced above? Dealing with people who exalt themselves is not a new problem. It is not an uncommon problem. We could easily cite many Scriptural examples (Psalms 36:1-2, Psalms 49:1-11, Psalms 52:7, Proverbs 30:12, Isaiah 3:16-26, Isaiah 10:5-16, Ezekiel 28:2, Daniel 5:18-20, Obadiah 1:1-4, Matthew 23:1-12, Luke 14:7-11, Acts 12:20-23, III John 1:9-11, etc.) as well as thousands of modern examples of those whom puff themselves up.

As Christians, we should understand that all abilities we have come back to God whom gave us those abilities (I Peter 4:11). At our very best, we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:7-10). There is nothing to glory in, even when we are doing what is right and commanded by God (I Corinthians 9:16). Where should those facts leave us? Shouldn't we resolve to be humble and understand not to lift ourselves up? Without God, what would any of us be? In fact, without God none of us would exist (Isaiah 45:12). Thus, a reasonable person can deduce that we should approach our lives with the sense of humility that would keep us from thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to.

No Self-Exalting Among Saints

Paul, through inspiration, penned this: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:1-5).* Isn't this a really clear series of statements? Even miraculous abilities that this context includes (Romans 12:6), that have

passed (I Corinthians 13:8-13), required an understanding that one should not think more of themselves because of those abilities.

As saints (I Corinthians 1:2), we are to have a mindset of humility (Ephesians 4:1-2, James 4:6-10, and I Peter 5:5-6). If God has blessed you with great physical and spiritual abilities, be humble. If God has granted you a mind like a sponge and you are able to absorb information and because of such have great knowledge of the Scriptures, be humble. The fact is, if you are chief among the saints you should be as one that doth serve (Luke 22:26). In whatsoever, even the greatest amongst us can accomplish, it is God whom is to receive the glory in all things (Matthew 5:14-16, Romans 16:27, and I Corinthians 10:31). So, if you are “amazing”, should you act like you are better than others?

The Most “Amazing” Should Be The Least Recognized

Notice these events and how Jesus used them to teach: *“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:20-28).

Who among us is greater than Jesus, the Christ (Acts 4:10-12)? Isn't Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords (I Timothy 6:14-16)? Yet, as we have read, He came to be a minister [servant]. Jesus taught this principle over and over again. To illustrate it clearly to His disciples, He washed their feet (John 13:1-17). Now, since we are to follow the example of Jesus (I Peter 2:21), should any of us seek to be seen as great amongst our brethren?

In addition to these undeniable facts we have uncovered in this study, we must also consider that the mindset amongst Christians is the opposite that we find in the world. You see, the world exalts “great people”. Amongst the body of Christ, it is the feebler and less honorable that we are to lift up and bestow more honor upon so that there is equality among the brethren (I Corinthians 12:14-27).

Conclusion

We need to clothe ourselves with humbleness of mind (Colossians 3:12). We need to recognize our place in all things (Romans 14:7-9). If anyone is lifted up or brought down, it should be to bring about equality rather than dominance (Romans 12:10 and Romans 12:16). If we faithfully do these things we will not fall into the error of thinking too highly of ourselves.