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# Words of Truth

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## “For I Am Holier Than Thou”

By: Brian A. Yeager

Concerning the nation of Israel of old, God said this: *“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom”* (Isaiah 65:2-7).

If you are reading this article, please take the time to carefully reread the text quoted above. Take the time to carefully examine yourself regarding the inspired words you have read (Psalms 119:59-60). Ask yourself if you have been or are guilty of looking upon others and comparing yourself to them as though you are holier than them. Here is a question for us all; if we are measuring ourselves by other people are we holy at all (II Corinthians 10:12-18)?

God has always expected His people to be holy (Leviticus 20:7, II Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 4:24, I Thessalonians 4:7, and I Peter 1:13-16). Yet, He has NEVER wanted us to have a “holier than thou” attitude (Proverbs 16:5, Luke 18:9-14, Philippians 3:7-9, and Revelation 3:14-22). The problem is, many who have this attitude cannot see it in themselves. Thus, this study is presented to help us examine ourselves. We will start with a fruit inspection series of thoughts.

### What Does The Fruit Say?

We should all be well aware that our words and thoughts concerning our faithfulness to God are nearly useless. We can say that we are faithful, but what really reveals whether or not we are faithful is the results that can or cannot be seen in our lives (Matthew 7:15-20 and Titus 1:16). Any one of us can lie to ourselves and to others. Self-deception is a key component to being an apostate (Psalms 10:4-6, Proverbs 21:2, Proverbs 30:12-13, I Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 6:3, II Timothy 3:13, and James 1:22).

So, as you examine yourself, consider what can be seen rather than told. For example, we know that we are commanded of God to grow spiritually in knowledge and application (Proverbs 23:12, II Peter 1:1-10, I Peter 2:1-2, and II Peter 3:18). For the sake of emphasis, consider that growth is clearly tied to being fruitful (Colossians 1:10). The reason I emphasized that is because many people fall prey to the concept that learning more Scriptures

is all there is to growth. You can learn a ton and never grow at all spiritually (II Timothy 3:6-7). So what if you can speak up in Bible discussions, class discussions, present lessons, quote Scriptures, etc.? Can you live them? You can know every Scripture in the word of God and still go to Hell because you didn't live them (Matthew 25:31-46 and II Corinthians 5:10).

For a clear application of this take the holier than thou individual whom is critical of a weaker brother or sister in Christ. Let's say this person is a self-proclaimed five-talent person (cf. Matthew 25:14-30). That five-talent person looks at the one-talent person and judges that individual critically. If the self-professed five-talent, more knowledgeable individual really were such, wouldn't that person understand that less is expected of the one-talent person than of him or herself (Luke 12:42-48)? Wouldn't that self-professed stronger person realize, if they were really a stronger saint, that their task is to bestow more abundant honor on that one-talent person and help carry that weaker saint (Romans 15:1-3 and I Corinthians 12:14-27)? Rather, what you see of the "holier than thou" idiot is that they tear down that honorable brother or sister whom the Lord accepts. The fruit really does tell the story.

For another application, consider a criticism some of us have seen and heard. A self-professed "strong Christian" begins criticizing the parenting and marital life of an individual that person considers "weaker". The "holier than thou" individual condemns the judged weaker individual because the marriage has "problems" and the children are "unruly". Yet, this self-professed strong Christian has the opposite marital life as expected from the Lord in Ephesians 5:22-32. In addition to that, this "holier than thou" individual has children who are and always have been unfaithful to the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:9, Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:4). What does the fruit here say (Matthew 7:1-5 and Romans 2:1-6)?

Consider the applications above. Do they apply to you? If not, can you think of a paragraph that you could write that would apply to you? Is there some area of your life wherein you display a "holier than thou" attitude, but your fruit comes back to judge you unworthy of eternal life? We'd all do well to step back and remind ourselves of how we've become holy (if such applies) and remind ourselves of the humility we all need.

### **If You Are Holy...**

If you have been purified, made holy, etc.; it was much more of the Lord's doing than your own (Ephesians 2:1-10). Even if you are a five-talent person, that is no doing of your own either (I Peter 4:11). When any one of us is using the maximum of our abilities, we need to humbly remind ourselves that in such a state we are still unprofitable servants (Luke 17:7-10). While we are rightfully supposed to examine others (I John 4:1), we'd better do so with the proper attitude and motives. We all need reminded, from time to time, what we once were before being in Christ (Titus 3:3-5). If you are holy, you will act as such with humility and fairness.

### **Conclusion**

I hate that lessons such as these need taught. Yet, proper humility has always been an issue that humanity needs taught about (i.e. Isaiah 10:5-19, Jeremiah 9:23-24, I Corinthians 1:29, James 4:6-10, etc.). As Christians, we must do good works (James 2:14-26). At the same time, we cannot allow our good to make us think highly of ourselves (Romans 12:3).