

To Be Noticed - 1 - Introduction

Introduction:

The self-esteem and enthusiasm gained from the notice and praise of others is a powerful motivation. It is used by organizations to help incite people to higher achievement. Schools use it to honor good grades, citizenship and athletic ability. Businesses use it to honor those who are productive or develop great ideas to save or make money. The military uses it for acts of heroism or physical prowess. Man has found many creative uses for the powerful need each of us has to be noticed and praised by our peers. It is a motivation that can be used to create profound changes in people.

But because it is rooted within the same emotions that create the “*pride of life*” (1Jn. 2:15-17), it is also a dangerous emotion that must be closely monitored. God spoke of the dangers and the proper realm for this emotion through Jeremiah.

*Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man **glory in his wisdom**, Let not the mighty man **glory in his might**, Nor let the rich man **glory in his riches**; 24 But let **him who glories glory in this**, That **he understands and knows Me**, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord. Jer. 9:23-24*

While schools offer praise and glory for scholastic achievements (**wisdom**) such as a valedictorian and the athletic (**might**) prowess that wins games, they must be kept in their proper domain or they will overwhelm everything else and lead to destruction. Young people have been ruined by the scholarships, and the praise and honor of such things when they make them proud or selfish. Again, though many have become wealthy (**riches**) and been honored for their wealth, they must realize the danger the pride of life creates for them. This is why God reveals that all the “*glory*” gained from these gifts must center on God who gave the wisdom, might and wealth and made it possible for them to achieve great things!

As long as all the praise and glory we receive and the wonderful sense of accomplishment we feel because of such gifts, ultimately that praise and glory must be offered to God. God made it all possible! All the enjoyment that comes from them is a gift from God. The glory they create is only safe and wholesome when celebrated in the context of being a gift from God. The Hebrew word “*halal*” which is translated “*glory*” in Jeremiah revealed this truth.

halal (לָלַל) “to praise, celebrate, glory, sing (praise), boast.” The meaning “to praise” is actually the meaning of the intensive form of the Hebrew verb *halal*, which in its simple active form means “to boast.” ... Found more than 160 times in the Old Testament, *halal* is used for the first time in Gen 12:15, where it is noted that because of Sarah’s great beauty, the princes of Pharaoh “praised” (KJV, “commended”) her to Pharaoh. ...While *halal* is often used simply to indicate “praise” of people, including the king 2 Chron 23:12 or the beauty of Absalom 2 Sam 14:25, the word is usually used in reference to the “praise” of God. Indeed, not only all living things but all created things, including the sun and moon, are called upon “to praise” God Ps 148:2-5, 13; 150:1. Typically, such “praise” is called for and expressed in the sanctuary, especially in times of special festivals Isa 62:9. (Vines, OT:1984)

So Israel was warned that all the glory and majesty that arises due to the possession of wealth must be transferred immediately to God:

then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ 18 “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth,” Deut. 8:17-18

When Paul quoted Jeremiah to the Corinthians, it was to show the grave danger this pride created for those offered entrance into the kingdom. The same glory and praise from others that schools and businesses offer today was in play then. God is so disgusted with the foolish and empty pride they create, that unless one is willing to forsake them to cling to the Lord they will never be blessed.

*For you see your calling, brethren, that **not many wise** according to the flesh, **not many mighty**, **not many noble**, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to **put to shame the wise**, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to **put to shame the things which are mighty**; 28 and the **base things of the world** and the **things which are despised** God has chosen, and the **things which are not**, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that **no flesh should glory in His presence**. ... — 31 that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him **glory in the Lord**.” 1Cor. 1:26-31*

All praise, honor and glory we received from men for mental achievement (**wisdom**), for physical prowess (**might**) on the football or baseball field (athlete) or in battle (soldier) or the ability to make money for ourselves and our employer (**riches**) lead directly to the pride of life! The only way to escape this danger is to always remember it was God that gave these ability and it is to God that we must be grateful that we have them. We must be humble and grateful to God for all gifts and see them as part of His grace and favor to possess them.

In this respect, God is as the sun and we are like the moon. All the “glory, honor and praise” we receive from men is merely the reflection of the glory, “honor and praise” we received from God. When we shine before men, it is only the reflected glory we received from God. Hence all the praise we receive from others is immediately transferred to God who made it possible. We minimize the praise we receive for the gifts and maximize the praise we feel toward God for giving them to us and ultimately the praise we will receive from God is all that truly matters to us!

6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ... 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God. Rom. 2:6-7; 10-11

When all the praise, glory and honor we receive from others is kept in the context of God’s “glory, honor, and immortality,” all is well and as it should be. When our “patient continuance in doing good” gains praise from others, it is only a minor reflection compared to the true goal of “seeking for glory, honor, and immortality” from God. Yet Jesus knew this would be a grave temptation even for His most faithful and gifted disciples. So He gave a very important warning for us to remember.

Beware!

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Mt 6:1

With these words Jesus opened a new area of discussion for His sermon on the Mount(Mt 6:1-18). He warned His disciples to be very careful about how the notice of men affected them in their righteous acts of service to God. This was something Jesus wanted us to always have in our minds. The motives for our actions and the expectations of what we will receive for doing them are of the highest importance to Him. While the praise of men is often a motive at school and work, it must not be allowed to become a motive for us in the church or in our service to God.

“Practicing your righteousness” sums up all activities we do to please, honor and obey God. Although Jesus only gave three examples {giving **alms**(2-3) **praying**(4-15) and **fasting**(16-18)}, He was not limiting them only to these. Any activity from evangelism to teaching God’s word, or from repenting of our sins to spiritual maturity would also be “practicing your righteousness.” All acts of service done to honor and submit to God, must have that single motive. It is for God and God alone. If at the same time, we also seek for the praise and honor of our fellow man, that desire alone would nullify everything else. Any thought of praise and reward from men will destroy any reward or regard from God. The notice of men then becomes the only reward for that action. If the notice of men is sought, God will ignore it. All acts of service to God are squandered and wasted for all eternity if praise of men was sought.

Motive or Consequence?

As in many of the commands Jesus gave in this sermon, this one must also wind its way between the extremes of the straitened and narrow way that leads to life. Although our works of righteousness are not done to be seen of men, most of them cannot be done without being seen by men. This is the paradox of good works and acts of righteousness. They must not be done to be seen of men, but they must be done in the presence of men.

Jesus did not forbid disciples from doing acts of service to God if others are watching. He had already revealed that when letting our light shine, it will be done “before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Mt. 5:16) We see many examples in Scripture of men and women openly practicing their good works before men. Jesus performed many of His miracles in front of others as did the apostles. Think of all who saw Peter and John heal the lame man(Acts 3), or Paul and Barnabas heal the cripple at Lystra(Acts 14:6-11). When Barnabas sold his land, everyone knew about it(Acts 4:34-37). The Centurion was praised to Jesus for all the good he had done to Israel(Lk. 7:4-5). So Jesus was unconcerned about the natural **consequences** of our devoted acts of service to God.

When an evangelist is giving diligence to rightly divide the word of truth, he is doing it for God. Yet those who are godly will praise his efforts and he will be noticed. This is the critical point of the lesson. If he is doing it for the praise of God and the praise of men is the **consequence** of his efforts for God, then he has not violated Jesus words here. But if his efforts to preach excellent sermons is **motivated** by the men and women who are listening and it is their praise he seeks, he has violated Jesus’ words here and will receive no reward. Every elder and evangelist must keep these things firmly in their minds. Again, it is to be praise that is immediately given back to God.

Three Main Concerns

There appear to be three additional dangers if one ignores this command. The **first** is revealed in

the difference between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira in selling their property.

And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. 1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Acts 4:36-38; 5:1-5

If they had only been motivated by God's reward they would have brought it all or brought what they could and kept what they needed. If they had obeyed Jesus' warning, there would have been no regard or concern for the praise of men. The temptation would have been crushed. It was a desire for man's praise that led to their lies and deception.

The **second** danger in using service to God as a means of seeking praise is the terrible example of the Scribes, Pharisees and Lawyers. By using God's commands to look important to others a terrible leaven of hypocrisy began to work in their lives.

In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. Lk 12:1-2

But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Mt. 23:5-7; 27-28

The **third** danger occurs when a choice must be made. When we condition ourselves to seek the praise of men, a day will arise when the choice becomes praise of God **or** the praise of men. After years of seeking the praise of men in our service to God, man's praise will eventually become more important to us than God's praise.

Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. John 12:42-43

How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? John 5:41-45

When our motives are pure and we only do things to please God, all other actions are also pure, clean and right. When we begin seeking the praise of men, slowly and insidiously, the leaven of hypocrisy begins to work. We start cutting corners, fudging truth, and eroding our faith and desire to be pleasing to God.

Practicing Righteousness

This is the fourth of the five times Jesus used this word in this sermon. In the previous chapter He revealed we would be blessed if we "hunger and thirst" and "are persecuted" for "righteousness" (Mt. 5:6, 10). He also explained that unless "your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees you will by no means enter the kingdom." At the end of this chapter His final words on righteousness are that we must "seek first His kingdom and righteousness" (Mt. 5:20; 6:33). Jesus could not have chosen a broader term than righteousness to describe the things we do for God that might tempt us to seek for praise. This was the term used in the Old Covenant to describe God's perfect code of conduct.

"dikaiosune... righteousness... condition acceptable to God... integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting.." (Thayer p. 149-150; 1343)

Moses had revealed it would be righteousness, if Israel would keep all the commands of the Law.

And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. 25 Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.' Deut 6:24-25

Hence though Jesus only gave three examples in the sermon, in opening it in this way he asked

us to take this into consideration every time we are following God's commands and doing what God asks us to do. The path to life can veer away into hypocrisy when we start doing things to be seen of men instead of doing them only out of concern that God be pleased. This is not difficult if we keep the greatest commandment in mind.

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. Mt 22:37-38

When the entire heart, soul, and mind are filled with a love, devotion, and loyalty to God, there is simply no room in them for anyone else. Any desire to direct elsewhere necessarily requires it be taken from God. Jesus demanded that all the focus of one's mind be directed toward pleasing God.

Before Men to Be Noticed

The Greek word that is translated "noticed" is one of those that was directly taken into our language with the term "theater."

"theaomai... to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate, (in Greek writings often used of public shows...)... of August things and persons that are looked on with admiration: ..." (Thayer p 284; 2300)

As we look at the definition of the term it is clear that what we do in a theater is exactly what this Greek term describes. We "behold, look upon, view attentively and contemplate" what is on the screen or the stage. All actors on the stage are up there for only one purpose: To be seen by the audience. No disciple of Jesus is ever up on such a stage while doing acts of righteous service to God. The eyes of others on them is a non-issue. It is something we neither avoid or seek. Since it is always done "before God" whether others are present or not, the only reason we are doing it is for God's viewing. When practicing righteousness, our fellow men are not the audience. Loyalty, love and devotion to God are so complete there just isn't room in the heart for what men think.

No Reward from you Father in Heaven

Jesus makes this as clear and forceful as possible. The motive behind our service to God is as important as the service itself. Just as there is no reward if we do nothing, there is no reward if we do it well, but with the wrong motivation. The praise of men short circuits the power of the action. It makes our service vain and there is no benefit. He does not speak these words to discourage us from working. He speaks them to warn us of the danger of seeking the praise of men. They destroy everything.

- 1 How do schools and business use the notice of men to motivate others?
2. What are the dangers associated with these motivations revealed in Jeremiah?
- 2 Can the church use such motivations?
- 3 Does Jesus want us to keep our good deeds so secret we don't do any unless they remain hidden?
- 4 What was the difference between Barnabas and Ananias & Sapphira's gift?
- 5 What was the leaven of the Pharisees?
- 6 How did this leaven show itself in their deeds?
- 7 How many times does Jesus use the word righteousness in this sermon?
- 8 What is the Greek word for noticed and how is it used today?