

Study 29

THE BEST THING TO DO WITH WHAT LITTLE SELF ESTEEM IS LEFT

First Peter 5:5-7

Tony Campolo was publicly praying once during his college days when he was interrupted and sternly rebuked by his professor during the middle of his prayer. "Not worthless!" snatched the forthright professor of theology, "Unworthy, yes ~ but not worthless!", he continued. This interruption came about during a prayer that Tony was in the early stages of offering up to God. "Dear Lord God, Heavenly Father, Creator of the Universe, we humbly come before You as worthless people-". After the professor's rebuke, Tony never prayed that way again.

1. What is the difference between being "worthless", and being "unworthy"?

Peter has just reminded the elders (pastors) of the churches to serve Christ wholeheartedly by caring for the flock entrusted to them. They were to do this through the ministry of God's Word and hands-on oversight (praying with people, visiting etc). The motivation for doing this was their love for Jesus. One day He would return and bless them according to their faithfulness in carrying out their responsibilities.

2. Read Luke 17:7-10. When we serve God, are we actually worthless to Him? What was the response and attitude of the servants in this parable?

REAL HUMILITY

The opposite to humility is pride. Perhaps humility is then best seen when we clearly see what pride is.

3. How would you define "pride"? Discuss.

Consider the opposite characteristics of what you have just discussed. These are the qualities that we are told to aspire to. In Philippians 2:8, Jesus is described as humbling Himself.

4. What is the common thread in the instructions given in James 4:10, 1Peter 5:5, and 1Peter 5:6?

Having looked at what humility is by comparing it with pride, let's consider what it is not. It is not: (i) considering yourself worthless [note Psalm 8 which describes the incredible worth of mankind in the sight of God], (ii) pretending that you are inferior [false humility; sometimes admitting your true talents is quite humbling], and (iii) refusing to be acknowledged for your legitimate achievements (God honours His servants, and we are told to honour certain people as well).

5. Who does 1Peter 5:5 immediately address. Why would this need to be addressed?

If we want God's grace on our Church, our city, our state, our nation, we must humble ourselves. The nation that says they have no need of God, is arrogantly heading for destruction.

6. According to Exodus 10:3, what angered God most about Pharoah's attitude, which eventually brought His wrath on the nation of Egypt?

7. When King Solomon dedicated the Temple, what instructions were the people given for those times when they had lost the blessing of God? (Refer to Second Chronicles 7:14)

SELF ESTEEM OR SELF DENIAL

We have a God who thinks that we are of great worth. The greatest display of this divine thought, was the sending of Jesus Christ to this earth. We should never doubt that we are loved by a God who considers us to be of such immense value that He sacrificed His Son for us. But our value doesn't make us worthy. We are unworthy- but not worthless. While the psychological teaching on self-esteem tries in humanist terms to tell mankind that they are worthy, the Bible points the human race to the Cross, and reminds us that we are not worthy. By coming to Christ we are made worthy because of His merit. When we do this God considers us to be his children.

8. According to verse 7, what privilege do we now have as children of God?

Amen.