

All glory be to God - Sunday September 16th 2012

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Beloved in the Lord,

Do you know that our greatest enemy lies within? Our greatest enemy is our ego. Ego, pride, arrogance are all enemies. The more I study God's Word, the clearer it becomes to me that pride is at the root of all sin. It does not matter what sin we analyse, if we peel away the layers then at the very centre we find pride. That is why, over and over we are told in the Bible that God hates pride. For example we read in James 4:6: ***"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*** Another example is Proverbs 8:13 where we read: ***"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate."***

Something very important is revealed here – namely that pride and arrogance are related to a perverted mouth. A prideful heart boasts of great things that are not true. Pride glorifies man and not God and therefore it is a perverted view of life. The truth of the matter is that we are not able to do anything good apart from God, so therefore if we must boast then we must boast about Him and what He has done.

Pride is hated by God, because pride steals the glory that is rightfully His. We read in 1 John 2:15-17: ***"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."***

The boastful pride of life is not from God and it certainly does not glorify His name. It is of vital importance that we understand this truth. What is of God and what He delights in is humility. Jesus taught: ***"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*** (Luke 14:11)

Humbling ourselves is something that we must do on a regular basis, because when we are humble God exalts us. Jesus is our greatest example. We read in Philippians 2:5-11:

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Clearly Paul is telling us to take Jesus as our example. Jesus humbled himself and God exalted Him.

Jesus humility led to the cross, where our salvation was purchased by His blood. Through this ultimate act of humility and sacrifice, God the Father was glorified.

I have said all of this to lay a foundation for our thoughts today. Let us now have another look at our foundation text: ***Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

Paul writes that we are not adequate in ourselves. If we allow this to take root in our hearts then we have an antidote against the poison of pride. We need to regularly remind ourselves ***Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.***

If our adequacy is from God, then it is not from ourselves. If it is not from ourselves what right do we have to boast and be proud? None. Therefore To God be all glory and praise and honour and thanksgiving.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this truth. Our ego is a very powerful and hard to control part of us. That is why we need to work on our mindset and remind ourselves over and over again that if we have done anything good, it is not of ourselves, but of God who gave us the ability, and so to Him belongs the glory and praise. ***Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.***

Jesus taught this truth using an illustration that is easy to understand. We read in John 15:1-5

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the

vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. Jesus is using a very simple illustration to teach a very deep truth. A branch that is broken off a tree will not bear fruit. The reason is that the sap no longer flows through it. The branch withers and dies and is to be tossed out. For the sake of today's message I would like to zoom in on verse 5 where Jesus said: ***“for apart from Me you can do nothing.”***

Do you understand this? Do you comprehend what He is saying? Apart from Him you can do nothing. Do you understand that the very air you breathe is the breath of God. He created you, and it is by His grace alone that you live. If He withdraws His breath you die!

We read in Psalm 145:8-21:

“The Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.⁹ The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.¹⁰ All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Lord, And Your godly ones shall bless You.¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom And talk of Your power;¹² To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts And the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.¹⁴ The Lord sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time.

¹⁶ You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds.¹⁸ The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.¹⁹ He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.²⁰ The Lord keeps all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy.²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.

I included this whole passage because it states it so well. Clearly all eyes look to Him for life. Because God is merciful He gives also to those who do not acknowledge Him, but their end will be terrible.

The one whose mouth sings praises to God and glorifies Him lives under His blessing, care and provision, and always receives help. Let us always remember to give God all the glory – always.

Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.