

## GOD CANNOT BE LIGHTLY ESTEEMED

One of the hardest things I ever faced as a young man growing up was being ignored. Though I wanted to fit in and not attract any attention, I still didn't want to be overlooked. I could handle anger and even mockery better than being disregarded. I don't expect the world to fall at my feet and say, "Wow, what a wonderful guy you are," but somewhere inside us all is the desire to be accepted and even admired by others.

We are made in the image of God and if I want to be accepted in my small way, then so does God in a much larger way. The difference between God and me is He deserves to be admired, worshipped and revered for who He is. I, on the other hand, can only expect esteem from men for what I can do, and that is usually short lived.

As I pondered this subject of esteem, I found some things that are alarming and even dangerous to the well being of mankind and anyone who takes the God of heaven and earth too lightly.

## MESSIAH

Isaiah 53:3 reveals how men will treat the coming Messiah. **He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

*[Though this scripture is believed to be a prophecy of what would happen to Jesus when He came 2000 years ago, I feel it is prophesying of things still yet to come. The only ones who rejected Jesus then were the religious people. Isaiah writes men will despise Him and "we" did not esteem Him. The multitudes that gathered to listen to Jesus speak accepted Him. Only the religious leaders wanted to kill Him. I believe this word is yet to be completely fulfilled.]*

The prophet makes it clear that the first problem mankind would face when encountering their Savior was despising and not esteeming Him. However, there is something worse than not esteeming the Lord and that is "lightly" esteeming Him. Not taking God seriously is a big mistake. It would be better to disregard Him than to treat Him like you could take it or leave it.

This is exactly what is still being faced today when some encounter Christ for the first time. Because of a cynical spirit and the exposure of hypocrisy in the church, Jesus is being taken lightly in this generation and it is feeding a spirit of mockery that has risen up in the media and the hearts of those who have come to hate the church.

In a human relationship, it is not uncommon to love a man but dislike his wife. On the other hand, a man is admired if he is able to win the heart of a beautiful woman. The church of today is only beautiful to itself while the rest of world has strong doubts about her worthiness to marry such a righteous King.

## THE FEAR OF THE LORD

**Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. Malachi 3:16**

Esteeming God is a lifestyle not a momentary idea. Talking about God is only a sign of an excess of what's in the heart of those who fear Him. I think the key word in this verse is "those who fear the Lord." With that fear firmly in your heart, conversation will have excitement and awe about the Lord. However, without fear, reverence lessons and soon lightly esteeming will follow. The more fully someone gets to know God the more fear and reverence will rise up until real worship is present. That is the natural chain of events that should happen to a new believer.

On the other hand, there are not many who actually fear the Lord and that can leave the believer in a lukewarm state. When "fire and brimstone" was preached in years past, the hope was to create a fear for the Lord but it only succeeded in causing contempt for that kind of preaching. Will it require a shock to bring a healthy fear of the Lord to this generation?

All this didn't mean much to me until I found out that lightly esteeming God is a sure way to death—spiritually and physically. Not considering God as significant is much worse than hating Him or rejecting Him altogether. God cannot be taken lightly, or be lightly considered.

There is a phrase I read in the dictionary and it said, "**familiarity breeds contempt.**" This means; extensive knowledge of, or close association with someone or something leads to a loss of respect for them or it. The contempt comes in when you discover the faults or shortcomings of the one you are familiar with. You may have started out the relationship seeing great qualities in this person and after some closer looks you found reasons for contempt. This is why the church cannot rely on its leaders to get to the Lord but rely on Jesus alone.

I know a young man whose father is a missionary and was loved by many for the work he has done in other countries. When the son grew up and saw some of his father's faults he became despondent towards God. Since then he has drifted from a relationship with the Lord and is waiting for God to do something to prove Himself. **But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; Matt. 12:39**

I have met many who think as this young man does. There will be no supernatural sign to turn their hearts to God if they have known Him in some way and then turned against Him. If it is not in someone's heart to want to know God on their own, then the Lord will not force that to happen. Waiting and expecting God to do something to prove His existence is high-level pride—especially since He already has done something. It is like saying, "I would vote for the president if he would just call me and personally explain his policies."

In spite of this there is an awakening coming to the church and a great revival coming as a result. Young people by the millions finding hope for the first time in Christ. Father's coming home after abandoning families—drug addicts being set free in one moment and miraculous healings being a daily occurrence. There will be nothing more wonderful and more terrible than these days.

With all of this said, there remains one thing in the way of this move of God—altogether too many people in the church are lightly esteeming Him. Just saying the words, lightly esteeming doesn't seem like a bad thing but after some research I found out that the most insolent thing anyone could do concerning God is to lightly esteem Him. I will try to explain what this means and why it is so bad a thing to do.

## A FRIEND OF GOD

The Lord asked me a question one day that has stayed with me. He said, "What should a friend act like?" My answer was, I think a real friend is someone I can have a bad day in front of and that will not go on my permanent record as a flaw. Then the Lord revealed that this is the kind of friend He is to those who love Him. I know this makes it sound like the Lord is not holding anyone accountable for their sins but it is really saying that He knows the heart more than the action. A heart of repentance brings out God's heart of forgiveness and that is true friendship.

On the other hand, when God does something I don't understand, do I hold my affections back from Him because I don't agree? The answer is yes, sometimes openly and other times unconsciously. After the many teachings on God's unconditional love, is my love wrought with conditions? Shamefully, this is a common condition for the believer—offering only conditional love to God.

During my years in ministry I have been told that I was a friend of God. In addition, I've been told I was a warrior for Him and even a general in His army. I have treasured all these things in my heart and wanted to believe every word. However, being called a friend of God doesn't mean I can freely call Him my friend or treat Him like one. I may be a friend to God but He is God to me. He must remain God to me, and nothing less.

I don't have any friends that I fear unless it's a boss/friend relationship and even at that I don't fear that person. Fear of man is not a good thing in anyone's life but fear of God is essential. That seems to be in reverse right now. Many more fear man than fear God and that doesn't seem to be improving. James 2:23 says, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness and as a result he was called a friend of God. John 15:15 records Jesus saying, **"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."**

When Jesus asked Peter, **"who do you say I am?"** Peter's answer was not, you are my friend, but you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. (Matt.16:15-16) This revelation came from heaven (Matt.16:17) and it states just what man-kind, through revelation, is to call the Savior—The Christ; the Son of the Living God.

In our present time the idea of honor and respect is at an all time low. It is common for people who call each other friend to openly mock one another in fun. I'm not finding fault with that kind of friendship but it cannot be the kind of friendship we have with God. No matter who I am to God and no matter what He decides to call me, He must remain God to me.

## ESTEEMING

**“Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. 1Samuel 2:30**

“Despise” in Hebrew means *to dis-esteem, distain, be contemptible*; while “lightly esteemed” means *to lightly value, to plot or contrive in a malicious way, to lightly consider someone or their work*; in more basic terms it means to *curse*. If you lightly esteem God you are cursing Him. If He lightly esteems you, God Almighty is cursing you. Again it seems impossible to imagine anyone when faced with the Lord would despise or lightly esteem Him—but that is just what happened then and is happening now. There is a greater danger in lightly esteeming God than these scriptures are revealing but in Job there is a message that comes through loud and clear.

**Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” Job 2:9** The word “curse” (barak) is a Hebrew word that means to bless, and in this case it is like blessing in a mocking or in a light way. It means to bow the knee with contempt in your heart and not gratitude. This is what the soldiers did to Jesus when they put a robe and crown of thorns on his head, and bowed to Him in a form of mockery. Cursing God is lightly esteeming or lightly considering Him and only casually praising Him. What does that look like was my first question?

Praising God on Sunday and going right back to your old way of life on Monday is one way of taking God lightly. Trusting God *after* all other things have failed, is another. Doing all the right things without true adoration in your heart is most common.

Many young people make a habit of mocking one another and it is all in fun until it becomes a lifestyle. Each seed of disrespect yields a limitless harvest of contempt, distain and condescension until it becomes the norm and no one notices this spirit is now being directed towards Jesus Himself. The term “whatever” is a rude way of saying, “I’m bored with what you are saying, and I don’t have any intention of receiving correction from you.” The phrase, “chill out” simply means, “Don’t get excited about the small stuff.”

In the case of Job 2:9 and his wife’s suggestion; she is saying and I’m paraphrasing, “*Why don’t you lightly esteem God and that will bring your death.*” This makes taking God lightly a little more serious than first thought. This is why Jesus warns so strongly against being a lukewarm Christian. (Rev.3:16)

## EARNING RESPECT

I know that trying to encourage a spirit of respect in a person who has embraced a lifestyle of insolence is all but impossible without a shock. I also know there has been little reason for many young people to have a spirit of respect when there has been so much dishonor in the generations before them. They are only carrying the iniquity of their forefathers.

During the revival meetings of Charles Finney in the early eighteenth century, there were three young men that lifted up their voices in mockery in one of the meetings. After refusing to quiet down and being asked to leave, two of the three young men dropped over dead only a short distance from the meeting place and the third raced back to repent before he died.

William Branham held healing meetings where the power of God was very present and after a request for all to bow their heads in prayer for the sick, one man refused and was heard saying, "I'm an official in the local government and I'm not required to bow my head." He lost his mind in a few short weeks, lost his job and all his friends except for his wife. She found Branham more than a year later so he could pray for her completely broken husband. It took Branham beseeching God to change this situation so the man could return to normal society. Branham, who carried an amazing anointing from God, had to contend for over forty minutes in prayer to bring deliverance to this man.

Does this say, God is mean and will kill anyone who doesn't do what they are told, or is this the result of lightly esteeming the most High God? The power of God is coming in a more authoritative way than any have known in the past. This move is the power of salvation, God's most treasured gift to man. If this move is mocked or lightly esteemed in any way there will be terrifying repercussions.

I cannot imagine what I would be like if my son were sacrificed for someone and the beneficiaries of the sacrifice treated it only lightly. If I can feel that much righteous indignation in my spirit, how much more a righteous God through a spotless Son?

## SELF-IMPORTANCE

### **Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed? (Is. 2:22)**

This scripture in Isaiah is after many warnings about the high things coming down, as well as the proud and haughty faces of man. This scripture paraphrased is, "Stop paying attention to a man whose spirit is in his pride. What is the point in regarding such a one?"

I was in church one Sunday and watched a dynamic that has stayed with me for a long time. There was an area in the front of the church that the ministry team leaders sat at a table. They often took notes on their computers, which is a pretty good idea if that is where you store all your important information. The only drawback is the need for some electricity to keep your laptop charged. This particular Sunday was no exception and when one of the leaders arrived late he stood at the table looking for the extension cord that was needed to plug his computer in. The intern who did all the running around for the ministry team leaders quickly realized as the late arrival stood holding his open laptop and glaring at him, an extension cord was needed. Here is the scene; someone is preaching while the entire church is intently watching a man standing in front glaring at an intern who is now literally running through the church to the back to find an extension cord. The leader continued to stand in front of all until the cord was found and the crawling around on the floor was complete. He then sat down without acknowledging anyone else and proceeded to check his emails. This felt like self-importance to me and I was offended by what happened.

Then the Holy Spirit brought to mind for me the many times I drive down the road thinking everyone should comply to my set of rules concerning how they drive. He reminded me how indignant I get when someone doesn't show me the respect I think I deserve. In a matter of minutes I realized how I live unconsciously in self-importance.

I could spend many pages trying to justify why so many people feel a need for significance or just to be recognized by others as important. However, self-importance is pride finding a way to manifest without anyone knowing it. With every effort I have tried to stop acting like I think I'm important, but so far it is an act. Only God can break out of us the pride that drives our lives. The idea of esteeming God is a distant thought when self-promotion, self-importance and selfish ambition are ruling in our lives. The only way to give glory to God at that point is through lip service.

**Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*, (Is. 29:13)**

This cannot be the chapter of the church that precedes the return of the Lord. There is an opportunity being offered now to rise up in praise and honor of the one God. By fulfilling the commandments of Jesus to love one another as He has loved us, and being known for that love, this will awaken the hunger to know the Lord. The world could see the church as the beautiful woman this great Lord has won. The bride who esteems her Lord with sincerity and truth.