

EXALTATION

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

Jesus said it, but do we believe it? It is not easy to believe for it runs contrary to everything the world is trying to convince us of. It is, however, easier to believe than it is to put into practice. Jesus repeated the same truth in Luke 18:14. In each instance He told a story to help us understand. The first story involved a wedding. One guest was presumptuous enough to take a place of honor he did not deserve. He was humiliated when a more distinguished person arrived and the host asked him to move to the least important place. The second story involved a Pharisee and a tax collector. Both went into the temple to pray and God humbled the Pharisee because he exalted himself, and exalted the tax collector because he humbled himself.

Most can relate to humiliation more than exaltation. Only a few become star pitchers and quarterbacks while the rest play second fiddle or sit in the stands. Only a few get lead parts in the class play, make it in the movies, or become CEO's. While they bask in the limelight we sit in the shadows. Motivational speakers make big money seeking to raise our self esteem. Rather than wait like Cinderella for prince charming, they encourage us to be cocky and self confident like the older sisters. However tempting it is to think this way, self promotion is not the answer.

Even little children learn by experience that they get attention when they do something outrageous. Teenagers perpetuate the problem by seeing who can do the most outlandish things, or wear the most outlandish clothes. Movie stars make millions by shocking the public with what they say and do. While all these may say it in different ways, the message is the same: “notice me, I am important!” It is far more important, as you know, to please God than it is to please men! That's why the real heroes of history are not the arrogant and audacious who flout their fifteen minutes of fame and disappear like morning dew. The real heroes are the ones who humble themselves and wait for God to do the exalting.

Take David, for example. He was minding his own business taking care of his father's sheep. He did not seek out Samuel and promote himself as candidate to be king, it was the other way around. God directed Samuel to seek him out! David had seven older brothers who were “at the right place at the right time” but something about their character was missing. God was searching for a man after His own heart and David was the man. **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” (2 Chr 16:9)** This is not rocket science. No one can hide from God! God discerns the thoughts and intents of every heart. He even numbers the hairs on our head. Obviously, once God decides to exalt someone it will happen. Saul was hiding in the stuff but God found him (1 Sam. 10:22); Moses was miles away in Midian but God found him. (Ex. 3); Gideon was threshing wheat in an obscure location but God found him (Jud. 6:11); Jonah was running away to Tarshish but God found him (Jon. 1:3); Amos was a shepherd working in the country but God found him (Amos 7:14); Nathanael was under a fig tree but God found him (John 1:48); Matthew was minding his own business collecting taxes but God found him (Matt. 9:9); Saul of Tarsus was miles from town on the Road to Damascus but God found him (Acts 9:3).

No example from Scripture is more relevant and practical, however, than the example of Christ Himself. Phil. 2:5 - 15 is crystal clear. We are to have the mind of Christ. We are to think like He thought. Christ did not exalt Himself. Quite to the contrary He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. It was at this time, the time of Christ's greatest humiliation, that God began the process of exalting Him. Ultimately God will exalt Jesus to the very pinnacle of power and command that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The Ephesian Letter states that God will exalt Christ: “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21). **“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”** (1 Pet 5:6).