

Do You Unknowingly Exalt Men Above God?

Anytime we exalt the men of God above the God of men, the church has been charmed. I thoroughly and wholeheartedly believe in honoring deserving men and women of God. This is right and well pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Paul instructs us in the Book of Romans to give honor where honor is due. Quite honestly, honor is a rare commodity in many Christian circles nowadays. We would do well if we practiced giving honor to those who merit it more. But trouble is on the horizon when we exalt our leaders as if they are Gods and give glory to them that is due the Lord. Men can and should be honored, but they must never be worshipped.

When men are worshipped, people blindly follow a minister. If the minister does not walk in humility and stop people from exalting him, it becomes truly a case of the blind leading the blind.

Only those blind to reality would allow themselves to be worshipped. We must never allow the praise of others to blind us of who we really are.

Paul and Barnabus immediately cried out for the people not to worship them. Do you know why they reacted so desperately and intensely? They did so because they knew who they were and what they had the ability to become without the Lord. They understood that if God abandoned them, they were through.

Even in today's church when pride walks in, God walks out. The church is spellbound when she holds her leadership to no biblical standard of behavior. When people are so taken by the gifting of the minister that they lose sight of the One who gave the minister the gift to begin with, they've been charmed. The ruler, pastor, bishop, or church leader who does

not operate in submission to God and His Word is an illegitimate leader. It doesn't matter how smooth or gifted an orator the preacher is, or how great he or she is in ministry, all must be held to the standard of God's Word.

Ministers are not worthy of our worship. The church is charmed when it falls deeper in love with the messenger than the message.

Paul was a man who embraced the tranquility of humility. He had incredible peace in knowing who he had become in the Lord. He was so busy exalting this Jesus who had transformed his life, he had no time or desire to exalt himself. The message he brought to the people of that region was simple and pure. It revolved around one central theme: grace.

Paul's precious preaching stood in total opposition to everything the Galatians had been raised to believe. These people had been bound up their entire lives by the shackles of paganism. Their rituals and heathen festivals dominated their very existence. As much as one-third of their calendar days had been reserved for worshipping, sacrificing to, and reverencing their false gods. The weight of their religion hung around their necks and choked the very life out of them. It must have been an arduous existence as they desperately attempted to fulfill every pagan prerequisite of the day.

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No matter what they did for their gods, there was always more to do. No matter what they presented to their false deities, they were constantly implored to bring more. There was always another sacrifice, another festival, another demand, or another ritual. In all their striving they were never granted peace or resolve; they could never do enough to

satisfy their nonexistent taskmasters.

Into this atmosphere of never-ending, never-satisfying paganism arises a man with a new message—a message that spoke of a savior named Jesus. Can you imagine how amazed these people must have been as they heard the message of Christ and His death on the cross? A message that said, “You don’t have to sacrifice to Me; I was sacrificed for you.” The message of the cross was life transforming to these desperate people. For the first time ever they heard a message revolving around what their God had already done for them instead of what they should do for their gods.

The gospel must have seemed like a deluge of refreshing cold water in a dry and thirsty desert. Grace, what a concept! Grace whispered into all the unending ritualism and said, “It isn’t what you can do; it’s what Jesus has done!” I can only imagine the relief and tears of joy as they began to grasp the concept of the incredible love of Jesus.

Even now, reacquaint yourself with the grace of Jesus in your life. Break every spell of striving off of yourself, and rest in the beauty of what Jesus has done, not in the futility of what you can do.

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