

Articles and Sermons :: Become Smaller, Not Bigger by Zac Poonen**Become Smaller, Not Bigger by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2024/2/17 7:00**

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt us at the proper time (1 Peter 5:5, 6).

To be exalted does not mean that we become great men in this world or in Christendom and get the honour of men. It refers to spiritual exaltation, where we are given spiritual authority to fulfil all the will of God in our life and ministry. But such exaltation depends on our humbling ourselves.

We all know that the world is full of people who want to become bigger and bigger in the eyes of others. Every politician and every businessman wants to become bigger. Unfortunately, those who call themselves servants of Christ also want to become bigger and bigger. They aspire to have grand titles like "Reverend Doctor" and to hold positions like "Chairman" of their organisations. Sadly, today's Christendom is no different from any corporation in the world!

Young believers today see their leaders standing in the spotlight like film stars, on large platforms in public meetings, living in expensive hotels and houses, and driving expensive cars. Not knowing much about God's ways, they admire such leaders and look forward to the day when they too will reach those heights! They feel that such preachers must have been faithful for many years for God to reward them in this way! And they imagine that by being faithful, they too will one day stand on such platforms with the spotlight on them.

When young men see preachers making lots of money with the gifts they receive, they look forward to the day when they too can be rich like them. The role model for these young men is not Jesus Christ but these wealthy, film-star-type preachers. This is the tragedy in Christendom today.

We need to demonstrate to our young people by our lives and teach them by our words that if we follow the Lord, we will not become wealthy or famous, but godly.

At the same time, we will be misunderstood, rejected, and persecuted! But we will be able to love those who hate us and bless those who curse us. This is what we need to demonstrate to the next generation. If we do not do that, they will follow "another Jesus" - the one they see in today's carnal preachers.

To humble ourselves under God's mighty hand means to accept joyfully all the circumstances that God sends into our lives. We allow those circumstances to humble us, so that we become smaller, and God becomes greater. When we become smaller in people's eyes, then they will not live in dependence on us, but on the Lord.

We must long that Christ will increase in us and that we will decrease. God leads us through many circumstances in our life to reduce us, so that Christ might increase in us. If we humble ourselves under those circumstances, then God's purpose will be fulfilled in us.

Humbling ourselves involves apologizing to all whom we have wronged. As servants of the Lord, we are to be servants of all people and must be willing to go under all of them to bless them. When we make mistakes, we must be quick to acknowledge them and to apologize where necessary. The only one who never makes a mistake is God.

I have told the Lord that I am willing to apologize to anyone under the sun - children, servants, beggars, or anyone - and that I would never stand on my dignity or prestige in this matter. And I have done that - and God has blessed me.

You who are married know how easy it is for you to hurt your wives accidentally, even when you do not intend to. You may say something with a good intention. But your wife may misunderstand what you meant. It could be the other way around too - where you misunderstand something your wife said. What must you do in such cases? Let me just say this: Peace can be restored much quicker in your home through an apology than through a laboured explanation of your motives, or through an analysis of whose fault it was!

Suppose you find yourself in a situation where your colleagues misunderstand you. It may be no use explaining matters to them because they may not be willing to listen. What should you do in such a case, especially when you are perfectly

innocent? Should you feel sorry for yourself? Not at all. Just make sure your conscience is clear before God and men and leave the matter with Him. That is all you have got to do. That is the policy I have followed for many years now and I have been really blessed. I would recommend it to you too.

Re: Become Smaller, Not Bigger by Zac Poonen - posted by ESchaible, on: 2024/2/17 13:38

The motivation of the article is good - but could this mentality still lead to, ultimately, the pervasive error of seeking self in spiritual things?

ie. Pursuing a feigned humility with our eyes on future exaltation in this life?

I think taking the scripture he used in its context brings clarity:

â€œHumble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.â€ (1 Peter 5:6-11)

I will just point out this specific verse, and leave it there - because the overall teaching of the Spirit in this has already been made perfectly clear by Jesus.

â€œAnd after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.â€ (1 Peter 5:10)

The question is when the exaltation occurs, and what it is.

â€œLet the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.â€ (James 1:9-12)

The lowly state is the exaltation in this life. The "at the proper time" is made perfectly clear by James.

â€œAnd he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, â€œCome, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.â€ (Matthew 25:33-34)

The question is always begged in these types of teachings - would you do it anyway, even if you were never blessed in this life because of it - simply because of love for Jesus?

The beatitudes show us clearly who is blessed, and Jesus also clearly shows when we can expect to be anything other than opposed, humiliated, hated, persecuted and cast aside - and that time will never come in this life for a true disciple of Jesus - unless of course compromise is introduced as a pragmatic formula for carnal success.

Doing anything so as to obtain anything is, at its root, intrinsically selfishness. The disciple of Jesus follows Him because Jesus is worthy, nothing besides.