

[scripture reading before lesson]

John 12:42,43 “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: ⁴³For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Rom 2:29 “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

There are 2 types of praise because there are 2 types of beings involved, with 2 natures – a spiritual nature and a physical nature. Men have both these natures. Our hearts and minds are the spiritual, eternal part of us.

These are the parts that really interest God.

But it's hard for us to get this because man tends to focus on the material things.

It's this way with praise too, as the scripture says:

There is a praise that is of God.

There is a praise that is of men.

When you say, “It's of God” you're saying it came from God, it derived from God, it is of a Godly nature. Therefore there's no question of its rightness or goodness.

On the other hand though, when you say “It's of men” you're saying it came from men and with men things aren't nearly as clear.

Can praise only come from God. If men give praise, is it bad?

Despite what you might think from this scripture, it's No, to both questions. Man can praise man rightly.

In this verse the condemnation derives not from the *origin* of the praise, where it comes from, but rather the nature of the praise and what praise men are looking for.

But it does point out that there are 2 forms of praise, 1 of God and 1 of Men and that the praise of God is to be preferred. We need then to be **careful** in the praise we give and that we receive!

Praise is a fit subject to study.

Praise is something we all are involved with. We receive it **and** we give it.

Are we dealing with it rightly though?

Are we **giving** praise rightly?

Are we **receiving** praise rightly?

Praise – Dictionary says it's “an expression of favorable judgment”, commendation, or approval.

“Expression” to let something be known. Not just think it in your head.

“Favorable” means good, and “judgment” is just that, something we have to judge or decide on, to weigh something and choose.

Now, one obvious difference between Praise of God and Praise of Men is that God can **not** lie, men can. Therefore:

True Praise must be deserved.

True Praise must be sincere.

Otherwise, it's a lie. And lies are NOT something we can deal in and be pleasing to God. A scripture that describes qualities associated with praise:

Php 4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.”

These are Godly qualities:

True, honest, just, pure, lovely, good report, virtue, praise.

To be the Praise of God, the praise we offer, and that we **accept**, must adhere to these qualities.

The praise we give, or receive should be:

True, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, with virtue.

There is a Praise **of** God and there is a praise **of** men.

The **distinguishing** feature between the two is WHY we (men) give the praise.

And what is the greatest reason for our doing anything?

John 15:13 “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

God is Love, is our praise Godly? Is it given out of love for someone else, not ourselves? A love that would sacrifice something of ours for someone else.

When we give praise are we trying to encourage others to do well?

Are we humbling ourselves by recognizing the good actions of others?

Are we sacrificial in our praise: giving – expecting nothing in return?

These are good reasons, they are Godly.

Praise given for these reasons is the praise of God.

Alternatively,

When we give praise are we trying to curry favor from the one we praise?

Are we trying to influence someone to do what we want for our advantage?

Are we doing it to be recognized by others?

These are selfish reasons, of our selves, they are bad.

Praise given for these reasons is the praise of Man.

Praise is given for a reason and it's that **reason** that distinguishes good praise from bad praise. The Praise **of** God, from the praise **of** men. Praise given **to** build others up, or praise given **to** build ourselves up.

For example:

1 Cor 11:2 “Now I praise you brethren that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

Is this *man's* praise? No, these are God's words. But isn't Paul looking for something for himself? “you remember me in all things” - they gave to his physical necessities. “More blessed to give than receive”.

Why would God have Paul write this? To encourage the Corinthian brethren to keep on doing so. To build their faith. It was “An expression of favorable judgment” from God. It was positive feedback – you're going the right way.

Is this praise we can give one another? Of course it is.
Do others remember us and provide for our needs from time to time?
Are others faithful in what they promise us? Do we notice? Are we watching?
We should be – if we love them.

And if we notice, and are happy, don't we have a “favorable judgment”.
What if we tell people that? We are “expressing” favorable judgement – we are praising them! Praise is an essential **tool** we can use to accomplish God's commands. He's told us:

Heb 10:24 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”

Praise is a good method of doing this. Both directly and indirectly:

2 Corinthians 8:1-3 - “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they* were willing of themselves;”

He praised the Macedonians, to the Corinthians. For what purpose?

2 Corinthians 8:6-8 “Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. ⁸I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.”

Finish in THEM the same grace, that you abound in this grace also, to prove (test) the sincerity of their love.

FALSE PRAISE

We all like to be praised, but as with most things we enjoy we need to be careful to not let it get the better of us.

Praise can be a **TRAP** that controls our actions – it may cause us to do the wrong thing, or **fail** to do the right thing being afraid to do the right thing because people may hate us for it.

We might want praise so much we would forsake God for it:

John 12:42-43 “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

What were the chief rulers getting in the synagogue that they wouldn't leave? The praise of men. This controlled them, it kept them from doing the right thing.

There's another way false praise, the praise **of** men can control us. Praise is “an expression of favorable judgement”. What would be the opposite be?

Condemnation, “an expression of Unfavorable judgement”. If we receive, or accept, the praise of men --- that is undeserved, what defense do we have against **condemnation** – that is undeserved? None. If we take the one, we have to take the other. Both of these serve to put us under the control of other MEN, when in fact we should belong to God. But ONLY if we accept **undeserved** praise.

Rom 2:29 “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Remember **Rom 2:29** “whose praise is NOT of men”. To whom are we looking for our praise? To Men or to God?

“**Who** it is we want to please”, is the great question before us.

Do we want to please God or please Man?
Whose praise do we want?

Praise can be a temptation Satan can use on us. Jesus was a man, tempted in all points as we are. Jesus had to be careful of this temptation also:

Mark 10:17-18 “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”

When presented with the temptation, Jesus answered quickly, not accepting the praise. What was wrong? Wasn't Jesus good? Yes he was. Why did he reject it? It wasn't offered for the right reason. Does Jesus need man to tell him he is good?

Who are we to glorify in the things we do? God.
What if WE accept the praise for these things.

Oops – we’re not glorifying God and He won’t glorify us

True praise must be deserved, and it must be given in sincerity, else it’s a lie.

Also, true praise is sacrificial,

Heb 13:15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.”

We give it freely, and not grudgingly. We give it because we **want** to, not because we have to or because we expect some material or earthly thing in return.

Matt 6:1-2 “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

Our reward is in heaven, from God, not from men.
We want praise **from** God, not from man.

INVITE

Praise is about the heart, it’s a spiritual thing. But it’s often hard for us to know our own hearts. It’s hard for us to see spiritually.

How do we know if we’re doing well and if God will praise us?

2 Cor 8:18 “And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;”

Paul was writing God’s word here to the Christians in Corinth.

How did a brother obtain praise from God, “in the Gospel”.

The Gospel, the Good News Jesus proclaimed to us.

They obtained praise by their obedience and faithfulness as evidenced in their actions. No appeals to vanity, no human subjectivity or judgment required, no room for error, their “Praise is in the Gospel” not in the lips, or minds, of men.

Yes, there is an objective measurement of us, something that can’t be swayed by feelings or emotions. Do we obey, or do we not.

It’s there in what Jesus said in response to those who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. These **won’t be praised**, they’ll be **condemned**; they will receive an “expression of unfavorable judgment”:

John 12:44-48 “Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. ⁴⁶I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

⁴⁷And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”

The **words** Jesus spoke will judge us.

Remember the definition of praise, “an expression of favorable judgment”.

How would we like to be praised?

By men saying, “He sure is a good person” or by our obedience to the words Jesus spoke?

This is the praise we should want, to hear:

“Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of thy Lord”.

Would you like to be praised by God? It’s simple – obey the gospel! Repent, turn to Him, leaving earthly, carnal things and seeking God’s praise.

Matt 3:7,8 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”

Don’t look back – fleeing from the wrath to come, instead turn and run towards God and the good he has promised.

[Sermon 5/22/2011 by Ed Kelleher at West Columbia church of Christ. All scriptures read and projected on screen during the sermon.]