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No Position for the Self-Ambitious in Christ's church

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Philippians 2:3

A selfish ambition person means real trouble for Christ's church. How can a person read from their Bible the many passages that deal with one's pride (Proverbs 21:24), one's self-exaltation (Galatians 6:3), one's selfishness (1 Corinthians 10:24), one's self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14) or one's self-will (2 Peter 2:10) and then think only of themselves? I am not sure I know the answer except to focus in on the word "self".

A selfish ambitious person is determined to get a leg up in the church so as to hold some type of position or obtain some type of perceived power. The problem is there is no power position in Christ's church. Christ has all authority and power (Matthew 28:18). His Father has given Him and Him alone preeminence.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:15-18)

There is no room for a selfish person in Christ's church.

Selfish people with ambition stir up strife and division. A selfish elder, deacon, preacher or saint is lacking humility and servitude which is required as a disciple of Jesus Christ. For example, Paul says that an elder is not to be "self-willed" (Titus 1:7). Followers of Christ are to "esteem others better than himself." When Jesus' apostles disputed among themselves which will be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom, Jesus taught them humility and servitude. If you want to be great in His kingdom you must be "servant of all" (Mark 9:33-37).

It is a shameful thing to have one who loves the preeminence in Christ's church today when you can read about Diotrephes' condemnation in 3 John 1:9-11. A selfish person only sees things through his or her eyes and not throw the eyes of another. There is no place of position in Christ's church for the selfish-ambitious.

STACY

Teaching the Old Lessons

- by *Mark W. White*

Every once in a while, some well-meaning but misguided brother will chide us for teaching the old lessons. He will say, "You are answering questions which no one is asking any longer." By this he means to squelch our teaching on the first principles of Gospel obedience and salvation by grace through faith; the nature, organization, and work of the church; Biblical morality; and the need for scriptural authority.

Of course, we understand that some people aren't asking questions like, "What must I do to be saved?" as people did in Bible days (Acts 16:30). However, not everyone raised such an important question back then, either. Just because men

ask the wrong questions, or they don't ask any question at all does not mean that we must alter our teaching to accommodate the "felt needs" of the people of our time.

Haven't people always clamored for something new, novel, different, and more exciting? Of course, we have. We do like to hear new things, even strange things. A skilled teacher of God's word will be careful to "clothe old truths in new robes", just as a good cook will find new and interesting ways to prepare and serve potatoes. Yet, the truth is still the truth. Its nature and essence never changes. We might present it differently or we might approach the teaching of truth by some new methods, but in the end the old truths will be clearly stated.

Older, more mature Christians must learn to be patient as the old lessons are taught again and again. There is always a new generation coming on, or a new convert here and there who needs the lessons we think we know all too well. If we insist on teaching something novel and exciting, what will happen to the people who are yet untaught? Do they not now need the same lessons today's mature Christians needed when they were novices? Judges 2:10 states of Israel, following the days of Joshua, "*All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*" Even Jeremiah encouraged the people of his day to ask for the "*old paths*" (6:16). However, most of the people to whom Jeremiah recommended this course rejected it and as a result, ended up in a seventy-year captivity among the Babylonians. Jeremiah preached that the "*good way*" was to be found in the "*old paths*".

It is no compliment to us when many of our young people in some churches have not even been given the opportunity of hearing the old lessons. It isn't that they reject the teaching, they've just never been exposed to it! Elders and preachers who have served up the novel and new while neglecting the tried and true will pay for their negligence, to be sure. Besides, if someone is preaching something new and novel, shouldn't that be examined closely to see whether it is indeed, truth? (Acts 17:11)

We must not grow weary of the old truths which distinguish the people of God. Spiritual ignorance will be the cause of our destruction both now and eternally. If we neglect the old lessons, the church which results will lose its distinctiveness and the identity which God has given it.

Every Man's Work

By ROBERT E. SPEER

Someone unknown to me has written: "He that gives good advice builds with one hand; he that give good counsel and example builds with both hands; but he that gives good admonition and bad example builds with one hand, and pulls down with the other!"

Such a statement lends itself to many illustrations, but none are so vital as those which pertain to the spiritual sphere of life. A man who boasts how much he loves the Lord but then does not obey His Word has surely pulled down with one hand as much as he has built with the other. He who admonishes others to live after the manner of Christ but refuses to do so himself has surely pulled down more than he has built, for he blunts the influence of others as well.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, Paul has written of the Lord's people who were building with one hand and pulling down with the other. Truly, they were the Lord's people (1 Cor. 1:2). As such, they espoused and expressed the truth, but by allowing sin among them their bad example erased their good admonition. Hebrews 4:11 states: "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

Jesus said, "Keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15) and, "I have give you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn. 13:15). Timothy was told, "Preach the word..." (2 Tim. 4:2) and "be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation..." (1 Tim. 4:12). These are illustrations of giving good example along with good counsel.

As a boy-preacher in the foothills of the Ozarks, I often asked an "old timer" if he had been working hard. Invariably, he would cock his head to one side, and with a twinkle in his eye and a conspiratorial tone in his voice, would reply, "with both hands!" The faithful of the Maker will give good counsel and good example. They will work; they will build—with both hands!

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:13). What about your work? What sort is it? Think about it!

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