

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit of Pride"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Self-will”

Often, people who are obstinate and stubborn are called strong-willed. Sometimes, what we are actually trying to say is that they are “self-willed.” In fact, having a strong will can be a positive attribute. However, when a person’s strong will conflicts with God’s authority, then it becomes self-will, pride, and is ultimately destructive, both to the individual and to others. In today’s lesson, we will see that Christians should humble themselves and submit to the will of God.

Key Verse

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (Jn. 5:30).

Lesson Summary

The story of the prodigal son illustrates the destructive nature of pride (Lu. 15:11-20). This younger son desired his inheritance, saying, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (v. 12). Afterward, he left home with all of his possessions to pursue his own will and desires (v. 13). This young man was determined to live his life by his own rule, not regarding the will of his father. His foolish pride robbed him of sound judgment and led him to squander all that he had received from his father (vv. 13-14). Pride left him hungry and empty-handed (vv. 14-16). Fortunately, his hard circumstances humbled him, causing him to see the error of his way and led him back home (vv. 17-20). Clearly, being self-willed is a destructive evil. James wrote of those who devise their plans and conduct their lives without considering God (Ja. 4:13-16). Such pride is evil, because it exalts self-will and ignores the will of God. The apostle Peter warned of false teachers in the church who would cause many to stray from the truth (2 Pe. 2:1-2). These last days’ deceivers and the people deceived by them are those who “despise government” (v. 10). Peter described them as “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (v. 10). As followers of Jesus Christ, we must guard ourselves against self-will and the spirit of pride. Jesus, our example in righteousness and holiness, asserted his own submission to the will of the Father (Jn. 5:30). He did not come in order to please himself, but to carry out God’s will (Jn. 6:38). Perhaps, no other occasion in the life of Christ demonstrates this better than his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Though he prayed that he might possibly escape what was coming, he ultimately surrendered to the will of God, saying, “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt. 26:39). Christ’s pattern of submission helps us to see our own obligation to do the will of God. Coming to terms with God’s will and doing his will are the marks of a true Christian (Mt. 26:42; 7:21).

Scripture Study

Self-will: A destructive evil – Lu. 15:11-20; Ja. 4:13-16; 2 Pe. 2:1-2, 10

Submission to the will of God – Jn. 5:30; 6:38; Mt. 26:39, 42; 7:21

Conclusion

As followers of Christ, we should not pursue our own will, but rather the will of our heavenly Father. Admittedly, doing God’s will is not always an easy task. Nevertheless, we will never regret the final outcome of pleasing him. While following self-will ends in destruction, fulfilling the will of God secures eternal life.

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“Self-promotion”

Introduction

Everyone enjoys being appreciated and promoted. A young adult is hired for a job with a promising future. He/she works hard, giving one hundred percent to the success of the company. After several years of faithful service, perhaps nothing is more rewarding than receiving an unexpected promotion. The feeling of promotion is exhilarating. Although promotion is a desirable and honorable goal, self-promotion is a prideful pursuit. In today's lesson, we will consider the negative aspects of self-promotion within the fellowship of the church.

Key Verse

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Ph. 2:3).

Lesson Summary

The apostles, James and John, are prime examples of self-promotion. They approached Jesus with a rather odd request, saying, “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory” (Mk. 10:37). Jesus replied, “Ye know not what ye ask” (v. 38). Then he further corrected their misdirected pursuit (vv. 39-40). The negative reaction of the other ten apostles to James' and John's request created a teachable moment. Jesus told them not to seek preeminence, but rather seek to serve (vv. 42-45). Opposing the spirit of pride which he saw among the people, Jesus taught a parable about being an invited guest to a wedding feast (Lu. 14:7-11). He explained how a guest should take the least desirable seat, rather than taking the best seat at the feast. By taking the lowest seat available, an individual does not take a position of honor which belongs to another. Moreover, by taking the lowest position, that individual receives due honor and praise upon being promoted (receiving a higher seat). To this Jesus added, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (v. 11). Clearly, we should avoid self-assertion, attempting to push ourselves in front of others. In fact, the love of God “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Co. 13:4). Believers should not be braggers and boastful of themselves, nor of their accomplishments. Trying to build up ourselves in the eyes of others comes from the spirit of pride. Instead, we should promote Jesus Christ and lift up his worthy name (Ph. 2:9). In regard to our spiritual consecration, we also should avoid self-assertion. In Matthew 6:1-6 and 6:16-18, Jesus cautioned us about our motives. We should never give charitably to gain the praise and recognition of others (vv. 1-4). We should not pray to gain the attention and admiration of others (vv. 5-6). Likewise, fasting is not for public display, but rather to be done unto the Lord with discretion (vv. 16-18). In other words, our religious practices should never be used to lift up ourselves. In fact, Jesus criticized the religious leaders of his day for their hypocrisy and pride, because their motivation was self-assertion, desiring “to be seen of men” (Mt. 23:5-7). We should avoid this temptation.

Scripture Study

Seeking self-promotion – Mk. 10:35-45; Lu. 14:7-11

Avoiding self-assertion – 1 Co. 13:4; Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18; 23:5-12

Conclusion

The spirit of pride causes one to push himself in front of others, whereas Christ calls us to give greater consideration to others than to ourselves (Ph. 2:3). Self-promotion works against the Spirit of Christ and his desire for the fellowship and unity of the church.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Self-righteousness”

People sometimes have an attitude of superiority, feeling that they are better than others. Certainly, some fare better than others in a variety of ways, such as physically and economically; but none of us is more valuable or superior to others in the sight of God, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23). Everyone needs to be saved. This fact relegates all of humanity to the same level: lost without God. Thus, our true value and worth depend on our relationship with Jesus Christ. In today’s lesson, we will see that our value and worth in Christ are not a cause for pride and a superior attitude, but rather for humility.

Key Verse

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Ro. 10:3).

Lesson Summary

The Scriptures teach: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3). Yet many religious people attempt “to establish their own righteousness,” as opposed to righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Ro. 10:3). Trusting in themselves, they rely on their own goodness for eternal life. This mindset corresponds to self-righteousness, a symptom of pride and what the Scriptures describe as “filthy-rags” in the sight of God (Is. 64:6). Recognizing the problem of self-righteousness among the people, Jesus told them the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lu. 18:9-14). The Pharisee prayed in the temple, despising others and justifying himself (vv. 11-12). But the publican prayed for God’s mercy (v. 13). God has respect for a humble spirit of repentance, but self-righteousness and the spirit of pride come under his judgment (v. 14). Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for putting on the appearance of righteousness when their hearts were actually full of sin and hypocrisy (Mt. 23:25-30). In fact, he condemned the Pharisees who justified themselves, and said to them, “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Lu. 16:15). Anytime Christians begin to inflate themselves, they are heading for certain trouble, unless they repent and correct their course (18:14). Satan is subtle and knows how to stroke the human ego. If individuals fall prey to self-righteousness and the spirit of pride, God will resist them (Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5). The apostle Paul admonished the believer “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Ro. 12:3). As faithful followers of Christ, even the good works which we do are no longer ours, but rather they are works of God’s grace through us (1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20). The credit for all that we accomplish belongs to God. Christ is our undeserved righteousness and the very source of our good works (Ep. 2:10). From this perspective, we have no cause for pride and self-righteousness. Accordingly, Paul cautioned the saints about looking down on others; he instructed them not to place themselves above others, but to lower themselves in humility (Ro. 12:16).

Scripture Study

An abomination – Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3; Ro. 10:3; Is. 64:6; Lu. 16:15; 18:9-14; Mt. 23:25-30

Our humiliation – Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5; Ro. 12:3, 16; 1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20; Ep. 2:10

Conclusion

Self-righteousness is not compatible with the Spirit of Christ. Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). Our ability to be righteous and to bear the fruit of righteousness is completely dependent on our relationship with him. Keeping this truth in our hearts will help us to overcome the destructive spirit of pride.

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"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Sensuality”

We live in a sensual, lustful world. For example, turning on the television can become a rather risky act, because we never know what will show up on the TV screen. Often the commercials are more disturbing than the programs themselves. Suggestive language, provocative images, and sexual innuendoes are injurious to the soul and offensive to the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we must guard ourselves against sensuality.

Key Verse

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro. 12:2).

Lesson Summary

Sensuality and sexuality are not the same. Sexuality is a major part of the natural composition of humankind. It is not dirty or shameful, in and of itself, for God created man in his own image, and made them male and female in order to procreate and inhabit the earth: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Ge. 1:27-28). Moreover, after God created man, he made the woman “out of man” to be his companion and helper (2:18-25). They were literally a match made in heaven. The distinction and attraction between the two were “very good” in the sight of God (1:31). From the beginning, the Lord placed sexuality safely within the marriage relationship between a man and his wife (2:23-24; He. 13:4). Nevertheless, though sexuality itself is not sinful, we must secure and protect our hearts in order to prevent our desires from becoming sensual and lustful. For if we pervert God’s original plan and purpose in our natural desires, they become sensual desires driven by vile, unrestrained lusts, which result in sexual immorality. Thus, sensuality is the doorway to sexual sins. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha are historical examples of God’s judgment against sexual immorality (2 Pe. 2:6; Ge. 19:4-11). Because righteous Lot saw and heard the vile wickedness of the people, his soul was vexed continually (2 Pe. 2:7-8). In spite of God’s historical judgments, the world today with its godless system continues to promote sensual pleasures which gratify the desires of the flesh (Ep. 2:2-3). These pleasures are strategically advertised through various media and flaunted through the lifestyles of the unredeemed. As sanctified and Spirit-filled Christians, we should critically monitor all that we see and hear. Our eyes and ears give sensually-driven words and images entrance into our hearts. By quickly closing the door to sensuality, we keep our hearts from being affected and infected by it (2 Pe. 2:9). Furthermore, we should guard our talking and conversations to avoid opening that door. The world often turns sexuality into a joke and a jesting matter. But this grieves the Holy Spirit (Ep. 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30). We respectfully should keep sexuality where God originally placed it – safely within the marriage relationship.

Scripture Study

Sexuality – Ge. 1:27-28, 31; 2:18-25; He. 13:4

Sensuality – 2 Pe. 2:6-9; Ge. 19:4-11; Ep. 2:2-3; 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30

Conclusion

The apostles warned of the last days when mockers would “walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17-18). Jude described them as “sensual, having not the Spirit” (v. 19). He called them “filthy dreamers” and compared them to: 1) the Hebrews whom God destroyed in the wilderness, 2) the fallen angels reserved unto judgment, and 3) those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha (vv. 5-8). In contrast to these, Jude admonished the saints to be spiritual: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (v. 20).