

Department: Growing In Grace  
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“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think {of himself] more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...”(Romans 12:3a).

So very many people think more highly of themselves than they ought, and very many others think down on themselves—as failures (which all are who are not living to please the Lord); and for this reason they see themselves as of little worth in the eyes of the world. They see the world just passing them by, often not even caring enough to look in their direction.

Meanwhile, the successful, the rich, most of them being lovers of money are deceived by the wealth they obtain. The success they seek will only bring them to ruin. To those who are not spiritually minded, wealth promises a satisfaction, which like the green leaf that fades, will eventually dry up and be no more.. Wealth deceives those who focus their lives on attaining to it. With the acquisition of wealth comes deeper involvement in the worldly pleasures wealth provides. It is not long before the time and energy of the rich is consumed in activities that do not profit the spirit and soul of man. The troubles that surround the rich are many. The candle of those who live to attain what the world most admires, will soon flicker and go out. The pursuit of worldly success and the accolades that the world gives leads only to a desert—a dry, parched land. Apart from God, all that man may achieve will not prevent his ruin.

To the unsophisticated, to the “lowly,” to those who feel rejected by the mainstream of society, it can be said: “God loves you. You are precious to Him.” To those who have risen to positions of power, influence, accomplishment, financial success, or worldly fame this may also be said to these:

- Repent and believe the gospel.
- You are of great worth to your Creator.

Every human being is of great worth to Jesus. Every human being is significant. Every person is unique and brings that uniqueness to God's family. God loves all. He has made each one different. He is the God of variety. There is vast evidence of this in His work of creation. Of great import to Him is that He loves the spontaneity of His children. He is a big enough God that He can give of His full attention to everyone. No one need feel slighted with Him. Thus with a sincere desire to know Him and to serve His interests, this allows the Lord to do wonderful things in a person's life.

God has a place in His kingdom for everyone who will respond to His love. He has a privileged place for you and for all in direct fellowship with Him. Whether you believe this or not will not alter the truth of this matter. He longs to fellowship with all His

children on a personal level. Yes, indeed, it is true that God loves you personally, privately, perfectly, with an everlasting love, and wants you to abide in His household of the faithful.

Why is it that most human beings really have a narrow (tunnel) vision of life and of themselves? In tunnel vision people have a very limited view of life. Most of their focus in life is on things that perish. They have little interest in world events or politics or the really important issues of life. Watching worthless programs on television, attention given to movies or professional sports, or involvement in recreational activities are of more interest to them than learning why God placed man on this earth. The reality of their existence is that the whole spectrum of their interest and activity is such as to leave God out of their lives.

Most people are occupied with their houses, their immediate families, cars, jobs, a few select friends, and the few events they involve themselves in, and they neglect the weightier issues of life. This leaves them with tunnel vision. When most of the friends and family are gone and the things they have given themselves to are left, what comfort can they derive from that which can not communicate on a personal or meaningful level. To surround oneself with things is no real remedy for loneliness. Where to go when friends depart? What to do when one no longer desires after things? People may long to be somewhere else; but where do the lonely go to gain relief from emptiness—if they do not know the Lord? And why is it that many long to be somewhere else, in some other job, in a different situation or environment? Is it not because they are unfulfilled or feel unloved? All around us are people who are lonely and depressed and feel unloved. These are people to love, to serve, and to help. Are they not of great worth?

In the natural, it is what one brings to the table to eat that appeals to most family members in their desire to satisfy their hunger. It is in what is of interest to the stranger and the neighbor that will likely determine whether they may be interested in coming to your house and mine. “Birds of the same feather flock together.” So it is natural that people who consider themselves successful are drawn to success. Success gains friends and influences people.

“Wealth makes many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbor” (Proverbs 19:4).

“Many will entreat the favor of the prince, and every man is a friend to him that gives gifts. All the brethren of the poor do hate him. How much more do his friends go far [withdraw] from him! He pursues after words which are vain” (Proverbs 19:6-7).

Consider what is said in these proverbs. “Wealth makes [brings] many friends.” What is said is that those who have resources have means of obtaining friends; those who have no resources have no means of gaining friends. How true this is in the world! The rich and famous gather in friends and admirers by the dozens or hundreds or even thousands. The poor are left to themselves. How tragic! No man can live as an island to himself. He is

just not made to function in that way. Yet so many, in the later years of their lives, are left isolated and alone. Oftentimes, when they are visited, it is a superficial visit and does not bring any real release from a feeling of aloneness or provide long term uplift of spirit to the one who is downcast. Nothing that means for driving away of emptiness and the bringing of peace in the heart, in the place of rejection, is gained.

And why is this? It is due to the superficiality of fallen men and the barrenness of the lonely. The spiritually lost simply do not want to be reminded of where they are headed. It is painful to them. So the successful surround themselves with things and buy loyalty in order to drown out their emptiness. The poor are left to face life alone. So it should not be surprising to realize that both the rich and the poor of the world's system are hurting. The cause of the heartache in both is the same. Self sits on the throne of the lives of the rich and the poor who know not the Lord. And the proud self and the self-life is the great enemy of man.

“Many will entreat the favor of the prince, and every man is a friend to him that gives gifts.” One writer has translated the first part of this proverb: “Many stroke the cheeks of the noble.” (Keil & Delitzsch). *Proverbs*, Part 2, 22. People profess to care for those who are, or can be, of benefit to them. The hypocrisy in this is that nearly all of these folk value the friendship of the well-to-do for their worldly success and possessions, and not for their righteousness or virtue. Thus when “riches make themselves wings and fly away like an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:5) most of the “friends” usually take flight with them and are not to be found associating with them again. This is because man is fickle. He is spiritually unstable, lacks steadfastness in loyalty, and is subject to erratic changeableness. He is lacking in true love for people because God is not in his thoughts. He lives to please himself.

What does a man do when associations become a “drag” upon him. He declines to associate with them. Yet all men face troubles in life. None are immune. In the book of Job, Job's friend Eliphaz made this plain:

“Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks (of a fire) fly upward”  
(Job 5:7).

When prosperity departs the fickle depart. There is one true Friend that will never depart, never give up on anyone—except where a person hardens his heart beyond any possibility of repentance, in refusing to desist in his rebellion against God. Jesus is the Friend Who “sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

The Proverb continues: “He pursues after words which are vain.” The assurance and promises these friends and even family members have given him turn out to be vain promises. “They are deaf to his entreaties for help and sympathy.” (Barnes, *Proverbs*, 312.) These are summer only friends. In the winter of difficulty they are not even visible. Pursuing after empty promises (vain words) leaves the abandoned devastated. And this is the lot of the poor. The rich in the world will not help, unless, of course, it will serve to gain for them the applause of their rich friends and the admiration of the world. And for

the poor to expect the worldly rich to come to their aid is to hope in vain. This is the way of the world. Writing of what happens when the rich lose their possessions, it is stated:

“He that has [had] many friends is rewarded with evil, hunting after words which are nothing.” (Keil & Delitzsch, Proverbs, Part 2, 25.)

The courting now of friendship leaves him disgraced, abandoned, and disappointed. It is now painfully evident that all their nice sounding promises were only empty words that had been used only to maintain and exploit the friendship to their advantage. These words were not promises, for it was not intended that they be taken seriously. They were empty words. Their hearts were not in what they said. They were not true friends; they were leeches.

Is there a better way to travel in life than by trusting in man? Yes, there is! How is such to be realized? How can one be certain that what is promised can be trusted, that the counsel that is given will not fail?

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her” (Proverbs 4:7-8).

“He that gets understanding loves his soul, and he that values understanding will acquire good” (Proverbs 19:8).

There is the counsel or wisdom that man gives. It is often unreliable. Man in his pride or ego often makes statements that are misleading and false and will not hold up in experience. And then there is the understanding and the wisdom that comes from above, from the throne of Almighty God. This is the understanding and the wisdom that is needed.

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

“But wisdom [the true wisdom that comes only from God] is justified [shown to be just that] of all her children” (Luke 7:35).

The way out of poverty and depression and aloneness is to be found only in the way that God leads. It is in relationship to the Son of God, “Who loved me [you] and gave Himself for me [you]” (Galatians 2:20b).

“The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

“Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuses instruction, but

he that regards reproof shall be honored. He that walks with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:18,20).

“Forsake her [wisdom] not, and she shall preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee” (Proverbs 4:6).

“The path of the just is like the brightness of the morning light, which shines more and more till the perfect day. The way of the wicked is deep darkness; they know not at what they stumble” (Proverbs 4:18-19).

Those of the worldly rich, who are spiritually dead, gain the things they desire by continually living in sinning. They function in darkness and do not know how greatly they err—for the path they take leads to great disappointment and eternal ruin. They live to the preservation of self, and in this state sinning is to them a necessary condition of life. Yet they have no comprehension of the punishment they face. Oh, that the light of true knowledge and happiness were given to them—just as to the poor. Both the worldly rich and the worldly poor need to understand that it is only the path of the just that brings “the brightness of the morning light,” and which path, if followed, “shines more and more till the perfect day.” In this:

“The progress of blissful knowledge is compared to that of the clearness of the day till it reaches its midday height, having reached to which it becomes a knowing of all in God” (Keil & Delitzsch, Proverbs, Part I, 113.)

The path of the wicked, rich and poor, is a dangerous path. It is characterized as a winding path of many stones of stumbling and deep dark pits (spiritually speaking), and leads to destruction; whereas the path of those who find their rest in Jesus is a path—although not without its steep climbs, narrow passageways, and rocky places; its thorns and thistles of life; and share of dry and barren places—nevertheless, leads to the place where sickness and suffering, persecution and hardship are unknown. It is the place where the Father waits to greet His child. It is on this path alone that true dignity and worth is known, and God’s favor and fellowship is experienced.

Those who have too high an estimate of themselves think and behave as if God does not exist, for although they know there is a supreme Being, they behave as if He did not exist. They do not realize that darkness dominates them and that sin is a master over them. This darkness is due to the absence of the light of God in their lives. They will not have the Lord to rule over them. Therefore, they judge the value of others and themselves by their own reasonings and evil surmisings and not by the word of God.

“The lamp of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be healthy, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

(Matthew 6:23).

God alone is worthy to place a value on everything He has created. When men think they have light within them, and it is really darkness, how great is that darkness? Yet it is with corrupt humanist thinking that men judge one another, and themselves. This is God's universe and it is He who has placed a great value on every individual born into the human race. To the Lord a human being is of more value than a galaxy of stars. This is the real truth about you—about your neighbor, about the beggar in the street, the prisoner in the jail cell, the woman who is caught up in prostitution, the single parent who struggles to care for her child, the elderly widow who sits alone in a rocking chair in a small, run down bungalow, the old geezer who wants to be left alone, and the tyrant who wants to own the whole county. All are precious to Jesus. He died for everyone of these.

Believe that God loves you. Know that you are precious to Him. If you have not done so, accept His offer to come to Jesus and receive Him into your life and become a child of His love. Then live to serve Him. He has already extended to every man and woman, boy and girl on this planet the privilege of being a member of His own family of the first born (Hebrews 12:23).

Man, in his false security, self-assurance, and wrong estimate of himself, cannot rightly relate to the truth of what he is to become should he opt for Jesus; for he does not understand that a simple dependence on Jesus provides the help and the understanding that man needs to know that every human being is of great worth to his Creator. In actual experience, once one has come to be in Christ, it usually takes a while for a man to gain an assurance in his life that, although outwardly things may not have changed that much, inwardly there has come a release from the bondage that depression that fear of failure and of what the future holds, coupled with lack of godly purpose, had generated. With his experiencing that he is now a child of God comes that release into the glorious liberty that one is truly loved by God, that he is ever loved, and that although he may not have or gain much in material things or friends in this life, that in the end things will turn out all right. So he is encouraged to cease to fret and to learn to judge things rightly.

Those that reverence the Lord can rest in the knowledge that as long as they rest in Jesus, and continue to trust in God's mercy, the place they occupy on this earth is not their true home, rather that God has assigned each a place in heaven that is far beyond what anyone could ever deserve; nevertheless, God has a place that is reserved for everyone that loves His Son.

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