

# Gospel Power



*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)*

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## *By The Grace of God*

**Evan Bennett**

One of the gravest dangers faithful people of God can fall prey to is self-righteousness and arrogance toward the world. Jesus spoke about this problem among the religious leaders of His day in Luke 18, where He gave the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who went up to pray at the same time (Luke 18:9-14). It is clear from Jesus' telling of the story that the Pharisee went to the temple to exalt himself rather than to pray. "God," the Pharisee said, "I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even this tax collector," (18:11). Meanwhile, the tax collector prayed humbly to God for mercy.

Jesus spoke this parable, Luke tells us, to get a point across to those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," (Luke 18:9). The Pharisee in His story certainly met this description: he trusted in his own righteousness and despised other sinners. He was arrogant and prideful in his religion and hateful toward those who had fallen short in his estimation. Rather than pull sinners up to worship God, he pushed sinners down to glorify himself.

It is clear that this Pharisee's style of religion was repugnant to God, yet this did not keep many in Jesus' time from behaving exactly as Jesus described. This sort of religion has long

been a problem, and it was not unique to the Pharisees and scribes. Indeed, it is clear from evidence in Paul's letters that this sort of problem was beginning to sprout among the Christians of the first century. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul took pains to remind them that it was God's grace not good works that saved them; boasting about one's salvation was therefore forbidden. He wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," (Ephesians 2:8-9). While no specific charge of religious arrogance is mentioned in Paul's letter, simply including this language indicates that religious snobbery was a potential problem.

It was not only to the Ephesians that Paul gave such a warning. In Romans 11, he urged Gentile Christians not to boast over Jews who had not come to Christ by reminding them that it was only through God's grace that salvation had come to them. Rather than boast over the branches cut off, Paul exhorted them, they should fear the power of God both to cut them out and to graft in again those He had once removed (Romans 11:17-24).

Boasting of one's salvation at the expense of those who remain in sin is a very strong temptation. It infected the religious leaders of

Jesus' time; it began to seep into the minds of first-century Christians; and, sadly, it taints some Christians today. Knowing we have been separated from the world and sanctified by the blood of Christ sometimes creates within us an attitude that we are somehow better than the world. We become spiritually arrogant, assuming that we have some special favor in God's sight that is not available to all men. When we become this way, we tend to scorn the world and lock ourselves in the church building, never reaching out to those who desperately need the Gospel. Like the Pharisees, we become insular and cliquish, boasting about our righteousness at the expense of those outside the church.

This sort of attitude is simply not acceptable for the Christian if he/she hopes to be pleasing to God. The New Testament is clear: grace has been extended to all (Romans 5:18), God wishes for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), and Christians need to be spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to every creature (Mark 16:15). For this reason, we must resist the temptation to become spiritually arrogant.

Guidance for overcoming this very temptation can be found in Paul's brief letter to Titus. Paul knew that the problem of spiritual conceit was already drawing the minds of some and understood the problem would only grow with time. Therefore, he counseled the young preacher about resisting this problem in chapter 3 of his epistle. His directives to Titus remain enlightening for us today as we confront this problem.

### **Remain Humble**

The first key to combating the sin of spiritual arrogance is to remain humble. Paul wrote to Titus, "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men," (Titus 3:1-2). Given the world of the first century, it would have been tempting for Christians to look down their noses at the people around them. Idolatry, immorality, and license reigned in both the Greek and Roman

worlds. Christians had left these things all behind, often suffering persecution for doing so. It would have been very easy for them to show equal contempt for the world. Paul, however, taught that they should remain humble and willing to serve all men, just as Jesus had in His times of persecution.

### **Remember Where You Came From**

The key to humility, Paul taught Titus, lies in remembering from you also were once stained by sin. Remember that "we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," (Titus 3:3). In other words, we all were once in their position. There is no room for boasting when we remember that we once also stood apart from God. Instead, this knowledge should prompt us to search out opportunities to bring others to the grace we have received.

### **By the Grace of God**

The greatest key to avoiding spiritual arrogance is to remember that it is ultimately through God's grace that we have been saved. Paul wrote to Titus "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Titus 3:4-5). We must remember that it is only through God's loving mercy and grace that we are saved. When we truly recognize our dependence on God, any inkling of spiritual arrogance quickly fades in the light of His mercy.

~via *The West End Way*, Richmond, Virginia.



## ***How To Grow Spiritually***

**Rodney Britton**

Without a doubt, growth is necessary in all areas of life in order to be successful. Whether on the job or in scientific research, whether in technology or education, growth is a prerequi-

site for prosperity. No place is this more evident than in the life of a Christian. Peter taught, “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever” (2 Peter 3:18).

With all the hindrances to living a godly life it would only make sense to look for ways of improving our “graceful growth” in the Lord. I challenge you to think on these areas with me as we try to grow as God wants us to and then apply them to your life that we “may grow thereby”(1 Peter 2:2).

### **Constantly Examine Yourself**

Paul urged the Corinthians to “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”(2 Corinthians 13:5). We should always measure ourselves in relationship to Christ. Have there been improvements in my knowledge? Do I have the same zeal that I had when I first became a Christian? Do I set good examples to everyone I come in contact with? Am I trying to improve my circumstances or conditions that will enable me to grow? How would you have to answer these questions?

### **Get Yourself Active in Your Local Congregation**

There is no better place to begin your quest for growth. Offer your services to the elders in what ever form it is needed. The greatest source of satisfaction and joy is to aid the flock that you are a part of. Have the desire that Isaiah had; “Here am I, Send me!”(Isaiah 6:8). Be an encouragement rather than a discouragement. Be a builder instead of a destroyer. Don’t criticize, but rather we should always support sound, scriptural efforts.

### **Surround Yourself With Godly People**

Spend time daily with people who can assist you in your growing. Understand that people I associate with will go a long way as to how I mature in the Lord. Paul said, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Always understand that

where a man’s heart is, his affections will be as well (Matthew 6:21).

### **Avoid Anything That Will Hinder You**

Stay away from things that take your mind away from godly things. Don’t allow anything to come before the Lord! Our daily lives can offer many troubles, trials, and temptations, but we must not let them cause us to despair (2 Corinthians 4:9ff). Do not allow laziness to affect your growth. Just as physical growth would be affected by lazy, effortless lifestyles, so is the life of a Christian (1 Timothy 4:8).

### **Stop The Drift!**

Sometimes our minds wander. Sometimes our lives are hectic and the “rat race” too much to handle. Sometimes we lose sight of the real issues at hand and before we know it we have drifted out to sea. We didn’t feel it, but it happened nonetheless. We didn’t necessarily want it to, but it did anyway. We used to sing an old song that said, “You are drifting too far from the shore, You are drifting too far from the peaceful shore. Come to Jesus today, let Him show you the way, you are drifting too far from the shore.” We must constantly keep our attention on the “shoreline”. We must know where Jesus Christ is (and where He is not) and where He so desperately wants me to be. “Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2,3).

### **Finally, Pray Everyday!**

How long has it been since you prayed alone? How long has it been since you talked to God about your life? About your family? About your fears? How long has it been since you asked God to help you? How long has it been since **you** talked to God? We are instructed to, “Pray without ceasing”(1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer will change lives!

Are you growing in the Lord?

~via *The Cartwright Caller*, Elkmont, Alabama

*Come and Study God’s Word With Us.*

# News & Notes

**THE SICK:** *Scottie Goode's father, Hubert Goode*, continues in the Huntsville Hospital, room 841 ...*Willie Ridgeway* continues in the Brookwood Hospital in Birmingham...*Amber Hammond* continues to not feel well and is not able to be on her feet much...*Eddie Hammond's father, Burl Hammond*, is in the ECM hospital in Florence following surgery on Friday to implant three stints. He is in a room and hopes to come home the first of the week...*Marcia Cooper* was able to be at services last Sunday morning, but is still recovering from her recent surgery... *Angie McCrary's sister, Peggy McGee*, is home from the hospital following her surgery in Birmingham...*Arvel Newton's nephew, Chester Newton*, is at home sick battling cancer ...Remember *Millinea Word* as she continues her treatments/medication... *Wanda Tucker's father, Billy Letson*, who is continuing to take medication for his Leukemia ...*Helen Trousdale's neice, Martha Henson*, who is battling cancer ... *Sandra Glass' cousin, Tina Strickland*, is not doing well at all and is not able to continue her treatments... *Mattie Blanche Word* continues at home and not able to be out...*Aldeen Noles* is in the SunBridge Nursing Home in Lawrenceburg ..*Shelia Moore's mother-in-law, Lorraine Whitehead*, is in the Athens Convelesant Center...*Mary Best's nephew, Shannon Johnson*, who is at home ...*Tisha Thomas' grandmother, Nellie Hunter*, and *Millinea Word's mother, Nola McCafferty*, who are both in the Meadow Brook Nursing Home in Pulaski.

**COMMUNICATION GROUPS:** Communication group three will meet tonight after the evening service. If you are in group three remember to meet with your group this evening.

**OUT OF TOWN:** *The Mosleys: Roger, Cindy, Derrick and Curtis; Jamie McConnell* and *Marla Clemmons* are in Gatlinburg this weekend for Curtis' and Jamie's wedding.

# Gospel POWER

is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.

## Schedule of Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes ..... 9:45 a.m.

Morning Worship ..... 10:45 a.m.

Evening Worship ..... 6:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes ..... 7:00 p.m.

## Anderson church Home Page

Anderson-church.org

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