

Humanity was made for glory. We were created in the image of God, disparate and distinct from every other creature in heaven and on earth to reflect the honor of God back to Him and to the world around us in a glorious menagerie of provider and needy, sustainer and dependent, father and children. We were made to give God the glory He so clearly deserves and to receive praise from Him that He gives by grace. Yet, we wanted more and in our longing to be too near the burning glory we flew too close and fell from glory. We were not content with the honor that we received from the Lord as His image-bearers, we wanted the knowledge that only belonged to Him, choosing the fruit of knowledge over the fruit of life. We wanted His honor, to be honored as having his knowledge, being deceived that we ever could provide, sustain, and engender such knowledge on our own. In doing so, we lost our glory and are now enslaved to the treachery of our soul's desire for honor and the travails of Sisyphus trying to push the rock of our shame up the hill of honor and never able to achieve the glory for which we were made.

In this interaction with Pharisees trying to trap Him, Jesus again shows us with great merciful calls to repentance and the hope of such humility, that trying to seize our own honor and gain our own glory only leads to our downfall and that it is only by humbling ourselves to receive the grace of God in Himself that we find the gracious and honoring invitation of the God who calls sinners to dine with him and sit in seats of honor at his table. If one will stop trusting in his own honor and come to Christ as a desperate beggar with no legs to stand on, He finds that He is invited by the loving gracious God to the festal joy of the glory of God, to the crown of life, love, and mercy, to be called a son or daughter of God Almighty to reflect again the aweful glory of God to all creatures as the sinner who was shown such great grace. In the words of George Herbert: "Humble we must be, if to heaven we go; High the roof is there, but the gate is low."

1. Self-Honor Compares and Defends Itself to Others (vv1-6)

a. The Soul is Manipulative to Honor Itself

i. Prominent Pharisee invites him over

1. "certain ruler"

2. It is unclear the exact position this Pharisee held, but it is clear that he was one of high position, respect, and honor within the Pharisee sect

ii. Jesus is invited in order to be "watched closely"

1. "watching him closely"

a. same word in Psalm 36:12-13; 129:3

b. "marking iniquities" - "plots against"

2. In wanting to prove their own worthiness (honor), they seek to rob Jesus of his

a. Self-honor is always manipulating to elevate its own perceived goodness and to reveal another's perceived failures

i. We like to talk about our successes, but never our failures

ii. We like to talk about others' failures (gossip), but not successes

iii. We especially like to see those more "honored", recognized by others, fall

1. This is the reason gossip magazines exist

2. It is also the reason that comments have to be disabled on many blogs

b. So, the Pharisees set a trap to show how wrong Jesus is and to show how right they are

i. There just happened to be a man with "dropsy" invited as well!!

ii. How coincidental on the Sabbath! (Sarcasm)

b. The Soul busies itself to build its honor by (1) comparing and (2) defending.

i. We lack compassion because our soul is comparing itself with superiority over another. We look down on them and treat them as lower than us, even puffing ourselves up if we help them and appear kind (Galatians 6:1, 14-15).

1. C.S. Lewis: "Pride is something that is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure in having something, only in having more of it than the next person. You may think you're proud of being successful, intelligent, good-looking, but you really aren't. You're only proud of being more successful, more intelligent, more good-looking than other people and when you are in the presence of other people who are much more successful, intelligent, or good-looking than you, you lose all pleasure in what you had. Because

you never really had pleasure in it, you were proud of it. Pride is the pleasure of having more of it than the next person. Pride is the pleasure of being more than the next person.”

2. When our soul rests in the propriety of God’s giving of honor, we see people not as tools to be manipulated for our reputation, but as God’s image-bearers to be pointed to Jesus for the fullness of life.
 - a. Test: Gossip, Boasting, Demeaning Talk, Harshly Critical spirit, talking about your success in the midst of another’s success
3. Being Christ-adequate rejoices in other people’s successes because you have pleasure in the success itself. Gospel adequacy never says “I told you so,” or “I thought of that first.” It simply rejoices in the success. It’s not about the competition. It’s not about your role in another’s success, either. It’s about the success itself, the other person herself.
- ii. We lack forgiveness with each other because our honor has been hurt and we must defend it. We don’t forgive each other because we must defend our verdict of righteous, good, acceptable.
 1. We are presumptuous and assume that we are good, not merely good but that we are better, that we are more important than another. That we are right and we’re going to let the person who has sinned against us, or provoked us, know that we are worthy of honor for being right!
 - a. Test: Irritability, Complaining, Gossip, Critical Spirit, Expecting people to make retribution for their sin against you (unforgiveness), etc.
 2. We’re still trying to present evidence to everyone (including ourselves) to defend that ultimate verdict that we are adequate in ourselves, good enough, acceptable, honorable, because *we* have performed successfully. We are operating out of our ego’s desire to honor itself.
- c. The Self-Honoring Soul Doesn’t Repent of Its Sin, but Ignores the Truth
 - i. Jesus sees the man, not his own honor
 1. They set the trap for him, and he gladly and knowingly steps into it for the sake of the man
 - a. Jesus knows their thoughts – In fact, Luke says, “Jesus answered…” even though none of them had spoken.
 2. He could have protected people’s views of him, his honor, his reputation, the respect of the important people
 3. **He trusts in the honor that comes from God, and so does not need to honor himself nor receive the honor of others**
 - ii. He reveals their sin to move them to repentance
 1. The Mosaic Law does not forbid healing on the Sabbath, but their rabbinic traditions do forbid it
 2. So, if they answer "yes" it is forbidden, then they know that he will want to know where Moses wrote that
 3. Yet, if they answer "no" then they would be claiming that everything that they build their honor upon was wrong
 - iii. Rather than come undone and admit their sin, they remain silent
- d. Unrepentance is a Sign of a Very Hardened Heart
 - i. There is a suffering man before them and the opportunity to see him made whole
 - ii. Don’t forget this man in the midst of this confrontation here! This son of Adam, the image of God, is precious to God and to Jesus, and the Pharisees are using him like a tool to trap Jesus.
 1. They are not honoring him as a beloved creation of God, but shaming him.
 - a. They are using him in front of everyone for their own purposes
 - i. Self-honor is so overly worried about itself that it cannot love others well
 - ii. It is anxious, fearful, angry, bitter, manipulative, self-protective
 - b. Even though they would work to make their livestock whole if one was in danger, and certainly their own child, they did not care about this man!
 2. But Jesus sees Him, loves Him, desires to make Him whole, even if it means walking into a trap that will lead to His own death.

iii. Their silence in the face of this man gets Jesus pretty warmed up to really start offending people

2. The Soul Attempts to Seize Honor for Itself (vv7-14)

a. Self-Honor Scrambles for Recognition

- i. As people arrived for dinner, they chose the places nearest the head of the table, near the host, places of honor and adulation (“I deserve this place”)
- ii. They wanted to be seen by others as important, near to the most honored guest at the head of the table
 1. So, they scrambled to take the places of honor
 2. Trying to prove their worthiness, be recognized as worthy and acceptable

b. True Honor is Only Bestowed Upon You by the Most Honorable Person

- i. Wedding feast – the Host (usually father) was the most honored person
- ii. if you choose an honorable place, but someone given more honor by the host arrives, you will be asked to move to the lowest place (because all the in-between places have been taken) and you will be humiliated
- iii. But if you choose the lowest place, the only way to go is up in honor, if your host should invite you closer and give to you a place of higher honor, you will not be humiliated
- iv. Everyone who exalts himself will be humiliated, but everyone who humbles himself will be honored
 1. The key difference is what you seize for yourself in comparison to what is bestowed upon you by another, particularly the most honored one at the feast.

c. True Honor Cannot Be Seized, but is Bestowed by a Greater Person

- i. You cannot even trust in your own self-affirmation, for the very honor which you seek must come from one with inherent honor, and your soul knows you very well
- ii. How do we do this?
 1. “I am honorable because I am beautiful, strong, and attractive.”
 - a. How do you feel when somebody more beautiful or attractive is present?
 2. “I am honorable because I am wise, knowledgeable, and intellectual.”
 - a. How do you feel around those more wise, knowledgeable, or intellectual?
 3. “I am honorable because I am such a good parent.”
 - a. How do you feel when your kids lose it or a teacher points out your child’s inappropriate behavior?
 4. Self-honor can only be humiliated, it can only be disproven, never lifted up and exalted
 - a. In each of these cases, humiliation leads to shame, the opposite of honor
 - b. Jesus’ point is that when you are humble, the only thing that can be bestowed is either the revelation of truth (you are where you are supposed to be) or the invitation to greater honor from someone more honorable

d. The Only Honor That Matters Comes From God

- i. Don’t merely honor those who can bring you honor in return, using people as tools for your own glory
- ii. Rather, honor those who only bring you shame and cannot gain you glory in the eyes of men
- iii. Your honor will be given by God in the resurrection of the righteous.
 1. This is not a condition, but a promise
 2. It is the reason for bestowing honor on those who cannot honor you in return
 - a. That is: “Because you will be given honor in the resurrection of the righteous, give away this world’s honor”
 3. When we believe that we will receive God’s affirmation by grace through His Son, then why do we need to manipulate our honor now?
 - a. Frankly, which honor is of greater quality?

3. God Gives Honor to Those Who Come at His Invitation (vv15-24)

a. A Pharisee brings up the Kingdom of God and blessing

- i. Jesus gives him another opportunity to repent with a parable

- b. God Honors by Grace, Not Performance
 - i. You don't earn an invitation, it is given of His own choice
- c. Many RSVP to the Invitation
 - i. The original invitees accepted the invitation in word, yet refused to come when the Servant came calling
 - ii. Words are cheap – Mere professions of faith are worthless
 - iii. Faith acts – the following of the Servant to the feast is more important than an affirmative answer to the invitation
- d. Those who consider their own honor and works as more valuable than being invited by the Most Honorable One will not have a seat at the table
 - i. The original RSVP's took honor in the invitation, not the actual presence of the King
 - 1. This shows that their desire was not in the Host himself, but rather in the self-honor that they received
 - 2. They loved the adulation more than the Person
 - ii. Thus, thought they professed to come, they refused to listen to the Servant, believing that other things were more important than the actual feast of the King
 - 1. The Servant is Christ Jesus!
 - a. But the self-honoring people considered their own attempts at honor to be more valuable than the honor bestowed by coming to the Servant
 - 2. Wealth/Land – “My wealth makes me feel important and that is enough.”
 - 3. Business/Oxen – “My business reputation makes me feel important and that is enough.”
 - 4. Spouse/Family – “My wife makes me feel important and that is enough.”
- e. Therefore, the man invites those who have no honor for themselves
 - i. Regressive order of neediness:
 - 1. The poor - powerless in society
 - 2. The crippled - have to limp around slowly
 - 3. The blind - have to be led by others
 - 4. The lame - have to be carried by others
 - ii. These are the categories of the needy among the Jewish people
 - 1. Thus, Jesus is showing that God has elected the weak amongst the Jews of his day
 - a. It is not as if no Jews trusted in Jesus, but rather that only those who didn't rely upon their power or sought their own honor
 - b. It is the repentant, weak, powerless, outsiders of power that come to Jesus for absolute Rescue
 - c. They view the invitation with joy and come to the feast with the Servant
 - 2. The man invites the powerless, the incapable, the weak, the ignoble, the outcasts, the outsider, the fringe people, those not allowed in the Temple due to their infirmities and brokenness
 - iii. When they don't fill the house, he goes to the foreigners! The Gentiles!
 - iv. All of this is a judgment upon Israel, like the previous pericope: Jerusalem should have looked forward to His banquet "eating bread in the Kingdom of God" saying "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", yet they were looking to trap the King and kill the King!!
 - 1. Because of their rejection God is bringing into His Kingdom, with the patriarchs and prophets, to dine at His table, the weak, the ignoble, the outsiders, the incapable, the broken, the weary, the powerless, those far-off without God (Eph 2:13,17) to be His people
 - 2. This was not a new thing, but the judgment was unexpected by the Jewish people and Jesus' words are a harsh condemnation of their rejection of Him and of their great shame bestowed upon them by God and great honor given to the weak and the powerless and the far-off outsiders.
- f. It is those who know their unworthiness and come at the gracious call that find great honor from the Lord
 - i. It is in our powerlessness that the grace of God is made so clearly evident
 - ii. Joy belongs to those who know that they were far off and have been brought in by the blood of Jesus!

1. Those who know God's grace towards "Me, the sinner" don't clamor for honor, but find great joy in the presence of God Himself
2. The seat at the table is an honor deeply undeserved and gratitude explodes in worship.

How Shall We Respond? 1 Corinthians 4:3-5

Every day we are living our lives in a courtroom, trying to prove our importance, with everything that we think, feel, or do either being admitted for the prosecution or the defense. Some days you feel like you're winning the trial and some days you feel like you're losing the trial and are buffeted by fears and tossed about with the anxious awaiting of the verdict. Paul found the secret that Jesus taught in these parables. He is no longer in the courtroom. He doesn't have to prove that he is honorable, presenting exhibits to convince the judge to honor him, and only the honor of the Lord counts. How is this possible? We are out of the courtroom because Jesus Christ went into the courtroom. He became the Servant, the Lamb, the sacrifice, the substitute in our place and bore our shame and gave us His verdict honorable. He bore the verdict that we deserved and gave us His. So now, for the believer in Jesus Christ, we receive the praise that comes from God it comes *before* any honorable performance that we could present (Romans 8:1). We perform knowing that the honor is given by invitation, not performance. We can now perform without fear and with humility.

You see, it is only the Gospel of sheer grace that brings true humility which chooses the lowest seat gladly. It is the Gospel that sets us free from our overly sensitive voracious honor-seeking egos and alleviates our comparing and defending with God and with each other. Now when God looks at you he sees one whom he loves and values and has chosen to honor. How can you worry about being snubbed now? How can you worry about how you're treated by others now? Where is the power of fear? It is gone. It has been cast out by perfect love, His perfect love. It is only Jesus who makes us confidently inadequate and humbly courageous.

Humbly inadequate because our value, worth, and significance is based upon Christ's sacrifice and His grace, not upon what we have done or who we are (There is no room for boasting, except in Christ.)

Boldly courageous because we have nothing to fear from losing reputation or honor in anyone's eyes (I'm a son of God), losing our lives (I am a citizen of Heaven), or losing God's love or His verdict (My redemption is not based upon my weak performance. I am acceptable to Him, justified completely based upon Jesus Christ's merit and sacrifice).

Only as the Lord works out His miraculous and powerful work within our souls by His Holy Spirit are we able to love like Him and be purified as He is pure. The work of the Spirit is the work of bold humility among His people. Spiritual maturity in Christ is not merely a question of one being moral or immoral, it is rather the question of one being humble or proud. Every sin with which we struggle comes from the sinful fountain of self-honor and works itself out as competition or defensiveness, trying to prove our worthiness in life and even in our Christian ministry. Jesus, though He was the perfect one, the only truly honorable one, was completely humble. Though he was always right, he was humble, gentle, patient, and endured great duress for us, even bearing the wrath of His Father. You see, ultimately, to seek your own honor is not merely to be anti-God, it is to be completely unlike God.

Let us see that we walk in-line with the truth of the Gospel to which we have been called. Make it a point to closely examine the severity and the depth of the sin within you, your will to power and self-honor. Let the HS work His power of conviction and the reminder of His radical gracious love within your heart. This is what repentance means, from confession to utter dependence. We do not deserve anymore blessing than Satan Himself. God set His love upon you because He chose to honor you as His own.

We are called by His grace, saved by His grace, adopted by His grace, loved by His grace, made heirs by His grace, and glorified by His grace. Walk like ones who don't deserve the honor, who are inadequate to perform the good, yet have been imputed the honor of Christ Jesus, adopted by God, and given these wondrous riches. Walk in bold humility and serve each other and the world around you with confident inadequacy, for God is at work through His Spirit. Walk with Jesus, love Him, see Him, worship Him, and boast in Him and His love to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to purify your hearts and the desires that well up within you. When you come to God through Christ Jesus, you come at His invitation. You do not have to convince Him of your worthiness, but you come because He desires you

there. He works to bestow honor on you at his table, so much so that he sent his servant, his Son, to bring you in at his own expense. He calls you in, and it is by His Spirit that your eyes are opened and your heart enlivened to follow Christ. It is His work. Take heart as you struggle against self-honor knowing this: He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power of His Holy Spirit working within us. And to Him be the glory in our lives, in our relationships, in our ministry, in Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen.