
BOASTERS AND LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVER OF GOD

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BOASTING

Boasting is a common human behavior, but in the Bible, its considered a serious offense. Scripture warns against boasting because it can lead to pride, arrogance, and an inflated sense of self-importance.

Bragging and boasting about self is not a wise practice. In fact, it is a forbidden practice in Scriptures. It is better to let someone else bestow honor upon you. The wise writer stated: *“Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27:2)*. There are a few instances found in God’s Word wherein individuals are bragged upon. If our readers do not like the word “bragged,” we might substitute the word ‘complimented’ instead.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF BOASTING

1. **Nebuchadnezzar:** In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar boasted about his power and achievements, leading to his humiliation and madness.
2. **Pharaoh:** In Exodus 5, Pharaoh boasted that he did not know the

Lord and refused to let the Israelites go. As a result, Egypt was plagued with disasters.

3. **David's enemies:** In Psalm 4, David speaks of his enemies who boast against him. He prays for God's protection and warns that their boasting will turn to shame.

There is one type of individual who is bragged on more than any other. These are the “givers” found in the Bible. Let’s look at several instances where high compliments are paid to those who gave.

THE FIRST EXAMPLE took place in the life of our Lord. On this occasion, Jesus was present in the temple. His discerning eye was watching as various individuals were casting into the treasury. One soul stood out above all the others. Jesus was so impressed that He called attention to her to His disciples.

Mark records the incident for us. *“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two*

mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mark 12:41-44).

Most people are impressed with individuals who contribute large dollar amounts to the coffers. That day “many that were rich cast in much.” Jesus, however, was not impressed. What stood out to Him was a poor widow who cast in two mites. Jesus said that she “cast more in” than all those wealthy individuals.

The reason is because she had given all. The rich had much to give. Even after they gave, they still had much left. Not so with the widow. She gave all, “*even all her living.*” It is interesting that Jesus pays attention to the amount given in relation to what one has. Often those who give a small amount have given more in terms of the percentage that was given.

A man who has a million dollars may contribute a thousand dollars to the treasury. The amount seems like much. Another may only contribute twenty dollars. This amount seems like so little. It may be that the person who gave twenty dollars gave more than the man who gave a thousand. Why? What if the man who gave twenty dollars only had fifty dollars to his name? His percentage was much more than the man who gave a thousand dollars. Man usually

dismisses the small donor. Jesus does not. Deity acknowledges these people as the ones who often give the most.

A second example of givers who were bragged on is the Macedonians. The apostle Paul expressed a need to many of the Gentile churches. It involved relief to be given to the hurting saints in Judea, Christians who were suffering due to a famine in the land. Many churches responded to Paul’s cry. The Macedonians, however, stood out as an example to all. ***II Corinthians 8:1-5.***

The Macedonians themselves were suffering “*a great trial of affliction.*” This affliction had brought many of them into a state of poverty. The second thing that we honor is their willingness to give and give liberally. Paul affirms that they gave “beyond their power.” It appears to have been so abundant that Paul did not want to accept it. He did so only after “much entreaty” from the Macedonians.

A third thing that causes us to admire these generous givers is their motivation. The reason they were so liberal is because they “first gave their own selves to the Lord.” These individuals were genuine followers of God. They were true through and through. Their love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ caused them to have a heart of compassion and a generous pocketbook. A third group of givers that were appreciated and bragged on were the Philippians. This church was extremely generous to the apostle Paul. They helped him on his missionary journeys several times. In his letter to them, Paul praises them

and gives thanks for them. (**Phil. 1:3-5**). One of the purposes of the Philippian epistle involved Paul's acknowledgement and thanks for a generous gift he had received from the Philippians by the hands of Epaphroditus.

THE DANGERS OF BOASTING

- It separates us from God:
- When we boast, we elevate ourselves above God and others. This creates a barrier between us and our Creator and hinders our relationship with Him.
- It offends God:
- Boasting is an affront to God's authority and sovereignty. It suggests that we are responsible for our accomplishments rather than God, who gives us all that we have.

HOW TO AVOID BOASTING

- Remember God's sovereignty:
- Acknowledge that all our blessings come from God and give Him the glory for our accomplishments.
- Cultivate humility:
- Recognize our own limitations and the need for God's grace in our lives.
- Focus on others: Instead of boasting about ourselves, focus on helping and encouraging others.
- Trust in God:
- Believe that God will provide for our needs and protect us from harm. This will help us resist the temptation to boast.
- Boasting is a dangerous sin that can have serious consequences.

By recognizing its dangers and following the principles outlined in Scripture, we can avoid the pitfalls of boasting and live lives that are pleasing to God.

It can seem a little heavy when we're reading Paul's list of characteristics of society in the last days, especially when the Greek words he used in that text are expounded on and looked at more deeply, as we are doing in these series of Sparkling Gems. But one thing is sure: The Holy Spirit did not inform us of these details so we would be worried or afraid and hide from the world. He forewarned us of these things in advance so we could spiritually reinforce ourselves to live victoriously and free until Jesus returns!

The Holy Spirit considers it important for us to know these things in advance, or He wouldn't have dedicated so much time and space to this subject. That's why we must give heed to His words and study them out fully so we can grasp their meanings to the greatest extent possible.

As Paul continued to bring illumination regarding events that will occur in society in the last days, he next wrote that people will become "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*"

The words "lovers of pleasure" are a translation of the Greek word **PHILODONOS**, which is a compound of two words, **PHILEO** and **HEDONOS**. The first word, **phileo**, is a well-known word that conveys the ideas of affection and love. It can denote an affection so deep that it even

embraces the idea of romance and is from the same root word that means a romantic one.

Frequently in the Greek language, the word *phileo* is compounded with other words to form new meanings, as it is with the word *philodinos*. The following are examples:

PHILADELPHOS: You may recognize this word because it is where we get the name of the great city of Philadelphia on the east coast of the United States. It is actually a New Testament word that is a compound of the words *phileo* and *adelphos*.

THE WORD **PHILEO** means to deeply, profoundly, and affectionately love, while the word *adelphos* is the Greek word for a brother. When compounded, they form the word *philadelphos*, which means brotherly love.

PHILOSOPHIA: The word *philosophia* is a compound of the words *phileo* and *sophos*. As noted, the word *phileo* means to love or to have a deep, profound affection. The word *sophos* is the word for wisdom. When these two words are compounded, they form the word *philosophia*.

PHILOXENOS: The word *philoxenos* is a compound of the words *phileo* and *xenos*. The second part of this word is *xenos*, which is the ancient Greek word for a stranger or foreigner. When the words *phileo* and *xenos* are compounded, they form the word *philoxenia*, a word that expresses the idea of a person who

has a special love for strangers or love for foreigners.

PHILOSTORGOS: The second part of this word is *storgos* — the Greek word for a commitment or devotion to one's family. When the words *phileo* and *storgos* are compounded, the new word depicts a person who has a deep affection and sense of commitment for his family.

PHILANTHROPIA: In this word, the word *phileo* is compounded with the word *anthropos*, the word for mankind or humankind. The word *anthropos* is where we get the word *anthropology* or an *anthropologist*. But when the Greek word *phileo* is compounded with the word *anthropos*, it depicts a love for humanity.

From this, we get the word *philanthropist*, which describes a wealthy person who generously gives his resources or money for the betterment of humanity. **Philarguria:** Here we see the word *phileo* compounded with the word *arguria*. The word *arguria* is the old word for silver or money. When *arguria* is compounded with *phileo*, the new word *philarguria* depicts a love of silver or an affection and love of money.

In Second **Timothy 3:4**, Paul compounded the word **HEDONOS** with the word *phileo* to tell us people in the last days will become "*LOVERS OF PLEASURE.*" Because the word *phileo* means to have a deep, profound love and can convey the notion of a romantic preoccupation,

this emphatically forecasts that people in the last days will be preoccupied with and in love with the pleasure and the pursuit of happiness. But let's look deeper at the word HEDONOS to get the full picture!

The word **HEDONOS** is only used five times in the New Testament, and each time, it conjures up the picture of people completely preoccupied with pleasure and who live for the gratification of their flesh and their own personal happiness. The English Dictionary says "hedonism" is the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good; addiction to and obsession for pleasure as a way of life.

Paul used the Greek word **philodonos** to say that society in the last days will become "lovers of pleasure" or that they will become preoccupied and obsessed with the pursuit of their own comfort, pleasure, and happiness. The truth is, there has never been a generation in history with more material goods or comfort than this present generation.

Yet despite this glut of goods and pursuit of pleasure, the worldwide happiness index is the lowest on record, especially in the industrialized world where material goods abound. It is very clear that self-centred living does not produce happiness. In fact, the highest rating on the happiness index is in developing Third World nations where goods are scarcer, but where commitment to "one's personal faith" is higher.

Paul used the word **PHILODONOS** — which means "lovers of pleasure" he was emphatically declaring that people in the last days will be obsessed with pleasure.

It is unfortunate that even Christians are often obsessed with comfort and pleasure to such an extent that they don't want to be asked to do anything that would inconvenience them. Here's the bottom line: God is more concerned about your obedience than He is about your happiness.

A doctrine has permeated the Church in recent years that says God wants them to be happy above all else. Such teaching ignores the fact that the Gospel frequently calls for us to die to ourselves, to deny ourselves, and to even pick up our cross and carry it (see **Luke 9:23**). Obeying this call of God to pick up our cross and carry it means that we will often be required to take the road of sacrifice — to humble ourselves and even lay down our "rights" for the sake of others.

This is ultimately a doctrine of selfishness that justifies self-focus and non-service. Yet if we obey the demands put forth by the Gospel, these demands will make our flesh suffer — for in order for us to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, it will necessitate that we mortify the deeds and demands of the flesh.

Paul's words in Second Timothy 3:4, the pursuit of "happiness" will become the chief goal of people at the end of this age. Of course, God wants us to be satisfied in life, but that which Paul wrote about in this verse is far beyond

that. It was a prophetic declaration that people in the last days will become completely consumed with themselves and that their own happiness will drive them to unequalled selfishness.

Second Timothy 3:4 says this love of pleasure will even supersede love for God. No one would ever claim to love pleasure more than God, but as my mother told me when I was growing up, a person's actions speak louder than his words. A person's actions always reveal the truth about what he or she loves most. This verse tells us that love of pleasure will become so widespread that people will be more devoted to their own pleasure and pursuit of happiness than they are in love with God.

In context, this means people will be excessive lovers of pleasure — much, much more than they are lovers of God. In fact, their desire for their own pleasure will be so great that it will far surpass their devotion, respect, and service to God. In the last days, people's thinking will not be ruled by what is morally right or morally wrong or what is pleasing or displeasing to God, but by the question: How will this decision or action affect my own personal comfort, pleasure, or happiness?

God is not against our being blessed or enjoying nice possessions, as long as we hold them in our hands and don't allow them into our hearts. But when the acquisition of possessions becomes an obsession and takes first place in our lives, thereby affecting our obedience to God and His Word, it

is wrong. In fact, it has become a form of idolatry. We have crossed a line that is a serious violation in the eyes of God. Jesus said that at the end of the age, people would be preoccupied with buying, selling, etc. This will be the condition of the unbelievers in the last days, but it does not have to be our condition. Especially as we draw near to the coming of Jesus, we must do everything we can to guard our hearts and keep them free from selfishness and greed. We must focus on Jesus and keep our priorities aligned with His Word.

1. BEING A LOVER OF PLEASURE IS IN CONTRAST TO BEING A LOVER OF GOD

If you are a lover of pleasure, you can't be a lover of God and vice versa. You can only serve one master (**Mt. 6:24**). Devotion to God requires denying yourself every sinful pleasure and also denying yourself many pleasures that are not sinful, but which can never take priority over following Christ.

2. NOTICE THAT THOSE WHO ARE LOVERS OF PLEASURE HOLD TO A FORM OF GODLINESS.

This means they are religious. They may even be in the church. They may read their Bibles, serve, give, but at a heart level, they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They have a "form" of godliness, but it is a shame, a mere pretense, a fake.

3. BECAUSE THEY LOVE PLEASURE RATHER THAN GOD, THEY DON'T REALLY KNOW GOD IN A SAVING WAY

Paul says they have denied the true power of godliness which comes from repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, they are religious, but they have not repented of the god of pleasure to believe in and receive Jesus Christ. Therefore, they do not have the Holy Spirit. The power of the gospel has not accomplished its transforming work in them. They live for the god of pleasure while they go through the motions of their pseudo-Christianity.

4. **TRUE BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS ARE THEN EXHORTED TO “AVOID SUCH MEN AS THESE”**

Surely this applies to anyone who is enslaved to any of the vices mentioned in vss. 1-9. Yet it also applies to those who are “lovers of pleasure rather than a lover of God.” We are to avoid religious people who are lovers of pleasure lest we get caught up in their worldly mind set.

Consider with me how the love of pleasure is affecting the church. The majority of people who profess to be Christians do not want to seriously commit themselves to the local church. Many will get up early to go to work, but not an early church service. They don’t arrive late to work, but they arrive late to church. They love the pleasure of staying up late and sleeping in more than the assembly of believers. Many don’t want a Sunday evening service because they want to have “family time,” which for most means flopping down in front of the TV.

They desire the pleasure of entertainment more than the

assembly of the saints. For them, Sunday is not the Lord’s Day, it is the Lord’s hour and a half. Many don’t want to go to church service because they want to get church over with quickly as possible so they can play on Sunday. They are more excited about their hobbies and after church activities than they are about being with the church, hearing the Word of God preached, serving, and fellowshiping with the saints. Many won’t get up faithfully to pray, read, and study their Bibles. Yes, they want to read their Bibles, but they love the pleasure of staying up late watching TV, playing video games, or surfing the internet more than they love getting up and spending time with the Lord. Spending time with the Lord is convicting, takes discipline, and they would rather have pleasure and ease.

Many can’t find the time to read good biblically edifying books. “*I am not a reader*” they say. Well, it is true that some people are not readers, but the reason most aren’t readers is that they don’t read.

Many won’t discipline themselves to listen to good sermons, teaching, audio books, or other edifying audio material. There is so much great Bible teaching available now on the internet that you can listen to when you are doing chores, cleaning the garage, going for a walk, driving in your car, etc. But many love the pleasure of secular music and secular talk radio far more than they love the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

Many do not like to pray. Yes, they pray in emergencies and pray along

during a church service, but ask them to show up to pray with the saints for an hour one day during the week, and anything else seems more pleasurable than praying. Many never study their

Bibles in preparation for a mid-week Bible study. Some will attend, but don't expect them to read, study, and prepare beforehand.

CONCLUSION

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