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BOILS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

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One of the greatest enemies of our soul is our self-righteousness. Believe it or not, for many believers and unbelievers it is disastrous, because it often blinds us and prevents the manifestation of God's work of grace in our lives.

Everyday we recognize people's self-righteousness all around us. Usually people praise themselves and prove themselves to be self-righteous saying, "I am not like that man in government. I am a better man than my neighbor. I have better principles than my co-worker. Look at the good things I am doing, look at how my children are better than that man's. I sacrifice more than anyone." With these kinds of statements often people try to lift themselves up above others attempting to prove that they are better and how others often need to change. They don't mention God, as they often praise themselves as good people full of righteousness and truth!

That self-righteousness blinds the world; and with God's children it is even harder. Some Christians often get caught in the trap of self-righteousness, which not only imprisons them in their growth and walk with God, it sometimes separates them from God in a way they are not even aware. Actually, self-righteousness often "attacks" believers who wish to truly serve God and do His will. Sometimes in this sincere devotion one can end up in self-righteousness that blinds them so much so that they lose understanding and the work of God's grace and bring on themselves harmful consequences that cripple their walk with the Lord.

Jonathan Edwards once said in relation to self-righteousness, "If we have any reason to trust in our own righteousness, then all that Christ did to save us and all that God has prepared in comparison with it is empty." [Paraphrase]

★ **One of the greatest enemies of our soul is our self-righteousness.**



Self-righteousness is a great danger to our soul, because if we are not careful it can diminish God's grace and Christ's work in us. Unfortunately, in my pastoral call, ministry, and counseling I have found it very difficult to counsel a self-righteous person because often they, while sincerely wanting to serve God with their whole heart, at times cannot hear counsel often because of their own self-righteousness. Consequently, this person often brings on their own head many harmful consequences that are sometimes crippling in the long-term and even dangerous to their soul.

Believe it or not, one of the most well-known biblical examples of self-righteousness is Job. I believe that God has shown me that one of the reasons for his trials was his own self-righteousness.

In Job 1:1 we read that Job was a blameless and righteous man. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."

It says about Job that he was "blameless and upright". The reason for this kind of godly lifestyle was that he "feared God and shunned evil". He was in awe of God; he was obedient and did His will. He didn't easily allow sin into his life and the life of his family. He successfully fought against trials and didn't give in. He really tried to please God in all aspects of his life; God even praised Job and thought well of him when he said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that [there is] none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8)

If Job were among us today he would be one of the best examples of a godly, righteous, and devout

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believer who desires to serve and please God with his whole being. This in itself is a good thing. It is good to be devout and love the Lord, to serve Him with all that we have, to give of our time, life, gifts, and possessions. But one thing we must not forget is that in our devotion and service that we not become self-righteous because it can lead us to disastrous consequences that unfortunately can be dangerous for our life and the lives of others around us.

We cannot stand before God and praise ourselves or be proud of our own righteousness and good works thinking that by this we have special partiality from God or that we no longer need to rely on God's grace. While it is good to do good deeds, we do not have a foundation for this. The Word clearly confirms, "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12)

With this the Apostle Paul did not want to belittle our good deeds or hinder our devotion, but he wanted to point out to believers that despite good works there is no one in this world who is blameless, who does not need God, or has special favoritism. The truth is that in God's eyes every person is worthy of His love because we are made in His image, but no one is righteous, which actually means that no one can stand before God and pride himself for his righteousness. Because, though we are worthy in His eyes, and although He gave us his only begotten Son to die for us, we are sinners – there is no one who is blameless.

I believe that Job knew this fact, but in some way became blind. I personally believe that while his trouble was shown as a trial, it wasn't given to us just to point out that God's children sometimes go through hard times, rather it showed God's purpose for trouble, namely reproof toward all who become proud because of their self-righteousness.

Job had something to be proud of. Because of his blameless life and all his great blessings that he received from God, I believe he became excessively proud and self-righteous. Because of His great love toward Job who was blinded to this, God decided to help remove his self-righteousness in the way he most often does, by fatherly reproof. This is why the writer of Hebrews said, “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” (Hebrews 12:6) Actually, the story of Job is a story of God’s fatherly reproof that overcomes self-righteousness and places man back into right relationship and understanding of God’s grace in order for God’s Word to truly manifest.

In the beginning we read that Job was powerfully blessed by God. The Word tells us that he had “seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. And his sons would go and feast [in their] houses, each on his [appointed] day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly.” (Job 1:3-5)

Therefore, if Job lived among us today, we could say that he was a very successful and blessed entrepreneur, a good father and husband, an excellent believer who desired to serve God in purity and righteousness; that he was filled with the fear of God and watched and prayed over his home. He was an example of a godly and faithful Christian, the kind every pastor would like to have in his church.

Yet, self-righteousness can find its footing in those who seek to please God; because in all of us exists a very dangerous tendency to think that we deserve the many blessings in our life because of our good

works, namely our goodness and devotion. This kind of thinking runs contrary to God’s righteousness.

I believe that because of all these powerful blessings, his blameless and righteous works, that Job became very proud. Yet, because God loved him, he reproved his pride and arrogance and for a short time took all he had. We know that he lost everything he possessed; God even allowed Satan to touch his body. The Word said that he hit Job with painful boils, “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” (Job 2:7). In Job 2:8-10 we read on that, “he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

If we were to stop right here at Job’s statement and not read on we would say, “Good for him! What a man! He is so righteous, stable, secure, and the embodiment of God’s servant!” Actually, with surety we can say that Job was really a blameless man of God, but regardless of that he had one blind spot that could completely destroy him, and that was his self-righteousness. As we further investigate from the second to the thirty-second chapter we read futile counsel from his friends; only in chapter thirty-two do we find the true counsel of Elihu who, as a true disciplinarian, said to Job, “This happened because you have sinned!”

✦ **If Job were among us today he would be on of the best examples of a godly, righteous, and devout believer who desires to serve and please God with his whole being. This in itself is a good thing.**



1. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE PRIDE THAT BLINDS US AND GOD'S FATHERLY REPROOF ON US.

Despite all that happened; despite all the counsel of his friends, Job was blinded by his self-righteousness and continued considering himself blameless. "So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." (Job 32:1)

If we read the previous chapters we will find that in nearly every chapter Job praised his own righteousness and good works. For example, "When the ear heard, then it blessed me, And when the eye saw, then it approved me; Because I delivered the poor who cried out, The fatherless and [the one who] had no helper. The blessing of a perishing [man] came upon me, And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice [was] like a robe and a turban." (Job 29:11-14)

Job was so proud of his own righteous works that he could not understand why all this happened to him. Self-righteousness and pride completely blinded him. Rather than staying in the attitude of his former statement in the beginning, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21), he became bitter and self-righteous and began to recount his own righteous deeds and vows, which according to his

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opinion; because of them he should not be found in the condition in which he was. In fact, it seems as if he even complains about God when he says, "I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You regard me. [But] You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me. You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride [on] [it]; You spoil my success." (Job 30:20-22)

What he wasn't aware of at that time was that God actually brought him to that place because He loved him and wanted to remove the pride and self-righteousness in his heart. His self-righteousness brought him to God's fatherly reproof needed to awaken him.

So, when something like this happens, let us not resist God in our self-righteousness and, become bitter toward him, or declare, "I don't know how this could have happened to me; I am a good and devout Christian; I give good counsel, love the truth, do what I ought, and serve my family, society and church." We must simply accept God's fatherly reproof with which he wishes to awaken us and bring us back to Himself and His grace.

Self-righteous believers are often quick in giving a testimony of their own righteousness and good works, yet, like Job, they often become defensive when someone tries to teach them something or offer counsel. If you try to reprove them in love they have hundreds of examples to prove that they are righteous in every situation.

And so then what happens? Their attitudes blind them as their self-righteousness leads them to God's reproof. We must be aware that if we do not confess our sin of pride and self-righteousness we will have to face God's reproof. God will not share His glory with another.

If we do not give him praise for all that we are and will become by His grace I believe that we will be given boils of self-righteousness. All we have taken pleasure in will be taken from us, we will be blind because of our self-righteousness, and will be led

to destruction. Worst of all is that the entire time we will argue with God and say, as Jerusalem did in Jeremiah's time, "I am innocent, Surely His anger shall turn from me." And God will answer, "Behold, I will plead My case against you, Because you say, 'I have not sinned.'" (Jeremiah 2:35)

2. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL CAUSE US TO CONSTANTLY COMPARE OURSELVES WITH OTHERS.

Many believers, who consider themselves better than others, more devout, or even perhaps blameless, often compare themselves with others in their walk with God. Often they say to themselves, "See how I am better than that brother or sister in this or that thing. They tend to run late, I do not run late. I pray out loud, they don't pray. I work hard, yet they do not. I give God more than other people. I am a serious person while that sister is very frivolous. I serve better than those people."

It is interesting that when we do this - when we exalt ourselves above others in our own eyes and consider ourselves more righteous - we feel better for a moment. This notion that is directed at some of our seemingly more righteous behavior, attitudes or positions in society leads us to the persuasion that gives us a good feeling that emotionally convinces us that we deserve even better things from God, His favor, a position or power. This feeling fills us and makes us happy; and in order to keep this feeling we compare ourselves all the more with others. We no longer trust in God's righteousness and grace, rather we begin to rely on our own righteousness and comfort ourselves by thinking that we are in a better position than others. Here is where we truly err, because the Word clearly tells us that it is foolishness to compare ourselves among ourselves. The apostle Paul wrote, "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12)

You see, self-righteousness leads us to the deception that we measure ourselves by our own measurement of self-righteousness and not by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we compare ourselves with Him we will note that we are proud sinners, and we will understand that we cannot stand before Him other than by His grace. We will be grateful to Him for what we are and for what He does through us by His grace, and not because of our merit and good works. Paul, in these verses, actually criticized false prophets who tried to show their own goodness by comparing themselves with others and not with God and His standards.

When we compare ourselves with others rather than comparing ourselves with God and His principles, we begin to feel proud and self-righteous because we always find a reason why we are better than others. However, when we measure ourselves against God's standards, it will be evident to us that we have no reason to take pride in our own righteousness. Do we not recognize that when we constantly measure ourselves against other's accomplishments or failures our self-righteousness will cause contempt or scorn of others because we will not consider them to be of value? This spirit brings strife, division, competition, envy, and jealousy; it causes separation among people in families, society, and churches. In reality, it is one of the disturbing spirits that does not rely on God's sovereignty and grace. The consequences of this condition toward these people are God's fatherly reproof.

✦ In God's eyes every person is worthy of His love because we are made in His image, but no one is righteous, which actually means that no one can stand before God and pride himself for his righteousness.



Apart from comparison, it will be difficult for a self-righteous person to receive godly counsel from other people, especially from the authority that God has placed in their lives.

In my pastoral ministry I have noted that self-righteous people rarely ask for counsel, and if they seek it, many already have a solution in mind, namely answers in which they glory in their righteousness and goodness for which they which a confirmation, or they are ready for a theological debate that does not build up rather it brings strife. If one perhaps wishes to rebuke this person for a specific sinful state, bad habit, or attitude they always have a reason to emphasize their own righteousness, a solution, a counterattack, or an answer for everything. But let us not forget that wise Solomon said, "All the ways of a man [are] pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits." (Proverbs 16:2)

Sometimes it is best to forsake counseling these people and to wait for God's fatherly judgment to soften them - his boils of self-righteousness - just as it softened Job. Unfortunately, sometimes this is the only way to awaken one from the trap of self-righteousness and escape God's final judgment.

Another danger of self-righteousness namely "boils" of self-righteousness, is that they become self-sufficient and create their own spiritual virtual world in which they become socially isolated from others.

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Often they will not fellowship with people for fear that they will pollute their righteousness; they feel somewhat more spiritual due to knowledge they have that, of course, only they see.

Unfortunately, because of this social isolation and weak communication, self-righteousness often leads them to wrong marriage relationships, ministries led by self-righteous preachers, and wrong life choices - because they did not want to receive counsel from those who do not live by their own self-righteous standards.

The Bible says of these people, "[There is] a generation [that is] pure in its own eyes, [Yet] is not washed from its filthiness. [There is] a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up." (Proverbs 30:12-13) They think they are pure when they are actually impure. Because of their self-righteousness and pride they cannot see their sin, pride, self-righteousness and self-sufficiency.

Not only do they not receive counsel from others, they often love to give others counsel regardless of whether or not it was sought for. The life motto of the self-righteous person is, "Find a thorn in the eye of your brother." Unfortunately, Christ's words address them when He said, "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

When one encounters a trial similar to Job's, we wrongfully extend soulish comfort and humanistic counsel that offers no help whatsoever. Actually, most often, by our sympathy, we wish to ease the consequences of their self-righteousness and wrong life decisions that have led them to this difficult condition while saying that things will be alright without the necessary changes needed. Yet, along with empathy is sometimes needed holy anger or indignation; sometime it is necessary to speak the truth, "No one is righteous before God, all are dependent upon Him. We cannot take pride in

ourselves, rather only in Him. Repent and turn from your self-righteousness and confess your sins. And do not blame God or other people for your weak spiritual state!”

In Job we read further how Elihu was exasperated because of Job’s self-righteous excuses and he simply spoke the truth saying, “Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” (Job 32:2-3)

Elihu said to Job that his present suffering would not pass if he failed to understand his present sin – self-righteousness. Let us consider closely, in the same chapter that Elihu confronted Job’s attitude of arrogance as he defended his own innocence, “I am clean without transgression, I [am] innocent; neither [is there] iniquity in me. Behold, [in] this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.” (Job 33:9, 12)

Elihu wanted to point out that the purpose of suffering is not just punishment, rather reproof and restoration so that we remain on the right path. This has always been, and still is, God’s purpose for testing – to bring us back to Himself.

There is no one today who can stand and praise himself for his righteousness and good deeds and say that he is without sin. We simply must understand and accept the fact that we can stand in God’s presence only on the foundation of His goodness, faithfulness and grace, not by our own righteousness, which in God’s eyes has no value.

This is why we must recognize God’s fatherly reproof toward us, humble ourselves, and say, “Without you I can do nothing. I do not know it all, Lord.” Draw near to Him, do not condemn Him; if we do not draw near to Him God has a way of teaching us about our paths and intentions, “He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones

with strong [pain]” “Who has assigned Him His way, Or who has said, “You have done wrong?” (Job 36:23)

3. THIS IS WHY WE MUST FIRST TRUST IN GOD’S STRENGTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT IN OUR OWN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

We cannot achieve that which only God can do – freedom from sin, bad habits, and attitudes of self-righteousness. Freedom and renewal is only possible through His righteousness and strength.

This is why God challenged Job and said, “Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself [with] majesty and splendor, And array yourself with glory and beauty. Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone [who is] proud, and humble him. Look on everyone [who is] proud, [and] bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden [darkness]. Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you.” (Job 40:9-14)

We cannot help ourselves nor can we save ourselves by our own goodness, the Word clearly says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-24) No one is righteous before Him, “Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous.” (Psalm 143:2)

This is why we need Jesus and His grace and strength; why we need to turn from our sin, temptations and struggles so that He can fight for us.

3a. Let us confess our weakness and God’s unlimited power!

Job said, “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose [of Yours] can be withheld from You.” (Job 42:2) When we confess our own powerlessness we settle our own weak self-righteousness and put our trust in God’s limitless



power! When we trust in Him we come to know Him more and understand His purposes and ways more clearly. After Job made this confession he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5)

3b. Let us repent!

Job also said, "Therefore I abhor [myself], And repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6) The Apostle John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9)

Life that is dependent on repentance, God's grace and limitless strength is true life! When I personally experienced God's grace (after three years of Christian living), His ways became clearer to me than when I had lived according to my own self-righteous rules and futile thinking that I thought had the power to change, freedom from vices, knowledge of His plans for me, and the strength to draw me closer to God. For three years I was critical and self-righteous, and all those around me, except for me, of course, were theologically wrong. I was a man void of true joy and strength because self-righteousness does that to a man, it robs his countenance of joy. Praise God that his grace helped me to arise and move forward into new strength, joy, and grace.

This is why Paul 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) When we repent and trust in God's righteousness He gives us true life, peace, clear leadership, and a greater blessing than before, which will enable us to bring forth good and quality fruit for Him. "And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Now the LORD blessed the latter [days] of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters." (Job 42:10, 12-13)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

★ **We must be aware that if we do not confess our sin of pride and self-righteousness we will have to face God's reproof. God will not share His glory with another.**

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