

It Is Written

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"Let Another Man Praise You"

By R.J. Evans

"Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger and not you own lips" (Proverbs 27:2).

Is it safe to say that most of us have difficulty from time to time in heeding and obeying the words of wisdom in our text? I'm sure we have all been guilty of doing a little bragging and boasting at times. In fact, generally speaking, it appears that boasting has become an accepted practice in our present culture. Just think about politics or the social media, and you realize how common it has become.

The boaster is the individual who wants other people to think of him as a great doer of many things. He is the type individual who likes to talk about himself, and is not bashful about bragging about all his accomplishments. There is an old saying that is associated with this kind of person: "If you want to know how great he is (or members of his family), just ask him, and he will tell you." Then there are those who do not have to be asked; they constantly boast about themselves, whether others want to hear it or not.

We just mentioned that boasting has become a part of our present culture. We can also observe that this practice is addressed in God's word. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul described the many evil characteristics of the Gentiles, one of which consisted of "boasters" (v. 30). In writing to Timothy, he stated, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (2 Tim. 3:1-2). These sins are running rampant today, and most certainly, boasting is no exception.

The Apostle Paul did engage "in a little folly" — a type of foolish boasting in order to expose his opponents who were false apostles — taking advantage of the brethren at Corinth (2 Cor. 11). However, he had already established the fact that acceptable glorying or boasting is to be only in the Lord — "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Cor. 10:17). Likewise, he told the Galatians: "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by who the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

There are many admonitions throughout God's word against being proud and boastful. Jesus taught that when we do our good deeds, don't "sound a trumpet" but let it be in secret to the extent that — "when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matt. 6:1-4). In other words, don't be telling others and bragging about what good deeds you have done. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector teaches against self-righteous boasting and pride (Lk. 18:9-14). The Apostle Paul stated, "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" (Eph. 2:8-9). In planning for the future, James said "you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (Jas. 4:15-16).

Boasters are proud, which is totally against the humble spirit that should characterize the faithful child of God. James said, "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6). The boaster is one who thinks he is better/smarter/more important than others. But the Scripture teaches that "in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). The boaster often makes others feel bad about themselves, and become discouraged over "falling so short" of all the braggart's alleged accomplishments and abilities. But the Lord says, "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Rom. 15:2). And there are other problems associated with all the damage a boaster causes. Thus, boasting is an attempt to belittle others, while seeking to elevate self above everyone else.

It has been said that no one likes to be around a boaster — having to constantly hear him brag about himself. No doubt about it, that is so true! Who wants to hear and see actions of someone essentially saying: "Look at me and see how great I am"? Never let it be said or observed that the faithful child of God is a boaster. May we at all times heed the words of our title: "LET ANOTHER MAN PRAISE YOU."

Speaking Truth 'With Grace, Seasoned With Salt'

By Al Diestelkamp

Most of us can testify that there are certain foods that are not very palatable without adding some salt. Even the scriptures quote Job's rhetorical questions, "Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job 6:6).

The Holy Spirit guided the apostle Paul to use our knowledge of this to illustrate the need to use wisdom, gentleness, and tact in our conversations: "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:5-6).

While Paul's primary focus in this text is on our conversations with "those who are outside," I doubt that anything less would be expected when speaking with brethren. In fact, he makes this clear in another epistle, urging Christians to "keep the unity in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). The wisdom of Solomon testifies that "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious" (Eccl. 10:12), and "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

There are some foods that I hate, and no amount of salt is going to change my mind about it. Similarly, most of the world does not love truth. Jesus declared Himself to be "the truth" (Jn. 14:6) and, as such, "the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5). But He warned that men "loved darkness rather than light" (Jn. 3:19). Our task is to try to change people's "taste" from "darkness" to "light." In doing this our speech must "always be with grace, seasoned with salt," all the while realizing that gentleness and tact will not make truth palatable to those who love darkness.

Unfortunately, even some who we may call "brethren" don't care much for truth. Paul wrote of an approaching apostasy causing people to "perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). They who did not receive the love of the truth had actually refused the truth in exchange for a lie so they could have "pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12).

To love the truth is to regard it, which does not always equate with liking it. Truth is not always likeable. Truth sometimes hurts. It sometimes saddens. It may disappoint or discourage. But even so, it is still to be loved.

Along with truth comes responsibility, and love of the truth demands change. If while trying to reach a destination, I find that I have been misguided as to the route I must take, or I have mistakenly taken a wrong turn, learning the truth may be unpleasant; but it benefits me if I regard it. In spiritual terms, this is called repentance. There's no virtue in being unyielding.

Too Much Salt

Dieticians often warn about the dangers of the overuse of salt. Regardless of the health risks, we know that too much salt defeats the purpose of making food palatable. In our pluralistic society which has taken political correctness to the extreme, there is the danger of our speech becoming so gentle and tactful that the power of truth is missed altogether. We do people no favor by altering truth in an effort to avoid hurt feelings and also risk causing genuine truth-seekers to gag at our lack of conviction. We can "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3) without being contentious, by speaking the truth in love and using speech with grace, seasoned with salt.