**POWER OF PRAISE**

by: Liz Wahl Andre’

“Religious Self-exaltation vs. the Humility of Christ”

There has always been those of every religious denomination who have enjoyed the preeminence among the “common folk,” seeking the spotlight, the best seats at public meetings and to be recognized and sought after on the streets. What seems to be the outer trappings of success and holiness in the eyes of men is not what God sees at all. He can see the motivation of men’s hearts ***“…for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart”*** (1 Samuel 16:7).

Jesus said of the Pharisees, ***"All their works they do for to be seen of men…and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’"*** (Matthew 23:5–7). Jesus admonished His disciples*,* ***"Be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"*** (Matthew 23:8). Self-exaltation is not just a personal, individual sin; it affects the entire Body of Christ. We are all brothers and sisters, only one of many, so we do not have to be important. We are all members of His body and Jesus is the Head***. “And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence”*** (Colossians 1:18).

Religious pride was the sin that caused the archangel Lucifer to be cast out of heaven as a profane thing. He was demoted to the title of “satan” (adversary) and is at war with God and every human soul. He was lifted up in his heart and desired the praises given to the only one, true God. Self-exaltation and pride blinds one with deception. Lucifer rallied a third of the angelic host to wage war against the Lord. Jesus told His disciples that He ***“… beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”*** (Luke 10:18). This competitive, jealous, prideful, independent spirit is a work of the flesh resident in every man and rails against submission and dependence on his Creator. (For further study on the sin and fall of Lucifer, read Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:12-19, and Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9.)

Jesus Christ left His abode with His Father in heaven, to take the form of a Man—the ultimate humiliation of Him by whom the worlds were created***: “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made”*** (John 1:3). Emptying Himself of the divine privilege, His mission to earth was for one purpose—to suffer and die for the salvation of mankind, and be raised from the dead on the third day to be seated at the right hand of His Father in glory. Jesus’ 33-year sojourn upon the earth modeled a perfect life of humility, holiness, obedience and total dependence upon His heavenly Father. Philippians 2 depicts Christ’s example of humility for His disciples: ***"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*** (verses 5-11).

The spiritual principle of humility rewarded with exaltation also applies to us as believers. Jesus said***, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”*** (Matthew 23:12). It is important not to mistake Jesus' meaning here. Humility isn't merely the opposite of self-exaltation. It is about more than practicing what we preach or taking the lowest seat in the meeting or doing good works in secret. Of course, these are all good and acceptable things in God's eyes, but none of them makes us humble.

Humility is not meekness, quietness, self-abasement or self-denial. We cannot put on humility by ignoring praise or putting ourselves down. True humility is about one thing only: total dependence on the Lord. When we see our need for humility, then we grow in love for God. Forfeiting all rights, our agendas and self-will is following in our Lord Jesus’ footsteps: laying our lives down before our God to fulfill His sovereign plan for our lives and His glory. In surrender to our Savior, we discover His strength and power to move mountains and supply our every need.

God is constantly at work in us, conforming us to the image of His Son. Our delight in His work and commandments encourages others in His body to obedience and holiness.

 ***"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"*** –Jesus (John 5:30).

 ***"I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him"*** –Jesus (verses 8:28–29).