

KNOWN BY GOD

INTRODUCTION

One of the carnal desires that wars against us in our journey towards maturity is that of earthly prestige. Far from being confined to the systems of politics and business, this lust is rife within the church systems also, and it's influence pervades the lives of many believers. Furthermore, it can sway us from trusting our Father to trusting in our works in order to consider ourselves known and approved by Him. This article is written to discern the difference in the mindset of a son as opposed to a hireling, and some of the veils that must be torn for us to see clearly in this regard.

FAME – TO BE KNOWN BY MAN

And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.... (Mark 1:28)

....many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:23-24)

One of the notable ways in which the church systems follow the pattern of the world, is their endorsement of fame. Though Jesus Christ Himself clearly put no value in fame, we have all too often departed from His example and seen it as something both desirable and indicative of God's blessing. How many Christians of the past are seen as validated simply by the number of people they "reached"? How many ministries boast of their sphere of influence? How many Christian authors have a page devoted to declaring their many accomplishments before man, including how many languages their books have been translated into? Not only this, but there are also celebrities who are automatically given a microphone when they profess to have been born again, as a nod to the power that their earthly fame must carry. The ego behind these things is apparent from the fact that the minister's image is usually stamped upon the materials of his ministry (be it book, CD or some other such thing), indicating what the ministry is truly about.

The fruit of this lust for fame is rotten. But unfortunately, this ambition is engendered in believers from an early age. They must look for a ministry and devote themselves to it until they "make a name" for themselves. And the ultimate sadness of this condition is that it becomes the measurement by which we consider ourselves known by God. For surely if our great works have reached the ears of thousands or tens of thousands here on earth, they must have brought us to the attention of the one who sits on the throne of heaven? With such reasoning our lives in Christ can become vain attempts to fill out a spiritual resume that will give us increased favor when we are raised up in glory. Even if we are not such an extreme case, there is still the possibility that the voice of the flesh will cast doubt in our mind that we have not "done enough for God".

In all of these ambitions, it is not considered that fame is purely a man made phenomenon! Fame can only exist in the temporal realm of limitation, for it is completely based on our recognition before other men. I do not hesitate to tell you that our Father knows the quietest, humblest,

meekest believer to exactly the same degree that He knows Billy Graham, or any other famous Christian! He does need the report of our exploits to each His ears, for:

¹³ ...there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)

Thus, it matters not to God whether we are the greatest or the smallest in the eyes of man, for He does not judge as man judges. I am convinced that many of the greatest triumphs of the faith are seen by God alone, as one believer or another overcomes in an area of great struggle, or shows the patience and endurance of Christ in a time of personal hell, all without fanfare or human acknowledgement. And if we know this, we know that our personal obedience and communion with the Lord is what matters, not the reputation we attain before men.

Beyond this, I believe that the Spirit deals with the apprehended one to ultimately not even *desire* fame or reputation before man, but to prefer to live hidden and unknown, in the sight of God alone, in all meekness and longsuffering, desiring only to please Him:

⁵ “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:5-6)

The carnal mind longs to be recognized and lauded, and we see how the Pharisees had fallen into this fleshly trap of religious pride. And surely the religious systems of today are no better – if anything, much worse! So many aspiring ministers want the whole flock of God under their care for the glory it brings in the eyes of men, yet would scorn to look after a single lamb. But he who is faithful in smaller things will be trusted in greater things. If we love the Lord, should not each of His lambs be worth nourishing? If the Father entrusts just one lamb to you, should not the mere fact of His trust be enough to make the charge precious and Holy? Why should we always seek numbers and statistics as evidence of our spirituality? Dear saint, know that your life is as valuable and known to God as any other believer, and that He takes as intimate an interest in you, not being one to show partiality:

^{34(A)}Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that ^(B)God is not one to show partiality..." (Acts 10:34)

⁶But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. (Galatians 2:6)

Understanding God's equal love for His creatures is an important step in our growth, for we must walk in the same love, loving because Love has become our nature, even as it is His nature!

SERVING OR SITTING AT CHRIST'S FEET?

38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus'^[k] feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

41 And Jesus^[l] answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

I am sure many who read these lines will have already heard or read these verses expounded upon with regards to the two mindsets, conditions or churches that Martha and Mary represent. Martha is quite clearly a type of the busy church, so "distracted with much serving" that she is not in communion with the Lord, nor possibly in the same room much of the time. What Christ highlights to her is that she is worried and troubled in her serving, which is causing a division in her focus on to a great many things, instead of the ONE thing that is necessary. And what a truth that is! Of this entire passage, the part that has always leapt out at me is our glorious Lord, Savior, King and High Priest Jesus Christ saying that "one thing is necessary". One thing! I am surprised that all those multitudes who seek the latest spiritual formula, fad or simplification, are not lining up around the block to hear what this 'one thing' is! But you see, this 'one thing' is not to preach to the droves, to heal the sick, to cast out demons or start a million dollar ministry. It is rather to sit at the feet of the Lord in communion with Him! To learn from Him, abide in Him, and be intimate with Him! There is nothing so perilous to the believer and son in training as to neglect the Lord Himself! For surely all of the distractions and stumbling blocks are to hinder us from this 'one thing'!

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21-23)

In the passage above from the book of Matthew we see a potential dire consequence of the Martha mindset. To the laundry list of great works that have been accomplished in His name, Jesus responds with the rebuke that "I never knew you"! We need no more proof than this that our intimacy with Him is of so much more importance than our works, and that Mary inhabits a place of safety even as Martha walks a dangerous path!

COMPENSATING FOR LACK OF COMMUNION

Communion with the Father in Christ is our high calling. To know and be known, love and be loved. The law and the prophets hang on the greatest commandments, because they are an out flowing of the nature of God, which will be ours if we abide in Christ and embrace the fires of His discipline. Yet in today's religious system, the lack of communion is being compensated for in many other ways, usually revolving around busyness and accomplishments. Not knowing God as we should, we instead seek to become 'experts' in Him, otherwise known as becoming 'scholarly' or 'great theologians'. Now please do not misunderstand me, brethren – all scriptures

are blessed and Holy, being surely breathed of God. A love of the scriptures is a natural byproduct of a love for God. Yet a form of Bible proficiency and head knowledge can be used as a substitute for knowing God Himself:

³⁹ “...You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life...” (John 5:39-40)

It is not simply searching the scriptures that brings life, but obeying them in coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might have life in Him. Though I testify the scriptures to be surely and completely inspired of God, I also hold that the author is always greater than his book, just as the Creator is greater than His creation! So if our Creator wrote that we should come unto Him, let us obey the call!

I like to sum up the problem of our biblical ‘expertise’ with the following analogy. A great man named John Smith disappeared from public life, leaving a son, David. Because He was a great man, his life and works became the subject of much research and discussion. In time, the book he had written before vanishing from view became a bestseller, and many people read all about John Smith and his image became imprinted on their minds through the photographs that were left of him. As time went on, he became almost an industry in himself, and the books and memorabilia concerning John Smith generated billions of dollars in revenue. Universities began to issue degrees in John Smith studies, and indeed whole Universities were founded to study him alone! Many men became experts in the life and works of John Smith, being able to accurately recite many facts and figures about him, such as his birth date, favorite color, middle name and so forth. However, as he had been a secretive character even before disappearing, none of these experts had ever met him. One day a huge seminar was taking place with all the leading experts in the field of John Smith studies. In the middle of this conference, a man walked in. Some of the experts gasped instantly, whereas others frowned. For the man who had walked in was David Smith, the son of John Smith, and he completely resembled his father in every way! He was clearly the manifestation and embodiment of everything that his father was, and in an instant, all of their expertise and knowledge was brought to dust in the face of the one who had known John Smith as a father, and been brought up and raised by him in intimacy and discipline! Some of the experts in the room rejoiced, seeing John Smith in the flesh, as it were, whereas others, seeing their hope of making merchandise of John Smith draw to an end, were enraged....

Forgive me for the extended analogy, but I have always considered it an effective way of perceiving the difference between experts and sons, inasmuch as the difference lies in the knowing God, as opposed to knowledge about God. We can all be experts, and be puffed up in what we believe to be our wisdom and depth, but we can only be sons if we are chastised and judged by God, for then He is truly our Father!

CONCLUSION

If we are to follow Jesus Christ on to perfection and the fullness of overcoming sons, we will surely be stripped of every crutch and idol of the flesh. The desire for fame and reputation before men is yet another that must be surrendered to the flames, inhibiting as it does our perception of

our relationship with God, and bending our focus towards the temporal rather than the heavenly. Beyond this, we would do well to remember the relationship between father and son – after all, which of us ever needed to prove we were the son of our earthly father by our works? I can safely say that I have never felt worried about being identified as the son of my earthly father...however, I have also come to realize as I grew from childhood to manhood, that I needed to mature and grow up into his likeness. Thus with our heavenly Father, let us cease from seeking ways to prove our status and sons by our works, but let us in faith behold *Him* proving us as sons by his discipline and refinement! Amen.