

Call to Obedience #367  
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## Jesus Honors Love Above Performance

All of us are performance oriented. We live in a world of grades: at school, at sports, at work. Our test results are expressed in percentages. We have a 73 or 84 or 99 out of 100 right. So it is only natural that either consciously or unconsciously we carry this process of grading ourselves over into our Christian lives. There is within any serious Christian that lingering question at the end of the day: Did I do all the right things today? Did I please my Lord today in my speech, attitude and reactions? (Please notice that I am not writing to the ungodly or backsliders today but exclusively to the saints.)

The more conscientious we are the more frequently we tend to go to bed with some sense that we missed the elusive 100% again, with a sprinkling of self-condemnation in our souls. Of course, the devil as the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) is always there to help us deflect our grade downward further. Many precious saints fall for this trap over and over again, robbing themselves of the joy of the Lord and the peace of God that passes all understanding. Interestingly, this whole problem of grading has been with mankind from the dawn of history. We all are familiar with the testimonies of some of the greatest men of God. Many of them, like us, have at times found themselves in the gutters of self-incrimination. For example:

Moses felt utterly unworthy and unequipped to get Israel out of Egypt. Here is his testimony: *Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh...* (Ex. 3:11). How many times has God called you to do something and you said, "Who am I", claiming to know more about who you are than the One who called you?

David, a man after God's own heart spake these words of self-condemnation: *I am a worm, and no man...* (Ps. 22:6). *I am forgotten*

*as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel* (Ps. 31:12). He contradicted himself because he said in the Psalms that God is everywhere and never takes His eyes off His people.

Elijah became so distraught about himself that he said weeping: *It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers* (1Ki. 19:4). Not true.

Job cursed the day on which he was born (Job 3:1), yet God called him a perfect man.

All these great men misjudged themselves. Here is what God thought of them: He spared Moses and Elijah's families funeral expenses and had them meet Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. He saturated the Psalms with David's writings. He blessed Job more at the end than the beginning.

Every one of these men knew what it was like to go to bed defeated. The disciples also had their bad days. This whole thing of measuring our worth to God by our performance will continue to threaten us until the end of time. Yes, Paul admonished us to "examine ourselves", but he never meant self-examination to be a way of life for us. His motto was: *For to me to live is Christ* (Phil. 1:21). **The only way out of self-degradation, is to realize that God does not measure us by our performance but rather by our love for Jesus.** Indeed, in the kingdom of God, our love for Jesus *is* our performance. Intensity of desire to be with Him, to abide in Him, to keep in fellowship with Him, to please Him, is what our Master longs for. Everything else is secondary at best and should only be touched at the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. Because the saints live in an ocean of infinite everlasting love, God is highly displeased whenever we are about to clutter that love relationship with negatives about ourselves or others.

Furthermore, it is evident that this process of self-evaluation is never reliable. It always falls short of objectivity. It is always corrupted by our feelings as in Elijah's case. Therefore, it cannot be trusted. Often I do not really know whether I was too aggressive or too reserved in my witnessing. Sooner or later the devil fusses at me

as to how I went about it. This is true with my interaction with people. I could easily go through any day feeling defeated.

I absolutely refuse to go to bed going through some kind of checklist on how I did. Yet this is what the devil wants me to do. He wants to torture me now since he knows he can't torture me in hell, because I am not going there. I would rather ask myself the question Jesus asked Peter just before the ascension when He said: *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these* (John 21:15)? You can justly enlarge this question by saying: do you love Me with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?

Again, that is the only test I want to give myself at the end of the day. It is not a hard question. If you love Jesus with all your heart no evil can come of that and that is all that matters. Poor judgment, yes, but evil, no. Evil can find no residence in love. When Peter said yes to this question, Jesus responded with *feed my sheep*. Peter could sleep well on that and feed the sheep the next morning. If you love Jesus with all your heart, you are feeding sheep and lambs one way or the other.

One of the passages that brings all of this masterfully to the surface is found in Luke 22 and John 13. Here we find Jesus in his darkest night. Before the Passover meal, all the disciples forgot to wash Jesus' feet. Bad performance! After Jesus related that the bread and wine referred to His self-emptying and self-humiliation at the cross, the disciples disputed amongst themselves who among them was the greatest. Bad performance! What grade would you give them after having been with Jesus for three years? Of course Jesus also knew that within hours they would all fall asleep on Him in the garden of Gethsemane. Bad performance! He knew Peter would deny Him. Bad performance!

How did Jesus grade them? He did **not** grade them! *He* does not grade people. *You* don't have to grade people. You will find wonderful rest in your soul once you stop grading people and start loving them from where they are to where they need to be. Rather than rebuking His disciples for incompetence, Jesus does the incredible: He compliments them, He rewards them, He promotes them and He

puts them on the honor roll of heaven, hours before His crucifixion. He told them. even after they failed to wash his feet how with great intensity He desired to eat the Passover with them (verse 15). **He was nourished by their love to Him.** Therefore He said after the supper, *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Luke 22:28-30).

It seems to me in Jesus' most agonizing night, He passed out Christmas gifts to His disciples. Oh, how little are we like Him! In this night Jesus gave His very young disciples more than He ever gave anybody in terms of honor and glory: a kingdom and thrones. Come to think of it, despite all their lack of performance, they indeed *were* all great... in Jesus' eyes. Because they loved! Again, **He did not grade them on their performance but on their love that had caused them to forsake all and to stick with Him through thick and thin**, never failing to do anything He asked them to do. Can you see how much Jesus treasures faithfulness, year after year? Are you faithful to the Lord, to your pastor and to your spouse? At the end, whether or not you get into His Kingdom depends on your faithfulness, for faithfulness is the noblest fruit of love. Oh my friend, it is about love and love *never* fails to please the Lord. Hallelujah! Don't set up wrong standards for yourself. That can kill you. As Jesus loved His disciples then, so He loves them now (John 15:9). Conversely, the love of His people toward Him is His greatest pleasure. The disciples gave Jesus this pleasure on the night of the Passion. Now, you can give it to Him all the time.

So, stop fussing and nitpicking at yourself, and at others. Give yourself to love and you will fulfill all the law and the prophets and you will feast of the finest delicacies of His kingdom.