

“I am nothing”

-- 2/24/08, Sun Valley, tp

Introduction

A. We sometimes hear the awful description of someone as "trash" or "trashy"

1. Trash is something that you throw away as no longer useful.
2. Men sometimes behave in such a way that makes moral and decent people shutter with revulsion and say "trash" to describe them.
3. At other times, the arrogant wealthy or successful look down on others as lower class and worthless trash.
4. The mighty regard all who do not imitate them and follow them as weak or nothing, useless as trash.

B. Fleshly men often misunderstand the values of God and underestimate strength of virtues that Jesus teaches. They despise the meek and lowly Jesus as well as His followers. Sometimes we His followers think like the fleshly men and are ashamed of the weakness (so called) of true servants of Christ.

I. 2 Corinthians 12:11 "For in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing."

1. If the apostle was nothing, what does that make you and me?
2. In the **12:7-10**, God had reminded Paul that the power of God is perfected in weakness by sending or allowing him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet" him so that he might not become too exalted in his own mind.

II. Paul learned to say that he was the "chief" of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15.

1. Although God had forgiven him and highly exalted him, he never forgot his past.
2. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **Romans 3:23**
 - a. You and I have fallen so short of the glory of God, that we are "nothing" and not worthy of any special treatment before God. Whatever blessing that God gives is pure grace, unmerited favor.
 - b. There is no merit in the fact that all have been just as guilty and weak as you.
 - c. There is no justification in continuing in shameful or sinful behavior, just because your neighbor is just as bad or worse; just as childish or worse; just as irresponsible or worse.

III. To the Galatians he wrote, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

1. Imagine the humiliation of thinking you are something before God or before men, when in reality you are nothing.
2. **Luke 14:7-11** "sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him." Proverbs 25:6, 7
3. **Luke 20:46** beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts.
4. **Luke 22:26** he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."
5. **John 5:44** How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God, only?

IV. Jesus taught that we must think ourselves "unprofitable servants" in matters of

honor and the forgiveness of those who sin against us. Luke 17:4-10 "we have done what it was our duty to do"

1. Should I be honored for doing what it was my duty to do?
2. Should I demand that I be honored when I am nothing? an unprofitable servant?

V. What rights and freedoms do I have? 1 Corinthians 9 I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me... v. 16

1. v. 17 Paul is a slave steward given a responsibility which he cannot refuse and for which labor he is not paid a salary.

a. As a slave, he had no right to a salary, nor had he any right to honors that he could boast about.

b. It was not a question to him of serving willingly and receiving his deserved reward.

c. The only reward that he could expect was the satisfaction of pleasing his Master.

2. v. 18 What reward then could he expect? That although the Corinthians paid him no salary and gave him no honors (though they ought to have honored him gratefully), he presented the Gospel to them without charge anyway, and did not abuse or take advantage of his authority and rights.

a. Using his rights might have hindered his success in persuading them to obey the Gospel, since they might have suspected him of taking advantage of them for financial reasons.

b. v. 19 He exercised his right or freedom to deny himself of his rights and freedoms so that he might gain or persuade them without his sincerity being brought into question.

c. v. 20-27 He used this same attitude toward all other issues that might help or hinder his success in persuading other men to hear and obey the Gospel of Christ.

VI. 2 Corinthians 13:1-10 Jesus and Paul behaved as if "weak" or as if unprofitable slaves and expendable agents of God to accomplish the greater purposes of redemption.

1. v. 4, Jesus was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth through the power of God

a. He behaved from the point of view of the world as a weak man.

b. Thus Peter rebuked Jesus, **Matthew 16:21-23**, thinking that Jesus was acting weak.

c. When Peter defended Jesus with his sword, Jesus startled him with and rebuke as he did not understand that Jesus was neither weak nor defenseless. Three points: a. they that take the sword perish with the sword (that is real weakness, "perish"), b. Jesus had an army of angels at His disposal that He could call and command (angels are much more powerful than men), c. Jesus was deliberately surrendering (as if weak) so that He might fulfill the messianic prophecies (a divinely powerful accomplishment).

2. v. 4, We also are weak in Jesus, but we shall live with Him by the power of God.

a. We must behave as if we were weak, nothing, worthless, without rights before God, which of course is all true.

b. We show that by self-denial: **Matthew 10:38**, take your cross and follow after Jesus to be worthy of Him.

-- **Matthew 16:24-26** repeated with even more emphasis and detail.

c. Fleshly strength declares, "Survival of the fittest" and the "strong shall survive."

-- But Jesus says, **Matthew 18:1-10** "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." v. 4 humble yourself as a child, v. 6 be careful not to harm one of these weak ones, that is cause one of these to sin...

-- **18:11-14** Heaven rejoices over the salvation one lost soul, "one of these little ones"

Conclusion

- A. We are nothing. And yet we are precious in the sight of our God.
- B. **John 3:16; 1 John 3:1-3**
- C. We are the elect, chosen of God, **Ephesians 1:3-13**, but only in Christ Jesus.