

4-23-16
Session 3

Ambition Notes

James 3:13-16

Paul wrote of 2 ambitions that are praiseworthy – the only 2 times the word is used in a praiseworthy way:

Rom. 15:20 It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known

1Thess 4:11,12 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands

But James is speaking of selfish ambition. Apparently a good thing can be corrupted.

James: it's **Earthly, Unspiritual**, of the **Devil** and that where it exists, you find **Disorder** and **Every Evil practice**

Ambition in its simplest form is the Drive to succeed. Fine, but it depends on what exactly you are trying to do.

Selfish Ambition speaks to the drive to gain PRESTIGE, FAME, POWER, and/or WEALTH and to pull it off no matter what it takes, who we trample, or how craftily we pretend it's not so

James 3:14 1. Don't pretend we don't have it and thus deny the truth
2. Don't boast about it: "I'm the strongest candidate, I'm the best leader, I can take us places no one else can"

Gal. 5:19-21

Emulation – Ambition characterized by a competitive desire to not only equal but to surpass another. To try to equal, then to excel or surpass or outdo.

Is this not the form of ambition that reared its head with the disciples? They argued over which one of them was the Greatest.

Mark 9:33 – 35 They were arguing about this on the way to Capernaum

Mark 10:37 and Mt. 20:20 James, John and their mother flat-out asked Jesus if the two boys could sit on either side of Christ in His Kingdom. (Positions of prestige and power)

Luke 22:24 They were disputing this again at the Last Supper

So, initially the disciples' ambition, **their first ambition**, was to be famous and to be powerful, and interestingly their fame came through suffering and servanthood, not the way they imagined at the time.

So Paul writes in Phil. 2:3,4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Prov. 16:2 All a man's ways seem innocent to him but MOTIVES are weighed by the Lord

Jer 17:9,10 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it?
I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

1 Cor 4:5 Judge nothing before the appointed time, wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the MOTIVES of men's hearts.

Billy Graham: When wealth is lost, nothing is lost;
When health is lost, somethings is lost;
When character is lost, all is lost.

Lest we think that the Lord does not gauge our motives so much, and is pleased that we're actually doing something even if our motives aren't pure, look very carefully at what Jesus shared in the Sermon on the Mount:

Mt. 6:1 Acts of righteousness to be seen by men

6:2 Giving announced with trumpets to be honored by men

6:5 Praying to be seen

6:16 Fasting to appear religious

John 7:1-6

Jesus was not directly concerned with becoming a public figure. It was inevitable considering His mission, but it was not His direct focus.

However, Jesus DID strongly endorse operating in the public domain for the RIGHT reasons:

Mt. 5:13-15

Salt is of no value until it's applied to something.
Light achieves no real purpose in a closed closet.

Book of Esther is about competing ambitions: One noble, one not.

Esther 5:10-14 and 6:6-9

Key verse: Esther 10:3, the last verse in the book:

Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

The temptations of Christ: Henri Nouwen "In the Name of Jesus" Pgs. 28, 30, 55, 56,

To be relevant Mt. 4:3,4 If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

The relevant self is the self that can do things, show things, prove things, build things. We are called as followers of Jesus to be stripped of our abilities as Jesus was when he came to earth as a baby, to be completely irrelevant, and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but our own vulnerable self, sinners saved by grace.

To be spectacular Mt. 4:5-7 If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down (from the highest point of the temple) for He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Ps. 91:11, 12

The spectacular person wins great applause, but Jesus did not come to prove Himself, walk on hot coals, swallow fire. When he did do miracles, he did it for the person healed, not for the audience as he always slipped away and often asked people not to mention what He had done. In today's church, the professionals run the show, and they pretty much do it in their own selves, as individuals. The dominant image is the self-made man, who can do it all alone.

To be powerful Mt. 4:8-10 All this will I give you, if you bow down and worship me.

From pages 76-79:

One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation or power – political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power – even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are. We believe that power used in the service of God is a good thing. With this rationalization, crusades took place, inquisitions were

organized, Indians were enslaved, positions of great influence were desired, episcopal palaces and cathedrals and seminaries were built, and much moral manipulation of conscience was engaged in. Every time we see a major crisis in the church, we see that a major cause of rupture is the power exercised by those who claim to be followers of the poor and powerless Jesus.

What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people. Jesus asks, "Do you love Me?" We ask, "Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your Kingdom?"

One thing is clear to me: The temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.

We must be a leadership of powerlessness and humility.

George Sanchez:

Finishing Well:

1. Have clearly established goals and determine to pursue those goals. Focus on the Lord; His person, presence and character. Get to know Him.

"One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in His temple." - Psalm 27:4

2. Don't focus on the doing, producing or serving because those are only a by product of your relationship with Christ. Remember when you can't "do" anything anymore, you can still praise and honor the Lord.

"Of the glorious majesty of Your honor, and of Your wondrous works, will I meditate."
- Psalm 145:5

3. Establish your state of mind, the attitude of your heart and a passion of your soul. Desire to experience the worthiness of Christ, get to know God more each day and give yourself to Him in praise and thanksgiving.

"And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand." - Rev. 8:4

This seems a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden
under the shadow of these vines.

But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands,
you know very well what I would see.

Brigands on the high roads, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters
men murdered to please applauding crowds, under all roofs
misery and selfishness.

It is really a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. Yet in the midst
of it, I have found a quiet and holy people. They have discovered a joy
which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of this sinful life.

They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the
world. These people, Donatus, are the Christians – and I am one of them.

Cyprian of Carthage
Bishop and Martyr

In the leader's desire to be at the front of people

He must in his person be behind them.

In his desire to be above the people,

He must in his speech be below them.

Sincere words are not showy;

Showy words are not sincere;

Those who know do not say,

Those who say do not know.

Lao Tzu
Chinese Philosopher