

“2 Corinthians 11:20 —Part 4”

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—At our Bible study on Wednesday night, I continued with a five-part series about 2 Corinthians 11:20. Since the apostle Paul mentioned five negative characteristics practiced by religious leaders and disciples, each study will discuss one of the ideas that he mentioned.

Followers were more wrong

It is interesting to read the context leading up to 2 Corinthians 11:20.

- 2 Corinthians 11:13-15—The discussion is about false apostles who are described as deceitful workers.
- 2 Corinthians 11:20-21—But, while Paul is describing the wrong behavior of the fake apostles, he was directly discussing the wrong behavior of the followers.
- Shame on false religious teachers for promoting themselves and their erroneous ideas.
- But shame on followers for accepting the wrong behavior of the alleged religious leaders.

Allowing people to exalt themselves over you

Notice the fourth of the five characteristics mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:20.

2 Corinthians 11:20 (New King James)—“For you put up with it . . . if one exalts himself [over you].”

2 Corinthians 11:20 (The Amplified New Testament)—“For you endure it . . . if a man is arrogant and puts on airs.”

Exalting versus serving

The rest of this article will be about four concepts that show the contrast between exalting over people versus serving people.

Instead of following people who exalt themselves over people, we should be encouraging people to be humble servants.

Do not follow leaders who exalt themselves

Notice a few verses about people who focused upon exalting themselves.

- Acts 8:18-19—Simon wanted power and prestige (instead of the opportunity to serve), so he offered money to buy the power.
- Acts 8:20-23—Peter sized up Simon’s problem and corrected him.
- 3 John 9—Diotrephes desired the pre-eminence over people, and did not receive servants like John.
- 3 John 10—John said that he was willing to point out the wrong deeds of Diotrephes—speaking malicious words against servants, not receiving the brethren and putting many out of the church.

I repeat—do not follow leaders who exalt themselves.

Do not exalt yourself over people

Notice a few verses about warning people to avoid exalting themselves over people.

- Matthew 20:25—The Son of God reminded that rulers tend to lord it over the people and tend to exercise authority over them.
- Matthew 20:26-28—The Son of God said that His disciples should act in such a manner—but rather become servants like the Son of God.
- Matthew 23:12—The Son of God said that he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now, notice the verses leading up to that statement.

- Matthew 23:4-11—Notice some bad characteristics to avoid—giving heavy burdens upon people, seeking the spotlight, seeking the best privileges among the people and seeking the fancy titles.
- Matthew 23:12—The greatest will be the servant.
- Luke 14:11—The Son of God said that he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now, notice the verses leading up to that statement.

- Luke 14:7-10—When you go to a wedding feast, sit at the lesser seats and allow the hosts to invite you to the best seats.
- Luke 18:14—The Son of God said that he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now, notice the verses leading up to that statement.

■ Luke 18:9-13—The Son of God contrasted a self-righteous Pharisee and a humble tax collector.

I repeat—do not exalt yourself.

Understand the danger of pride

Let's notice three examples from the Old Testament about the danger of pride and arrogance.

■ 1 Samuel 15:17—Samuel asked Saul: "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel?"

■ Isaiah 10:12-15—The Lord announced that He would punish the arrogance of the King of Assyria, because that nation took excessive delight in capturing the northern Kingdom of Israel.

■ Isaiah 14:12-14—The Lord criticized Lucifer for wanting to ascend into heaven and to exalt his throne above the stars of God.

Teaching people to be humble servants

■ Philippians 2:1-4—Paul described about esteeming other people better than themselves.

■ Philippians 2:5-11—The Son of God was the perfect example of humility.

■ Philippians 2:19-24—Timothy set a good example of being a humble servant.

■ 1 Thessalonians 2:6—Paul did not seek glory from men.

■ 1 Thessalonians 2:7—Paul sought to be gentle like a nursing mother cherishing her children.

■ 1 Thessalonians 2:8—Paul did not only impart the gospel, but he sought to give his life for the people.

■ 1 Peter 5:2-3—As servants, we should strive to fulfill three goals—serve willingly (instead of by compulsion); serve eagerly (instead of for money); and set an example (instead of being an overlord).

■ 1 Peter 5:4—Peter wrote: "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."