

THINK SOBERLY

By inspiration, the apostle Paul motivates Christians to perfect their individual strengths and respect the responsibilities of other Christians as being equally important to the success of the Church (Rom. 12:4-8). He prefaces this encouragement with a warning that each Christian should not “think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). To “think soberly” is to think of self in such a way that points our conduct in the direction of sobriety, modesty, wisdom, and proper discretion. The opposite of thinking soberly therefore, is to think of self in such a way that leads to a proud, haughty, and foolish disposition – which attitude is condemned by Scripture (Pro. 6:16-17; 16:18). The apostle Peter impressed the necessity of a sober, or a modest and clear-thinking, mind “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Many Christians have fallen to the snares of Satan because they did not think of themselves as they ought.

A Christian may “think of himself more highly than he ought” when he considers himself faithful when he is living in sin. How many souls wander the Earth lost because they consider themselves faithful even though they have sin in their lives for which they refuse to repent? This is just one reason that God implores all Christians to encourage those in sin to repent (Acts 8:22). There are countless more who fail to see the sins they commit just to be able to compromise the Truth of God so that they can remain in fellowship with those who have or continue to teach or practice that which is contrary to God’s Word (2 John 9-11).

A Christian may “think of himself more highly than he ought” when he judges himself by a standard other than the Bible. Any Christian can convince himself that he is faithful if he judges himself by someone who is wicked. When the Pharisee went to the Temple and “prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican” (Luke 18:11), he was justifying himself based on a standard other than Truth. Jesus stated that it was the penitent publican who “went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14). If an individual sincerely desires to be right with God, he will open up the “perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein” (Jam. 1:25).

A Christian may “think of himself more highly than he ought” when he begins to relish the praise of men. A Christian who becomes enamored by the praise of men will begin changing his conduct, or teaching, so as to attract more praise. In the first century, the “chief rulers” refused to make proper conclusions based upon the facts and evidence presented to them because “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43). Many preachers and teachers have succumb to this devilish tactic. They have set themselves upon “Hollywood-esque” pillars of fame rather than standing “fast in the faith” (1 Cor. 16:13), “against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11), and “perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). It is a sad state we find ourselves in when preachers boast that they are on an “A-List” of speakers-in-demand because of the dozen or so speaking engagements they have away from home rather than examining themselves whether they “be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). It is equally as sad that some preachers are angered when they are “dis-invited” from a speaking engagement because they are not being shown the proper praise of men that they deserve rather than analyzing the reasons and concerns given to them that led to the decision.

As Christians, we must think of ourselves as God desires. We must appreciate the grace

and mercy that allows us to be called “children of God” (Gal. 3:26-27). We must do everything in accordance with God’s will (Col. 3:17), letting our lights so shine that, by our good works, we may give glory to God (Mat. 5:16). All men are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and God desires that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). With that in mind, all men should “think soberly,” and submit to the Law of God.

- *Brad Green*