

Guest Blog by Craig Biehl

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Mirrors in the Hallowed Halls

By Craig Biehl

Perhaps you have known some folks with an uncanny knack of rubbing you the wrong way. No doubt we have all been that person at one time or another. And, given our tendency toward self-justification we can always find more faults in others than in ourselves. At the same time, the annoyance of others can be a divine appointment to aid our growth into the likeness of Christ. God often addresses blindness to our own sin by personal encounters with our problem in someone else.

The Halls of Humility?

To make my point, allow me an example from my own experience in academia, though the principle applies to our Christian experience, generally. A seminary professor and friend once told me that he saw no positive correlation between academic achievement and piety. I thought him a bit cynical at the time, but have since come to agree with him. (I am not referring to any one institution, here).

As with any group of sinners saved by grace, the “hallowed halls” of academia teem with some of the best examples of how to act as a believer, along with some of the best examples of how *not* to act as a believer. Knowledge, of course, was never a problem; we are sanctified as we grow in the depth and breadth of a true knowledge of God. “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:2-3). Application, however, is another story. Knowledge without a proper love and humility does create unsanctified fools. We can easily forget that our ministry position or moments of personal accomplishment are gifts from above, and that the God of the universe became flesh, had nowhere to lay His head, and willingly suffered the worst kind of humiliation and suffering imaginable for unworthy enemies. Indeed, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

Reflections

Once my overly idealistic view of contemporary giants of the faith was dismantled and I had yet another crop of examples that salvation is by grace, I was reminded of the principle that how others treat us often reflects how we treat others, a picture of the sin we are unwilling to see in our own life. And while I am not advocating that anyone make their life’s ministry one of sanctification through negative example and boorish arrogance, or to provide living proof of depravity that fellow saints might grow in grace (I wonder what a good theme song would be for that ministry), the expression of spiritual immaturity in others, especially as directed toward us personally, can be a tremendous force for enlightenment and repentance. And while we have all experienced more than a few living examples of how Christians should not behave, our take-away should be that we have often been the same bad example ourselves.

Amazing Grace

No one escapes pride. It ran the show before we came to Christ and rears its opportunistic and ugly head at the

slightest encouragement. Indeed, the moment we think we are free from it we can be puffed up to high heaven with our own humility! Its cure comes in a deepening relationship with our Savior and appreciation of the depth of His grace toward one so underserving. “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...” We grow in humility as we grow in understanding the nature of the wretch He saved by infinite love and suffering, and by knowing and loving the excellence of the One who purchased our eternal happiness. To grow in Christlikeness is to grow in humility.

Thanks for the Thorns

Sanctification can be a difficult process when assisted by walking and talking thorns in the flesh, irritants that hold sway over some aspect of our lives. But God gives them for our good, as mirrors reflecting the sins of our own soul. Once we get over our pride in being disrespected by someone else’s inability to handle a bit of responsibility in “humble service” to the saints, we can begin to confess and repent of the same in ourselves.

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