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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

John 3:22-36

Lesson #13

Degeneration

10/11/2015

It's not whether you win or lose . . .

. . . but how you play the game.
. . . or with whom you place the blame.
. . . or to whom you give the fame.

Being a Christian
doesn't change what I deal with,
so much as how I deal with it.

**Natural disasters
call for acts
of God!**

**God's providential
circumstances may be
unclear, but His plan
for my response is not.**



*We have the freedom and power to
choose our fate in this life.*



Carly Fiorina

"What you are is
God's gift to you.
What you make of
yourself is your
gift to God."



**The human right
to free choice is
a foundational
American value.**

- Foundation of human dignity and self respect
- Foundation of human rights - internationally
- Foundation of capitalism, and democracy
- **Foundation of Christian ethical responsibility - faith, love.**

**A servants ~ heart is
revealed in its response**

**to being
treated like
a servant.**

Take your baptism seriously
because God does.



Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **so that you may prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

When you feel as though God’s providence has given you a pink slip, how do you respond?



Does baptism set us up for a red carpet or a pink slip?



- **Jesus’ baptism put him on a straight path to suffering, rejection, and the Cross.**
- **Paul’s baptism brought the end to his comfortable life as a Pharisee and led to his “suffering the loss of all things to know Christ”.**

- **John the Baptist was the greatest man born of a woman and once he had introduced Jesus as the Christ, he was given a “pink slip” thrown in prison and beheaded.**

“John the Baptist is significant not only in relation to Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament writings, but also as an important figure in the history of first-century Judaism, as known to us through other sources.

For many centuries, some Jewish people considered John the Baptist to be more important than Jesus of Nazareth.”



Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D.

Consider

- **He was older than Jesus and had an established ministry in Israel before Jesus was known.**
- **He baptized Jesus and some saw Jesus as his disciple and follower.**
- **Many Jews considered him to be the Messiah.**
- **It is hard to overstate the status and fame that surrounded John.**



Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D.

John 3

“22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. 23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being baptized. 24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.”

“²⁷ John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ ²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.”

John 3 (A Paraphrase)

“²²⁻²⁴ In those days both Jesus and John were involved in baptizing people. ²⁵⁻²⁶ John’s disciples were confused about this so they came to John wondering why Jesus was attracting more attention than John. ²⁷ John answered, “This all is ordained from God. ²⁸ I told you that I am not the Messiah but only his forerunner. ²⁹ Jesus is the bridegroom and the people who are his bride naturally come to him. As his friend, I am not upset by this but overjoyed. ³⁰ You must realize that this is about him and not me. ³¹ He will continue to become more significant, I must get out of the way.”

If Christ is to increase through my witness ~

then I must decrease.

Am I prepared to live with that?

Philippians 2

“³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, **although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,** ⁷ **but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,** and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

How can I know if I have a problem with this?

Anxiety
is a negative audit of the future.
“Something awful will happen.”



I feel like I am living in Sheol rather than shalom.

Anger
is a negative audit of the past.
“Something awful has happened.”

- **Shame** - anger at self
“I blew it.”
- **Bitterness** - anger at others
“You blew it.”

Anxiety & Anger are often linked to Idolatry.

- **Both may come from the idolatry of placing faith, hope, & love in anything other than GOD.** “I believe that I need ____, to bring me serenity, security, and significance.”
- **When God does not save MY IDOLS for ME.** “I am not only confused, I am often fearful, & furious.”
- **I take it out on others or myself.**

I must ask myself -

- **Do I have an idolatry problem?** Do I act as though Jesus' mission is to make me successful, comfortable, secure, & happy?
- **Do I share my culture's sense of entitlement?** Do I have a right to find fulfillment and recognition through my gifts, accomplishments, position, etc.?
- **Do I act as though I have a consulting contract with God?** Do I feel that I have a voice, vote, & veto with respect to my role in God's plan?
- **Am I confused if not bitter in the face of God's providence?** Do I expect "God's Plan" for me to match the superficial "desire of MY heart"?

How can I know my assigned role?

- **Know myself.** - Find out what it means for me to bear the image of God in my personal integrity and relationships.
- **Accept myself.** - Make peace with who God has made me, the limiting circumstances of my story, and His sufficient grace to me.
- **Forget about myself.** - Get over the fantasy that the world revolves around me. It's not about me. Take my baptism seriously.
- **Give myself.** - Cultivate a servant's heart.

How can I develop a servant heart?

- **Be willing and eager to find my significance in accompanying someone else's solo.** The way I treat others mirrors the way I treat Christ. Matt.25
- **Take steps to avoid using cultural values to keep score.** - status, salary, and social connections.
- **Keep a loose hold on my rights to upward mobility.** - socially, materially, positionally
- **Don't make myself the center of attention in my testimony for Christ.** - Jesus is not interested in being my social frontman.

- **View anger and anxiety as a call for me to bear witness to Christ's Spirit in me.**

Turn these negative emotions into opportunities for a powerful **witness to my faith, hope, and love that is centered in Christ.**

Thank God for the opportunity to bear His image in this life and share His joy in being a lamp stand for His light.

Too many Christians are willing to follow Jesus so long as they have a voice, vote, and a veto.

Kingdom consulting is not a spiritual gift.

We can't give ourselves until we have forgotten about ourselves.

Too many Christians are willing to follow Jesus so long as they have a voice, vote, and a veto.

The abundant life, the deepest desire of our heart, and the call of God on our lives are met as we follow the example of

John the Baptist.