

## Who Cares What You Think?

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It is human nature to think of oneself frequently, if not nonstop. But who really thinks of us anything like the way that we think of ourselves? Virtually no other human, nor would any, even if one had the ability to get into our heads and think our same thoughts. But the one Person who knows us the way that we want to be known is God above. The One who thinks about us as much as we think about ourselves is only our God. In fact, God thinks more about us than we think about ourselves. Imagine THAT! He thinks about us the way that we WANT to be known, even when we ourselves don't know what that is. He knows our thoughts before we think them, and He cares about the truth about us. He believes the best about us (even more than we do: He never gets depressed about us, able to think only negative), so much so that He sent His Son to die for us because He saw us as worthy of redemption (that's our being excused from the penalty owed for our own intentional wrong doing). He knows what He has planned for His children, and it's ALL good – way better than we could imagine!

Now, most people, rightly or wrongly, are concerned about what others think about them. It is conditioned into us to think that way. So, you may think that what matters is what others think about you or what they believe about what you think –what they think are your motives (how they judge you), but God alone is the judge. And He has judged you ... as worthy of His love gift of redemption. No matter what you have done, are doing or will do, no matter how horrible and despicable it might be, He sent His Son to pay the price for that wrongdoing of yours!

Coming to grips with that, we must also realize that it is a personal relationship with Him that changes lives, not anything else external to that, including membership in a human organization (especially one that will judge its members on human terms), not attendance at some ceremonial something, not any religious practices, not adherence to a To Do list nor avoidance of a Don'ts list. We can't DO enough, we can't be "good enough," to pay the just penalty for what we have already done. But He already has paid it, at the greatest cost to Himself.

Some would tell you that He requires you to be in attendance at some place at certain times of the week, to do certain things like "obeying the ones who have rule over you," or not do certain things, such as not "forsaking the assembling of yourselves together" at that place. (Many dare not consider critically the bias of scripture translators with an agenda.) Those poor souls, however, have a really hard time reading and understanding a love letter, written from the perspective of perfect justice, that instead of commanding performance, lovingly gives us clues and guidelines about how to find all that we want and way more than we can imagine by simply drawing closer to the Lover of our souls.

For example, "obey those who have the rule over you" is a poor English rendering of a passage that, in the hands of authoritarians, can be used to coerce our submission to them. What it really says, however, is that, if we are wise, we will allow ourselves to be influenced by - to listen to - those who know God the best, who are most acquainted with Him, who are closest to Him (and can, thus, tell us how to get there, too), who best understand the message that He has for us, rather than those who would take His words and twist them for their own illicit advantage. They already know where the treasure is hid: listen to THEM!!!

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~~“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” cannot possibly apply to something that is nowhere patterned for us, much less commanded of us, in the New Testament. But the operative clue is that the Greek phrase is used only once elsewhere in the New Testament ... to refer to the “upgathering” (assembling in the air) of the saints at the return of Jesus for His redeemed ones. THAT is the assembly that we are not to forsake. See, our Lord wants us never to forsake being a part of that FUTURE assembling with Him (and, yes, fellow believers THEN), and if that comes about partly by joining with other believers to seek and learn and worship Him, great, but making it about the “corporate” aspects of said assembly, about the act and details of the “assembly” itself, is completely focused the exact opposite direction. There is absolutely zero virtue in the act of “assembling together” with anyone, even with others who are believers, for the sole sake of assembling as such, but God wants us to draw close to Him. (The ecclesia is an “assembly,” like Congress is an assembly, but it is not one because it “assembles,” per se.)~~

People and institutions that draw you to God are good, at least to the extent that they actually draw you to God. People and institutions that draw you, instead, to themselves instead of to God, or to themselves as necessary intermediaries between you and God are, at least to that extent, not good. People and institutions that take scripture out of context or that create their own mistranslations to lead others to believe that God expects allegiance to them instead of directly to God Himself are, at least to that extent, liars. And though His use of them does not constitute His endorsement, sovereign God can use anything or anyone to glorify Himself.

Is it any wonder that God’s instructions to His ecclesia include, at the top, right after loving Him with all of our hearts, souls and minds, to love others as we want to be loved, to prefer one another in honor, and to put others ahead of ourselves? THAT, my friends, is the hallmark of Christianity, not edifices, doctrines and hierarchal leadership structures.

Draw close to Him!