

THE ARROGANCE OF GOSSIP

May the peace and blessings of God be with you, now and always. Satan was an angel who thought he knew better than God. When God indicated He was going to create man as His ultimate creation, Satan disagreed, then when God said all the angels should bow before man, Satan disagreed again. This was the root of arrogance, where arrogance began, it began when Satan assumed he knew better than God.

Arrogance moved into our humanity where it sits as a separation between God and ourself. Arrogance, the first quality of separation, initiates a chain of reactions, acquiring other qualities to enforce itself. Arrogance insists on having its own way, believing in its own correctness and its right to control. When arrogance cannot control by merely issuing a command it becomes anger, then anger engages energy which can be applied in many different ways, on the individual level, on the national level, on the international level. What happens when arrogance and the army of its comrades rise up in people, what is the danger in this?

Arrogance begins with a need to establish a certain position, the refusal to step away from that position, to surrender it to someone else or to some other prevailing situation, the insistence on a specific situation. Arrogance in an individual is based on a self-righteous understanding that he or she is completely correct, and everyone else is wrong. People might even think, in their arrogance, that they are protecting the word of God, that they are the treasurer of truth, that their assumptions protect the truth. While the arrogance of this kind of thinking is evident to some, it is not apparent to those who believe their arrogance protects the truth.

In a small community when people have diverging views of the truth, when they have a need to force their view of the truth on the others, certain things happen. First there is gossip, and what is this kind of gossip? It is finding fault with those who do not agree with us, finding fault for some reason, judging and condemning a certain person's actions, reporting on those actions in a judgmental frame of reference. Yet judgment belongs to God, and so when we step into the arena of this type of judgment, we are denying God's role.

Gossip has arrogance at its root, gossip suggests that we know better, and not only do we know better, but we can also judge other people's lives, we can instruct them by talking about them. There is not even a face-to-face confrontation, and this implies a certain cowardice, an inability to talk directly to the individual we are discussing. But we have been told if we have a problem with someone, we need to resolve it. Gossip is the refusal to resolve a problem, it makes the problem fester, like picking a sore. When we gossip it means no one wants the problem solved, we want the problem to continue because then we can rank each other, we can differentiate higher and lower. The people we gossip about are lower, we are higher, gratification for the arrogance which requires this.

Two people are involved in the gossiping process, the one who talks and the one who listens. Both are wrong, both are involved in a process which veils us from God. When we engage qualities which do not belong to God we separate ourselves from Him. We have two obligations in this, first, not to talk about others, and second, not to listen to talk about others. We have to change the conversation or walk away.

Understanding what is forbidden, what is permitted, and binding ourselves to the

permitted, keeping away from what is not permitted, both are essential on this path. We cannot swim in filth without smelling like it. If we have that stench there is a good chance we are swimming in it, we need to extricate ourselves, we need to wash. This means we need to examine our own state severely, we need to purify ourselves. Ablution is something we are supposed to do before prayer, a ritual cleansing, yet we also need to cleanse ourselves in ways we have not even thought about. We have to cleanse our words, cleanse our thinking, our actions, we have to make our actions pure, make them actions which are without malice, without improper motive. Unless we can bring ourselves to that place which has no improper motive we are not clean.

We need to examine our motive in every situation, examine our cleanliness in every situation. Just as we look at our fingernails to see if they are clean, we have to examine our motives. If they are self-serving in any way we have to make a change, and we need to know how to do that. We have to examine ourselves this way on a regular basis, especially when we consider the fascinations, the illusions and hypnotism of our society, all the lies society perpetuates by proclaiming what is good for us, what is bad for us. Look at the standards of right and wrong in the popular press: being famous is positive, being promiscuous is positive, exposing yourself is positive, total abandon is praised, flouting morality is praised, a contemptuous attitude for society is praiseworthy. These are the things popular culture recognizes and admires.

If we do not examine ourselves with guidelines of a more enduring nature we are susceptible to everything around us. We have to learn how to avoid this susceptibility, learn how to walk away from it, and the only thing which will make us walk away is the understanding that there is something greater than the world, there is a reward, a treasure

greater than anything the world has to offer, something of immense worth, well beyond what the world has to offer. We find this treasure by being immersed in God's qualities instead of the world's.

We need to search for examples of these qualities, we need to remember examples of these qualities and keep them at the front of our consciousness. They have to become our touchstones, our constant reminders of what is true and what is a lie. We need to see through things to their reality. As long as we listen to the world, let ourselves be pushed by the world, let ourselves react to it, there is little hope for our purity because we are too busy wrestling with the world, reaching for the world and swallowing it.

There is a story about two bullfrogs who were fighting. One of them was trying to swallow the other, it kept opening its mouth wider and wider while the other, to stop this, kept puffing itself up, expanding itself, becoming larger and larger. They kept doing this until they were stuck together in a way which meant death for them both. We are trying to swallow the world, but in the end we are going to die. Is our focus on the mortal or the immortal, is our focus on what is sustained forever or what is temporary? Why do we believe in the temporary, what is it that believes the temporary? It is the gratification arising from the small pleasures of worldly status, worldly understanding.

There are two kinds of pleasure, one entails desire and the other entails grace, two kinds of pleasure, the small and the large, the small defined as desire, the large as grace. We have a certain desire, a lust for the world, a sexual energy which can be focused on many different things. We lust for power, we lust for control, there are things we lust after. Have you ever seen an elephant in that critical sexual frenzy, have you ever seen a huge animal in heat? Nothing stops them, their arrogance and their will to satisfy that lust

are so overpowering they trample everything in their way. Human beings can also be like that, and for what, for temporary satisfaction.

Most people who chase some worldly thing realize once they have it, they are still dissatisfied. This is something like a dog chasing a car, what is a dog going to do with the car when he catches it? We chase because this is what we do. We need to become something else, we have to stop chasing and find the stillness of existence, integrate ourselves in the stillness of existence. We have to know that the value, the true worth of our lives is not found in what we see with our physical eyes, this worth is not found in what we touch with our hands, not in what we wear on our backs, not in what we display to the world, not in the titles after our names, not in the people we control or the things that move when we point to them. Real worth lies somewhere else, somewhere else which must become the focus of our intention, our will and our lives.