

How Should We Handle Attention and Praise from the World?

Acts 3:11-26

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Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus

- Acts 3:19-20, ESV

Peter and John were used by God to perform a remarkable miracle, in full public view of many witnesses. A lame man, whom hundreds of people had known and had regularly passed on their way into the Temple, was completely and miraculously healed. He walked, leapt and praised God as he strolled into the Temple for joyful worship. Such remarkable actions will surely draw a crowd and soon "*all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them.*"

Peter's response to the astonished gathering is a model for us of how we should handle any positive attention or praise we receive from the world. Peter did not steal glory for himself. He did not put on airs of false modesty, saying, "Oh, it was nothing, really. Thank you." Nor did he just flippantly and casually say "Glory to God! Glory to God!" No, Peter took full advantage of the assembled crowd to give true glory to God and to proclaim Christ.

Peter began by making sure that the crowd did not credit him or John with this great miracle:

Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus" - Acts 3:12-13, ESV

If God ever chooses to use us to do something remarkable in the world, something noteworthy that somehow wins the attention and praise of the world, we must truly and sincerely give credit where credit is due. Every good and perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights. (*James 1:17*) We must never forget that and never yield to the temptation to take credit for ourselves for the work of God in us and through us.

Yet it is not enough for Peter to deflect the credit for this action back to God. He doesn't even slow down to take a breath once he mentions Jesus' name. He rushes onward, before the crowd can interfere or object, and gives them the full Gospel proclamation of who Jesus is and what He has done for them. He speaks boldly and directly, issuing a direct challenge to the assembled Jewish people.

Notice the rich content of this short sermon:

1. Who Jesus is: The Holy and Righteous One and the Author of life.
2. What Christ did: He suffered and died at the hands of God's people, as foretold by the prophets.
3. What God did for Christ: He raised Him from the dead and glorified His name.
4. How this miracle was done: Through faith in Jesus' name.
5. What the people should do: Repent of their sins, turn back to the Lord, and seek the Christ whom God has sent.

This sermon, like Peter's Pentecost sermon from chapter 2, has a clear declaration of truth and a call for repentance and faith. It is also thoroughly biblical, Christ-centered, theologically rich and personally passionate. Peter seems always ready to preach and to do so with knowledge, authority, passion and power. May the Lord grant us the same kind of desire to bring glory to His name and the same kind of readiness to speak the truth.