

Personal Management?

Dee Bowman

There is a tendency in man to disregard God's government in preference for personal autonomy (auto--self; nomos, rule). He wants to rule himself—without interruptions. Illustrations of the fact are numerous. You see them everywhere, on bumper stickers, in magazines and newspapers, everywhere. Perhaps the most all-inclusive statement of it is seen in this generation's proclivity to “do your own thing,” or “it’s my life, I can handle it!”

Jeremiah sounded the warning. so did Solomon. Jeremiah said, “...it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah. 10:23); Solomon said, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Man seems driven to plot his own course, choose his own way to happiness. But in promoting such a scheme he only brings about frustration, for such an adventure is doomed to failure. Its futility is described by the wise man as a “vexation of spirit.” Literally, it is like trying to catch a handful of the wind (Ecclesiastes 2:17). Personal management is foolish and doomed for failure.

No matter how it “seemeth right,” there can be no benefit to such a nonsensical fantasy which supposes that one can live life without restraints, impositions, or requirements. Just because a thing feels comfortable, even enjoyable, does not argue that it is moral. Revenge undoubtedly feels good to some folks, but it is not moral. Illicit sexual conduct produces sensations that recommend it to those who are disposed merely to satisfy their animal lusts, but it is still wrong, still sinful. And success at all costs to some may feel good, no matter what action-is required to make it come about, but it remains sinful. Personal management is ultimately a poor choice.

The tendency toward self-rule causes men to rebel against the authority of God. Humanism, with its various tentacles, seeks to explain the existence of man without including God, so out comes evolution. Secularism says all truth is relative, that no such thing as absolute truth even exists, so out comes situation ethics. The pious religionist explains the nature of God only in terms of goodness and without regard to severity, and out comes ecumenism. Foolish!

Truth is not only definitive (John 8:32), it is “once for all delivered” (Jude 3). It not only requires obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9), it assigns retributive actions against all who disobey (Jude 14-15; II Thessalonians 1:7-9), even against the false religionist (Matthew 7:21-22).

The desire for self-rule causes men to neglect to involve God in their day-today affairs. To many, He is some kind of being from whom we are disassociated and with whom we have contact only when worshipping. Godliness, properly regarded, is the inclusion of

God in every area of our lives, and on a daily basis. Not merely mentioning His name, but doing even the smallest things according to His word (Colossians 3:17). Godliness means taking into consideration how the decisions we make--even the very smallest ones--will affect our relationship with Him (I Peter 4:11). It means being constantly involved with Him, always grateful for all He has done for us, even the smallest blessings (Ephesians 5:20).

The person who cries out "I can do it by myself" often is prejudiced in favor of the rich, the elite, the educated. He is more interested in being served than in serving. We have no right to form estimates of people based on what they have, where they live, what they do for a living, who their parents are, or where they attended school. The Lord answered the question "who is my neighbor?" by teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). My neighbor is anyone who needs my help.

We must learn that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15), that we are not to put our zeal for some personal project above knowledge of the word (Rom. 10:1-2), that we must learn to "tarry for one another" (I Cor. 11:33), that we are to "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phi. 2:4). The gospel is for all; we must make sure all have access to it.

Man cannot make it alone. He needs direction, purpose, pardon. And perhaps the worst thing he can do in life is to leave God and His word out of his life and do whatever he wants to do with it. He must turn to God, not himself, for what he needs. "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Personal management is foolish!