

## Label, then ignore. Categorize, then discard.

Let me call to your attention a widespread sin that tends to plague Christians who have accumulated above average Bible knowledge. Those who commit this sin usually don't realize that it is a wicked, harmful practice. (If they did, they would immediately stop doing it.)

Knowledge in itself is a good thing that we should pursue. But the Bible warns about an inherent danger that lurks when we acquire it. *"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1)*. When Christians acquire knowledge, they sometimes begin to think that those with less knowledge probably don't have anything worthy to say or teach. Though we would never tell them directly, in our inner thoughts, we might find ourselves labeling them as misguided and ignorant. If we do, we could likely then ignore what they say. But because we don't want to appear unloving, we might give them the impression that we are listening to them with a big smile.

This type of thing also can occur when a Christian of one denomination is listening to or reading the words of a Christian from a different denomination. For example, a fellow church member with less knowledge might be confused about a statement he read in a Bible commentary. So, he explains it to a more seasoned church member. The more seasoned church member might abruptly stop the conversation without listening to the concern or question. Instead, he might tell his fellow church member that the commentator does not know what he is talking about because he is an "Arminian" or a "Reformed" Christian or any other denomination other than his own. Now the commentator may indeed not know what he is talking about. But the church member might have had a legitimate question that went unanswered because the more seasoned church member dismissed the commentator outright. The statement that raised the question may have been a true, biblical statement. But since it was made by a commentator from a different (inferior) denomination, in his mind, it is not worthy of any consideration.

New believers or Christians that have not yet acquired much biblical knowledge might not even know that this type of thing occurs. But those of us with more knowledge have observed it often. Many of us are guilty of it. On occasion, God reminds me of instances in which I was the one doing it. Such reminders always cause me to cringe, because I know it is an arrogant, unloving thing to do to others.

This sin is even uglier when the sin of presumption gets added to the mix. For the sake of example, let us assume that a Reformed Christian is being encouraged and challenged by a commentary. He reads many things that causes him to assume that the commentator is also Reformed. Suddenly, he reads a statement that challenges some of his current theological views. As he reads further, he runs across a statement that does not seem to be in complete harmony with reformed theology. Without being certain, he suddenly assumes that the commentator is an "Arminian" because only an Arminian would make such a statement. Once the reader categorizes the commentator as Arminian, he feels justified ignoring everything he has to say. The reader assumed the commentator is Arminian when in reality, he is a Reformed theologian. But since he falsely categorized and labeled him Arminian, the reader discards the commentary and anything else the commentator has written. So, in addition to the unloving sin involved in the outright dismissal of anything a fellow Christian might say, this reader also commits a sin of presumption. He dismissed the statement even before considering it because he falsely assumed the commentator was not in his "superior" theological camp (even though he was in his camp). *"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13)*.

To further illustrate this, I purposely included the Bible quotes from the King James Version. Because of this, some Christians who read this might assume that I am in the "King James Only" camp. And of those who assume this, some of them might label me "a King James Only" person and assume that I am one of those **ignorant "King James Only" people**.<sup>1</sup> That assumption might be all that some Christians need to label me "King James Only" and disregard everything I might have to say. (To them, King James Only people do not know much and therefore can't have anything worthy to say or write.) In reality, I am not a "King James Only" person. So, anyone who read this far assuming that I am "King James Only" proves the point I am trying to make here.

The sinful attitudes described in this article plagued many of the Pharisees when Jesus walked the earth. If we identify these attitudes in us, we should be alarmed because the Bible teaches that only the humble will be in heaven. Most Christians are familiar with the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector found in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke. Most Christians do not think they possess the attitudes of these Pharisees. They assume that since they believe that justification is by faith and not works of law, they automatically are not like the Pharisees. But let me call your attention to Jesus' reason for telling the parable. *"He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous."* This is probably what stands out about Jesus' reason for telling the parable. But it is incomplete. Let me state the full reason. *"He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, **and despised others**."*

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<sup>1</sup> Let me state for the record that I **do not** believe those in the "King James Only" camp are ignorant people.

The Pharisees were not just self-righteous, they also despised others. The word despised here means to take lightly or disregard. This is exactly what Christians do when they label, and then ignore other Christians simply because they think that those Christians are not in their theological camp. They might not come right out and say everything the Pharisee said in Jesus' parable, but they certainly despise other Christians by categorizing, and then dismissing them.

*He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).*

*Tom Bear*

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