

# “WOE UNTO YOU, WHEN ALL MEN SHALL SPEAK WELL OF YOU”

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## APPLICATION OF LESSON

In Luke 6:26 the Lord said, **“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets.”** Such a statement almost seems to be out of place, for don’t most of us want all men to speak well of us? Yet Christ says that for such to happen would not be good.

In this chapter of Luke, our attention is arrested by the paradoxical nature of blessings and cursings (vs. 21-26). In those few verses we note:

### “Blessed”

- A. **“...are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of heaven.”**
- B. **“...are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.”**
- C. **“...are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.”**
- D. **“...are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”**

### “Woe”

- A. **“...unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.”**
- B. **“...unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger.”**
- C. **“...unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.”**
- D. **“...unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets.”**

The vital truth contained herein is, that the *blessed* (i.e. the poor, the hungering, the weeping, the persecuted) have consolation and assurance in future rewards if they endure; whereas, the rich, the full, the laughing, and **the “spoken well of”** have their reward now (cf. Mat. 6:2-6), therefore the picture of their future is painted with lamentation and woe.

The popularity seeker has the same lamentation and woe as his “reward” as do the rich, the full, and the laughing. The heart of the meaning of verse 26 is best seen by understanding Christ to say, “Men have not praised or applauded my doctrine, rather they have opposed it; (cf. John 15:18). Therefore, if they speak well of you (my followers, and professed disciples) and your doctrine, it is obvious proof that you do not teach my doctrine.”

To better understand all that is included in Luke 6:26 it is necessary that we give attention to the following truths.

## DISCUSSION

### ***The Character of the Popularity Seeker***

The motive of the popularity seeker is not an interest in the spiritual welfare of his fellow man (cf. Acts 20:20-27). In Acts 20:20-27 we read,

**How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom shall see my face no more. Wherefore I testify unto this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God.**

Paul was not a popularity seeker. Paul said, “...I have kept back nothing...I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Paul did not disguise any important truth, nor did he withdraw any needed truth from public view. He did not refuse to declare the truth, and he was not afraid to preach the truth. He did not fear the consequences. Because Paul had openly, fearlessly, wholly, and without refrain proclaimed the saving truths of God’s word, he could innocence from the blood of all he had taught. Paul was not seeking popularity, he was concerned for the souls of men and women. His motive was exactly opposite of the motive of the popularity seeker.

The motive of the popularity seeker is well stated in Matthew 6.1-7.

**Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain**

**repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.**

He seeks to have “...**glory of men...**” (v. 2). He wants to “...**be seen of men...**” (v. 3). and “...**heard of men...**” (v. 7). The popularity seeker will sell his soul to be popular with the world (Jam. 4:4). Perhaps it is because the truth to him is unpalatable. Or, perhaps he fears the loss of reputation and/or financial support. It could be that he fears the rich, the great, and the popular in the community looking down their noses at him. Whatever the motive, he sells his soul for the pitiful price of popularity and in his quest for popularity with men forfeits being popular with and praised of Jehovah God.

Matthew 6:1-7 notes the motive of the popularity seeker, and this passage also notes his *method*. His method is to be benevolent and generous, and to make certain that all are aware of such. He publicly exhibits his piety and makes long and eloquent prayers and speeches. One would never have to ask him anything of his character for he is careful to see that all men hear of his “**goodness**” and “**purity.**”

The popularity seeker’s method also includes *withholding the truth*. He will *avoid* certain aspects of it while other principles of truth will be given little prominence. He will present some truths in a web of *allusive, abstract, and subtle* speculations, and he will be careful to cloud the issue in some areas to such an extent that people cannot understand him.

Absalom (2 Samuel 15:2-6) was a popularity seeker.

**And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that, when any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgment, when Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that, when any man came nigh to do him obedience, he put forth his hand, and took hold of him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.**

He stood at the gate and with words as sweet as honey won the people; and so it is with such men today. They preach to please the ears of men and not the heart of God.

### ***The Class Of The Popularity Seeker***

In our text, Jesus asserts that a man’s fidelity, where truth and doctrine are concerned, may be measured by the way in which men view or look upon him. A Christian should strive to have “...**a good testimony from them that are**

**without...**" (1 Tim. 3:7); but when his words and conduct are such as to please and delight the ungodly, affording no reproof for their wicked practices he should be alarmed.

Universal praise brings one under suspicion of unfaithfulness, characterlessness, and the lust of pleasing. Perhaps the interested student would like to consider the false prophets noted in Micah 2:11, 1 Kings 22:6-14; Jeremiah 23:14; 28:10-11; and Ezekiel 13:10-11.

### ***The Consequences Incurred By The Popularity Seeker***

Jesus stressed the vanity of being a popularity seeker when he said, "**Woe unto you...**" Some of the more practical consequences are: (1) The loss of *humility*. Over a period of time, one might easily begin to believe he is something special and lose sight of his own sins and weaknesses. (2) The loss of *watchfulness*. Watchfulness, in the Christian sense is the posture of one who feels himself to be in danger and beset with enemies within and without. Peter certainly commanded that we be watchful (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The man who becomes hungry for popularity becomes self-satisfied and loses the spiritual poise necessary to watch and overcome.

The eternal consequence of seeking after popularity at all cost is the loss of one's soul. Passages such as Galatians 1:8-9 and 1 Peter 2:1 teach this lesson. But not only will the popularity seeker lose his soul, there will be the loss of souls influenced by him. There will be those he never taught for he didn't want to hurt their feelings. There will be others that he influenced to follow in his steps and believe the doctrine of "Good God, Good Devil; Good Heaven, Good Hell" in order that he might be popular with all men.

### ***The Popularity Seeker Will Not Preach The Gospel of Christ***

The *nature* of the gospel produces a stir. It will, when preached, comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. It seeks to dispel darkness (which many love) with light (Mat. 5:14; John 3:19-21). It seeks to spread purity in a world of immorality (Gen. 6:5). It cries out against sin in a world that loves sin (John 16:8-9). In Acts chapter 2 and 8, we notice that the preaching of the gospel stirred the people to receive the word of God and obey that word to the saving of their souls.

The gospel not only produces a favorable stir, it also produces a negative stir. When Stephen preached the gospel in Acts 7, the people ran upon him with gnashing of teeth and took him outside the city and stoned him to death. When sin is exposed, the sinner often becomes angry. This is something some brethren do not like to have happen. Often preachers are told to not upset the people with their preaching. Such is an impossibility. Preaching one God stirs the idolater and the atheist. Preaching divine creation stirs the evolutionist. Preaching the authority of the scriptures stirs the modernist and the liberal. Preaching one church stirs the denominational and the unconverted church member. Preaching on Christian conduct stirs the sinner in the church.

### ***Regardless Of Popularity, We Must Preach Sound Doctrine (The Gospel)***

All Christians should be concerned with popularity, but not popularity with the world. We must be concerned with popularity with God (2 John 9-11). Therefore, if we are going to be popular with God we must preach the gospel.

We must preach the gospel because we are therein saved (Rom. 6: 17-18). We should also preach the gospel because God's word is unalterable (Pro. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19; Mat. 24:35). We must preach the gospel because it is of divine ordination (1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:10), and because the wrath of God abides on those who preach any other doctrine (Gal. 1:6-9).

### **CONCLUSION**

We have noted the Character, the Class, and the Consequences of the popularity seeker. We have also pointed out the fact that the popularity seeker will not preach the gospel of Christ and that we must preach the gospel to be popular with God.

Whenever the church fails to arouse the world she has failed in her loyalty to the Lord Jesus. Loyalty to Christ's Commission must and will result in unpopularity and rouse the antagonism of men. It is our business to bring a new standard of life into the world. It is the business of Christians to be unworldly. If we would apply that new standard, declare it frankly and freely, the church would not long have to complain of the want or lack of persecution. It is our business to denounce and condemn sin. Christ laid down his life in denouncing and condemning the sins of the day. He loved the souls of men. He wanted to see them approved of God, therefore, he denounced their sin. He was not running a popularity contest with men. He was seeking to do the Father's will.

In preaching the cross, we are bound to rouse the antagonism of the world; thus Paul referred to "**the offence of the cross.**" Further, when one preaches the Christ of the cross, he must preach: (1) The Reformer of the Temple; (2) The Denouncer of Sin; (3) The Condemner of Hypocrisy and Religious Error; and (4) The Proclaimer of Truth.

Alexander Campbell wrote regarding one's stand for the truth:

It required brave men to confess the Lord, then, and to maintain their Christian character. These early Christians were persecuted, because they were Christians,—persecuted for pushing the claims of Master upon the attention of others (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1867, p. 233).

On another occasion Campbell wrote:

Oh, for an increase of the number of faithful men who care more for the honor of God, His Word, and the salvation of men, than for the idle, vain applause of an unsanctified world!—who would rather teach a saving truth, than "make a good impression" for themselves; that would rather, awaken careless souls to a sense of their lost condition, and inspire a desire of

salvation, than make an “eloquent sermon”; that would rather lead souls to Christ, than draw admiring audiences (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1864, p. 540).

Our blessed Saviour summed up all when he said, “**If any man will come after me, let him deny *himself* and take up his cross, and follow me.**”~

*Deceased*