

## The Pursuit of Excellence

### Introduction:

1. Refer to the men's training class. The goal or purpose was to encourage each participant, in whatever he did in public worship to do it to the best of his ability, and in a way and manner which would be of benefit and encouragement to all who are present.
  - a. The objective of such an effort was to discourage mediocrity and to encourage the pursuit of excellence.
2. The lesson title: The Pursuit of Excellence.
3. There are a number of Scripture which use the word "excellence," and which encourage a person to excel, to abound, or to go beyond the ordinary.
  - a. Abel offered to God a "*more excellent sacrifice*," Heb. 11:4.
  - b. Daniel had an "*excellent spirit*," Daniel 6:3.
  - c. Paul showed the saints at Corinth "*a more excellent way*," I Cor. 12:31.
  - d. Paul prayed that the saints at Philippi would "*approve things that are excellent*," Phil. 1:9-10.
  - e. Jesus obtained "*a more excellent ministry*," Heb. 8:6.

### Discussion:

#### I. Excellence Defined.

- A. Noun: From *Huperbole*, defined as "a throwing beyond, hence, a surpassing, an excellence, is translated "*excellency*" in 2 Cor. 4:7
- B. Verb: From *huperballo*, "to throw over or beyond." Vine. 2 Cor. 9:14; Eph. 1:19 2:7.
- C. Adverb: From *huperekperissou*, "denotes superabundantly over." Vine. I Thess. 3:10; Eph. 3:20; 2 Cor. 7:4.
- D. From the Dictionary: "The state of excelling in anything; the state of possessing good qualities in an eminent or unusual degree," **The Webster encyclopedic Dict. Of the English Language.**
  1. It is not the we are competing with each other, but that we are doing the best we can.
    - a. Cf. the Parable of the Talents, Matt. 25:14-30.
    - b. Cf. "*she hath done what she could*," Mark 14:3-9.
    - c. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:2-3,5

#### II. Excellence is the opposite of Mediocrity.

- A. "Mediocrity" is the norm for many people in their various activities:
  1. Their work habits.
    - a. The reverse of Col. 3:23-24.
  2. In sports.
    - a. Some athletes are known as "floaters." They have above average ability; they work hard for part of the game, but once their team gets a little ahead they play at a lower level.
  3. In religion.
    - a. Many are like the brethren in the church at Laodicea, Rev. 3:15-16.
    - b. It is much better to be like Jesus of whom the astonished people said, "*He hath done all things well*," Mark 7:37.
- B. Two sobering questions:
  1. What kind of a Christian am I?
    - a. Am diligent in my efforts? Am I exercising myself unto godliness?
  2. What kind of a church is the Seffner church?
    - a. Are we pursuing excellence? Are we diligently striving to make known the wisdom of God? Are we striving to be a shining light in this community and beyond.
    - b. Or are we content to meet and greet, to simply keep house for the Lord?

#### III. God always demanded the best of His people.

- A. In their Giving.
  1. Numbers 18:12,29-30.
  2. Note the contrast to those mentioned in Mal. 1:6-8.
- B. In their living.
  1. I Thess. 4:1-12.
  2. Jesus taught that we should be like little children, Matt. 18:3.
  3. In one way or another children are continually growing, growing:
    - a. Emotionally.

- b. Physically.
  - c. Intellectually.
  - d. Spiritually.
- C. In their Thinking.
1. Psalm 1:1-3.
  2. Prov. 4:23.
  3. Phil. 4:8.

#### IV. Application:

- A. The Essence of Excellence is God.
1. We should strive to be like God, 2 Cor. 3:18.
  2. God is holy, so we should be holy, 1 Peter 1:15-16.
  3. God is perfect, so we should strive for perfection, Matt. 5:48.
  4. What God does is *"very good,"* Gen. 1:31.
- B. The Example of Excellence is Jesus Christ.
1. Jesus, the Word, was manifest in the flesh, John 1:14.
  2. Jesus said, *"he that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"* John 14:8-9.
  3. Jesus left us an *"example"* to follow, 1 Peter 2:21.
  4. When we are faced with a question with regards to a course of action to take, we should pause and Ponder the question, *"what would Jesus do?"*
- C. The Guide book for Excellence is the Bible.
1. It is the word of God, Heb. 4:12.
  2. It is *"able to save,"* James 1:21.
  3. It can make us complete and equip us for every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
  4. It must be obeyed, James 1:22.
- D. The Goal of Excellence is Eternal Life.
1. Jesus, the ultimate example of Excellence, came that we may have eternal life, John 10:10.
  2. We live in hope of eternal life, Tit. 1:2.
  3. Note 2 Peter 1:10-11.
  4. Rev. 22:14.

#### Conclusion:

1. Try as we may, we fall short of absolute perfection, 1 John 1:8,10.
2. But we must keep on keeping on, keep growing, keep striving.
3. Phil. 3:13-14.

--Bobby Witherington, Oct. 4, 2015