

## 1.18.21 - Honoring God

Honor is a word that is hard to define, but we all use the word and think we understand what is meant. The dictionaries for this word seem to use the word to define it which is little help. To get started, let's say we honor God when we are impressed by a sunset, or a view from a mountain vista. We honor Him when we admire the skill and variety of his creatures. We honor him by admiring the beauty of the many flowers and plants. We honor Him when we follow His leading instead of "leaning on our own understanding" which says, "I know better than You."

As impressive as a sunset may be or as inspiring as the view from the mountain top, they rank far below God's greatest creation. He did not speak it into existence as He did for the rest of His creation, but made it from the dust of the earth in His own image. He did not program this greatest creation with instincts but gave it a free will and reasoning skills to learn how to provide for and protect itself. God wanted this creation to love him which is only possible with a free will. Here is a quote from Theology of the Body, by Christopher West to illustrate the point: *Only the person who is free of the compulsion of lust is capable of being a true "gift" to another. The freedom of the gift, then, is the freedom of the heart to bless, which is freedom from the compulsion to **grasp** and **possess**.* God does not grasp and possess us like Satan does if he can. even "you scratch my back and I will scratch yours" is love with conditions. If you love me keep my commands was tested with one commandment. Satan, another of God's creatures with a free will, that God did not redeem, came to the garden to see if the first humans loved God. Satan convinced Adam and Eve that God was keeping the good stuff from them.

If you search the scriptures looking for what God is keeping from us, you may end up agreeing with this quote from Christopher West: *In essence Christ's life proclaims: "You don't believe God loves you? Let me stretch out my arms and show you how much God loves you. You don't believe God is 'gift'? This is my body given for you (see Luke 22:19). You think God wants to keep you from life? I will offer myself so that my life's blood can give you life to the full (see John 10:10). You thought God was a tyrant, a slave driver? I will take the form of a slave (see Philippians 2:7); I will let you lord it over Me to demonstrate that God has no desire to lord it over you (see Mathew 20:28). You thought God would whip your back if you gave Him the chance? I will let you whip my back to demonstrate that God has no desire to whip yours. I have not come to condemn you but to save you (see John 3:17). I have not come to enslave you but to set you free (see Galatians 5:1).* Adam and Eve made their decision before the Bible was

written, but how can we question God's goodness with all the written evidence? We honor God then by realizing He is providing His best for us.

Alright, Satan lied to them. What does that have to do with naturism? The tree of knowledge seems to be a key to a Greek belief called Gnosticism. The name comes from the Greek word for knowledge. Greeks were famous for philosophy and they viewed the body as a hindrance to gaining knowledge. Gnosticism is a changing collection of beliefs and not easily defined. Our dear friends from Aching for Eden wrote an article about Gnostic beliefs creeping into the church. It was reporting on another article on the same subject which I read, and that article recommended the book by West. Since some Baptists think that Catholics have no concept of what the scriptures say I got the book as cheap as possible. Good stewardship if it turned out to be a waste of money. I have not found any reference to Gnostics in the book, but it views the body in a much more wholesome light than we are accustomed to. We are ready to blame Gnostic beliefs in the church for the textile position on nakedness. This is based on the sources mentioned above and trying to explain why they are so blind to the truth.

It is rather clear that some of Satan's appeal in the garden was the acquisition of "knowledge". If we know how to do a task, we do not seek advice on how to do it. In fact, we do not even consider advice on how to do it better. If Adam could be "knowledgeable" enough, he would not take suggestions from a God who gave him a free will. God, I would sooner do it myself. Thus, Satan would separate man from God by using knowledge mixed with a little pride as a replacement for God. Since Satan and God are in conflict with each other, Satan did not want anymore images of God to deal with, so he added covering the image of God starting with the parts used to generate more images of God while Adam and Eve were following his advice. We have read that Satan can not replicate himself as humans can. Satan is stuck with the demons that he has. With too many humans he could run out of enough demons to keep everyone at least under observation if not controlled. Here is a quote from West that he applied to the human body: *"If we want to know what is most sacred in this world, all we need to do is look for what is most violently profaned.* You do not need much exposure to naturism before this becomes obvious about the body if you are willing to see it. Even textile believers should be able to recognize it in porn.

We are going to talk about our bodies and how they honor God. As stated, many times by many authors, we are made in God's image. We have not found any scriptures that suggest that God wants us to cover His image except to protect it from harm. We are also designed with the ability to become one flesh to "image" the closeness of the Trinity. Yes we are talking about sex not just nakedness, but

you can not talk long about nakedness before you need to talk about sex... The world uses sex to stop people they don't like, to sell almost anything (Do I get the pretty girl with the product?) and to mar our humanness. We need some glimpse of why God built it into our make-up.

Since humans do not have an instinct for mating time, God must have additional uses for the spousal relations. Enjoyment is certainly on the list, but there is more. Many authors claim the enjoyment is as close to the joy of heaven as humans can handle here on earth. Another purpose is mentioned above. Conjugal love demonstrates the closeness of the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit. They are three parts of one God. The two spouses become one flesh modeling the closeness of the parts of the Trinity. Yes, you have to take Them two at a time to make it fit. Spousal love also demonstrates the closeness of Christ and the believer. We are in Christ and He is in us from the time we believe. If we stretch the symbolism a little, when we join with Christ, we are born again which is a new life. When spouses become one flesh, they can start a new life. When we enjoy conjugal love, we honor God. We demonstrate that His creation works as He planned. If you worked on a project and it works like you planned, you are blessed with attaboy's even if you have to give them to yourself.

Marriage as an illustration of spiritual truths is found through the Bible. The Bible starts with the wedding of the first humans and ends with the marriage of Christ and His Bride, the church. In the middle of the Bible is a book on the conjugal relationship. The first recorded miracle was at a wedding feast. Christopher West likes to refer to a marriage that lost its original zeal as running out of wine. God uses marriage to illustrate the relation He wants with us. The for-life part is to illustrate that He will never leave us. Again, we honor Him by following the plan He put into action from the beginning.

Here is a quote from Christopher West's book which shows the spousal love mirroring Christ's love for us. *As we know well, it's at the deepest spiritual level of our humanity--not merely the physical level--that we're afraid of our "nakedness" and thus, find ourselves "hiding." True love is not afraid of the other person's "warts." In fact, the "strength of such love emerges most clearly" when the beloved person stumbles, when his or her weakness or even sins come into the open. One who truly loves does not then withdraw his love, but loves all the more, loves in full consciousness of the other's shortcomings and faults... For the person as such never loses its essential value. Remember, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (unlovable by a Holy God).*

One more quote, this one relates a little more to naturism. *Since the dawn of original sin, we've been hiding our "nakedness" from God (and one another) out of fear that we're not lovable. Faith in God's love casts this fear out enabling us to bring all our brokenness into the light, knowing we will not be chided or condemned, but embraced, forgiven, healed. "I was afraid, because I was naked; so, I hid myself" is transformed into "I was at peace, because I know God loves me in my nakedness, so I exposed myself."*

Maybe the question that should be asked to the textile believer is, "What are you trying to hide from God and the rest of us?"