

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Distinguishing between Compliments and Flattery?

(Jerry Fite)

The Devil does not create, but corrupts what is good. He takes desire in man's heart and turns it into covetousness. He uses the sexual desire placed in man by the Lord and turns it into fornication and adultery. The vigilant Satan also has corrupted the needed “compliment”, into vain “flattery”.

Compliments and flattery both involve praise and adoration. How do they differ? How does God arm us with this difference so we continue to give and receive compliments while avoiding flattery and suspicion?

Determining if adoration is the truth is a big factor in distinguishing a compliment from flattery. Paul encouraged the new Christians at Thessalonica by telling that he thanked God for them constantly. He praised them for their work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. That was not the end to his adoration. He uplifted their spirits by pointing out that their good example had spread as widely as their faith had gone forth (*I Thessalonians 1:2-10*). However, Paul says, “for

neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness” (I Thessalonians 2:5).

Paul did not let the possibility of flattery keep him from giving needed compliments. There are times when people need to be lifted up, and “compliments” fill the need and “complete” the person. The Thessalonians needed to be made complete with encouraging words. Paul freely gave it. He did not use empty flattery, but offered heartfelt truth.

We also need to be warned about receiving flattery. Flattery can be a trap. Wise Solomon admonishes us with this truth: “*A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his steps” (Proverbs 29:5).* People ingratiate others with words of flattery for one's selfish gain. Don't you feel good towards those who praise you? Watch out? Flattery is a cheap investment in order to reap a selfish profit later. Paul reminds us that flattering words are often a “cloak of covetousness”. The flatterer thinks, “What

can I get out of you?” Such thought is followed with “I will set you up with empty praise in order to cash in later.”

We can guard ourselves from flattery when we first refuse to flatter ourselves or lie to ourselves. For example, the wicked man has no fear of God “*for he flattereth himself in his own eyes that his iniquity will not be found out and be hated” (Psalms 36:2).* Flattery is a lie, but it is self-deception emboldening the wicked to think they will not be held accountable for their sins.

Knowing that we are not really the brightest, cleverest, most beautiful or most handsome; we become stronger to not be set up by the flatterer who says we are! When we handle things according to “common sense”, we should not be swayed with the flattering words that we manifested “uncommon wisdom” Flattery says more about the person offering it than the recipient. Speaking truth at a critical time is the beauty of a compliment. Being truthful with self will guard us from stepping into flattery's trap.