

New Year's 2019 – “The Way Up is Down” Sunday, December 30, 2018

- ❖ What has happened in this country?
 - We used to be able to have meaningful **DIALOG**...about our differences...in hopes of resolving them.
 - It appears that we can no longer state our **OPINION**...on issues without **OFFENDING** someone.
 - **SLIDE** - We used to be able to **AGREE** to **DISAGREE**...and we used to be able to do *that* **AGREEABLY**.

- ❖ Now everything is a war of words...without hope of resolution...each side standing firmly entrenched...in their own **RHETORIC**...unaltered by facts, logic or common sense.
 - It appears that we can no longer share our opinions...and thoughts on an issue or a subject...without invoking **HATE** speech...casting **ASPERSIONS**...or **INSULTING** someone or some group.

- ❖ **SLIDE** - The first amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; **or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press**; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”
 - The Supreme Court requires the government...to provide substantial **JUSTIFICATION**...for the interference with the right of free speech...where it attempts to regulate the content of the speech.
 - **SLIDE** - Generally...a person cannot be held liable...either criminally or civilly...for anything written or spoken...about a person or topic...so long as it is truthful or...based on an honest opinion.

- ❖ While it appears that we are protected...from Congress and the Supreme Court curtailing our freedom of expression...for now...it also appears that we are not secure...from each other regarding the same.
 - How and when did this happen?
 - **SLIDE** - For me, it began with the William F. Buckley, Jr. versus Gore Vidal debates of the 1960's.
 - Many pundits agree that this was when...to quote a 2015 New York Times article...“debate became bloodsport.”
 - ◆ It has only gone downhill from there.
 - I have no clue where it will all end.
 - But I would like to offer a starting place...for **RECOVERY** from our addiction...to **FULL-CONTACT** debate.

- ❖ I believe that **Philippians 2:3-5** holds the key to becoming, as the late President George H.W. Bush proclaimed, a “kinder and gentler nation.”
 - **SLIDE** - **Philippians 2:3-5** encourages us, “³**Let** nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **let** each esteem others better than himself. ⁴**Let** each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵**Let** this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”
 - The overarching theme of...**Philippians** chapter two is **OTHERS**.

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- Our motivation should never be “**selfish ambition or conceit.**”
- In fact, we must strive for **HUMILITY.**
 - I believe **Andrew Murray** said, “The humble person is not one who thinks mainly of himself, the humble person simply does not think of himself at all.”
 - Humility is that grace that...when you know you have it...you have lost it.
 - The truly humble person knows himself and accepts himself – **Rom. 12:3.**
 - **SLIDE** - He yields himself to Christ to be a servant...to use what he is and has...for the glory of God...and the good of others.
 - ◆ The believer's eyes are turned **AWAY** from himself...and focused on the needs of **OTHERS.**
- ❖ Along with humility goes **SURRENDER.**
 - We are called not to focus only...on our own interests...but to additionally surrender attention...from our own interests...in favor of looking out for “**the interests of others.**”
 - There is something here that requires us to be **PROACTIVE.**
 - We must surrender our needs...our desires in favor of proactively demonstrating the ability to “**esteem (value) others better than (above) ourselves.**”
 - Paul said it best in **Rom. 12:3a**, “to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”
 - What Paul is saying here is that...our concern for **OTHERS** and their needs...must come before looking...out for our **OWN** interests...this attitude **ILLUSTRATES** possessing the “mind of Christ.”
- ❖ **Phil. 2:5** - “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**” refers to this very attitude.
 - **SLIDE** – **Unknown QUOTE:** “We're at a point in the history of Christianity where people don't care if you can back up what you say with Scripture. Their feelings, desires, and emotions override what Scripture says. They don't follow Christ, they follow self.”
 - We should be **OVERWHELMED** with **THANKSGIVING**...that this kind of attitude...was not the thinking of “The Greatest Generation.”
 - Without their **SELFLESSNESS...COURAGE...VALOR**...and their willingness to **SACRIFICE** for **OTHERS**...our nation would never have survived the tyranny of the Axis powers.
 - “**Let**” – 4 times in 3 verses...is the operative word...**MEANING**...you have a **CHOICE!**...every day that dawns...is chock **FULL** of...**LIFE** changing **CHOICES!**
 - You cannot **ADOPT** the **ATTITUDE** of Jesus...**OR** you can continue in the **PRIDE** and **SELF-CENTEREDNESS** of your own **INTELLECT**...and continue to **TRUST** in your own limited **UNDERSTANDING.**
 - **Pro. 3:5-6** - ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

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- Jesus **CHOSE** to put **OTHERS** ahead of Himself...He did nothing from selfish ambition...He magnified “lowliness of mind” by **VALUING**...you and me above Himself.
 - **SLIDE** - His birth and death demonstrate this kind of attitude...“He came to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay!”
- **UNITY** in the church or in this nation...can come only from an attitude of **GENUINE** humility and surrender...by people truly regarding **OTHERS** as more important than themselves—the attitude that was **SUPREMELY** manifested in Christ Jesus.
- ❖ For 2019, remember **James 4:6-10**:
 - **James 4:6** - the call...in this verse...is to shun pride and to...submit humbly to God’s authority.
 - **James 4:7-9** - In **verses 7–9** a whole series of commands are given which...if followed...contribute to **HARMONY** and **HOLINESS**.
 - James called for commitment - **Ver. 7**...cleansing - **Ver. 8**...and repentance - **Ver. 9**.
 - **SLIDE** - **James 4:10** - The **KEY** is **HUMILITY**....“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”
 - The way **UP** is **DOWN**...the **LOWLY** one becomes the **LIFTED** one.
 - There is a marked advantage to **HUMILITY**—eventually it brings **HONOR!**
 - **SLIDE** - And it will produce **JOY**:
 - Jesus
 - Others
 - You