

### **Puffs That Do Not Satisfy**

Please meditate on these three verses of Scripture. They will serve as the foundation for my message today: *“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day”* (Deuteronomy 8:18).

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”* (James 1:17). *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up”* (I Corinthians 13:4).

The phrase translated “puffed up” comes to us from the Greek word: “phusioo.” The meaning carries the sense of blowing; to inflate, i.e. (figuratively) make proud (haughty). It is from the Greek root “phusis” which is: growth by germination or expansion. Allow me to take the license to give my interpretation and application of “puffed up.” This is when we become persuaded of deluded visions of grandeur with our own importance. A proper sense of self-esteem is good when it is anchored in our becoming who we are by the grace of God, but if we believe we have arrived at where and who we are by any innate goodness, apart from God’s promotion, we are in trouble. The Bible says, *“Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another”* (Psalm 75: 5-7). In the Bible the use of the word “horn” is most often referring to authority coupled with power. God declared that promotion does not come from the points of the earthly compass, but rather from Heaven and Himself. This is best illustrated in the life of Joseph. He was sold by his brothers into Egypt where he was under servitude, then he served a jail sentence and eventually found favor with Pharaoh and became the second most powerful man in all of Egypt and the world. Jacob spoke of this in his dying moments when he said of his son, *“His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth...”* (Deuteronomy 33:17). We observe the mention of the physical horns of a powerful beast to push used in reference to Joseph to push people, even to the ends of the earth. You might say Joseph was the first man to be “a pusher and a shaker.” Joseph, like his father Jacob graduated to becoming a man who had *“...power with God and with men...”* (Genesis 32:28). Yet, as we come to the end of the book of Genesis, Jacob has died and now the older brothers of Joseph are afraid he will use his authority and power in a vengeful manner toward them. Listen to the brothers’ trumped-up plea and Joseph’s loving and humble response: *“And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said,*

*Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:16-20). Joseph recognized that God is the one that brought him into a powerful position in life and he was determined not to abuse it. He alluded that to not recognize his power from God, is thus abusing this power to hurt others and was a form of playing God, “...Fear not: for am I in the place of God?...” (Genesis 50:19b).*

As Americans, many of us have never been exposed to much of the world outside our country and we often take for granted how wonderfully comfortable we live, especially in comparison to many other countries. We need the humility of a Joseph, who recognized that God has placed us where we are and given us what we have. If we forget God in the midst of our prosperity, we will think we made ourselves who and what we are today. This is dangerous. We become "puffed up." Recently, I was staying in nice Bed and Breakfast during an out-of-town meeting. I was asked if I wanted to go out and get something to eat. Well, I had to get up at 3:00 the next morning to catch my flight, so I determined it to be unwise to take the extra time to go to a restaurant to eat. I was, however, hungry. So when I returned to my room, I went to the cabinet and saw a variety of cereals in those personal size varieties. I saw there were several boxes of puffed rice. I remember as a child enjoying the snap, crackle, and pop fun of eating that cereal, so I opened a box and enjoyed. And it was as good as I remembered. The only thing, eating one box did not diminish my hunger one bit. As a matter of fact, it served to stimulate my hunger – so I quickly tore into another personal box and consumed it in no time (you are hardly required to chew this stuff, it is so light and flaky). I am ashamed to tell you the second box did not satisfy nor curb my hunger. Now, I am not going to tell you how many boxes I ate, but I re-learned a valuable lesson: puff does not dispel hunger. The puffs of this world system will not satisfy either, no matter how much we have. This must be learned in life to truly enjoy life. The earlier we can learn this, the better. Consider “puffs that do not satisfy”:

### **1. Education Without Instruction**

The Bible says, *“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain (empty)” (I Corinthians 3:18-20). There is no fool worse than the educated fool. The foolishness of so-called learned men comes out often in times of crises. Richard A. Falk, professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University has made some incredibly foolish and hurtful statements of humanistic determinism that reeks of insanity in the face of recent crises in America. He and his ilk have fulfilled the Word of God’s surmising. They are, “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3:7). In some of our highest institutions of learning we have much education but little or no instruction on how to live life. God’s Word says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...” (Psalm 111:10). “The fear of the*

*LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:7). What puffed cereal is to the body, much of modern education is to the brain, resulting in deficit of character. *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). The Bible tells us: *“Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God”* (Proverbs 2: 3-5). In the day we are living in, we must take the path “less traveled by” to find God’s thoughts. We will find ourselves going out of the way of the world to find true knowledge and wisdom, but it will be well worth the trip and the rewards will reap eternal benefits. *“The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools”* (Ecclesiastes 9:17).

Next week, I am going to finish this message. I want to discuss three more “puffs that do not satisfy.”

-Pastor Pope-