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"Jesus spoke this parable to some people who viewed others with contempt" (Lk.18:9).

There are various reasons why people view others with contempt. They may have been taught by their parents from childhood to look down on others who are inferior in social status, or wealth, or education, etc. Or, if you are very intelligent and top your class in school, you can begin to view others in your class with contempt. If, in addition, you are unfortunate enough to have foolish parents who make you imagine that you are a genius, then matters could be even worse.

Let me plead with all parents: If your children are intelligent, please don't ruin them by boasting about them. I made it a rule in my house that my sons were never to tell anyone about their rank in class or the prizes they got anywhere. I knew that if they became proud, they would lose the grace of God immediately. Then they would fall into sin, and never be able to fellowship with ordinary brothers. I fear that many parents have ruined their children thus.

It is a common habit among children to make fun of someone who cannot speak English (or whatever their mother-tongue is) with a good accent. Beware of encouraging that in your home. Did any of us come out of our mother's wombs speaking with a good accent? We should thank God for any ability that we have. But we should never be proud of it. Do you know what accent they speak with in heaven? The accents of humility and love. Let us learn those accents clearly.

Perhaps you are a woman who keeps your house spotlessly clean, with everything in its proper place. Then you see someone else's home untidy and slipshod - and you despise her. You are then a Pharisee; while the person whose house is untidy may be a godly person.

Some brothers have very poor music sense, and if they start singing a chorus in an open time of praise in the church, they will invariably sing totally off tune. Don't despise them, because God doesn't listen to the music; he listens to the words. And that brother singing the wrong tune may be more sincere than you, who can sing the right tune. Personally, I have thanked God for such brothers, because they humble all the clever musicians in the church. It is Pharisee musicians who destroy the church, not the non-musical brothers. God loves non-musical brothers just as much as anyone else - but He rejects Pharisees. Many a surprise awaits such Pharisees when the Lord returns.

I am not saying that you shouldn't come first in your class, or that you shouldn't keep your house tidy, or that you shouldn't sing in tune-Not at all. By all means let us do all these. But let us be humble about them - and not despise anyone else who cannot do what we can.

There are many areas like this where we can despise others quite easily. It says in Job 36:5 that "God is almighty, but He doesn't despise anyone". The more we become like God, the more we will value people and never despise anyone - for anything.

So let us cleanse ourselves and learn to look at people as God looks at them. "What do you have that you did not receive from God? How can you boast then about anything or despise anyone else?" (1 Cor.4:7).