**BULLIES WILL BE JUDGED**

***Humility Before Honor***

I watched a documentary on Joseph Stalin. This tyrannical dictator was a murderous despot of the Soviet Union from 1922-1953. He was born as Iosif (Joseph) Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili in 1878. As a child he contracted polio and was scarred for life in his face and left arm. His mother was a kind-hearted orthodox Christian who prayed her son would enroll in a theological seminary and enter the priesthood. But while in school he fell in with those who believed in Karl Marx and Vladmir Lenin and the Communist party. He joined the Bolshevik Revolution that overthrew the Czar and established the U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic).

In his youth, due to his invalid health, he was bullied and ridiculed by other children. This built within him a bitter hatred that would last a lifetime and result in over 20,000,000 Soviet citizens being murdered by his evil hand. In an effort to build his ego to overcome his inferiority complex he changed his name to “Stalin” which means “man of steel.” In reality he was anything but a superman. He was just 5 foot 4 inches, and a cripple who bullied his way to glory. In his 29-year “Reign of Terror” from 1924 to 1953 he built thousands of monuments to himself and added titles that bordered on deity. Today, his monuments have been destroyed and his name, even in Russia, lives in infamy. History denounces him, as it does all others who claim “honor” without first “humility.”

I played on the football team when I was a sophomore at Hillcrest High. On the team was a bully named Billy Welch. He had already been in the Marine Corps and had returned to get his diploma. He lived to taunt me and all other under-classmen. One day during practice he literally started beating my best friend until he was almost unconscious. The coaches were even afraid of him and allowed him to do it. Oh how I hated him! I laid in bed at night plotting at how I would break his arms and legs so that he could never hurt others again. Thankfully, I never got the courage to try it or I would probably not be able to type this due to my mangled hands and arms.

Bullies have been on my mind ever since my sophomore year.

Bullies, like Joseph Stalin and Billy Welch, have an inferiority complex that seeks honor from others. But they seek it without humility. Solomon has something to say about that.

“*The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom,* *And* ***before honor is humility***.”
(Proverbs 15:33)

“*Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty*, *And* ***before honor is humility***.”
(Proverbs 18:12)
*By* ***humility*** *and the fear of the Lord are riches and* ***honor*** *and life*.”
(Proverbs 22:4)

Solomon understood the sequence any man must take in order to receive true and lasting honor. The way to the top is the way down. Jesus said it this way, “*The last shall be first*” (Matt.19:30; 20:16). Christ also said, “*Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth*” (Matt. 5:5).

In the business world to reach the top floor of the corporate penthouse a man should first push the elevator button marked “basement.” If he does this he will be honored. If he climbs over the back of others to reach the pinnacle he will be despised.

In our marriage we succeed only when the husband first loves his wife as Christ loved the church “*and gave himself for her*” (Eph. 5:25); and only when the wife “*submits to your own husband, as to the Lord*” (Eph. 5:22). Any other approach leads to failure.

To become the world’s Savior Jesus “*made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He* ***humbled*** *Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly* ***exalted*** *Him and given Him the name which is above every name*” (Phil. 2:7-9).

Simply put, **before honor is humility**.

In the secular world we see in history such tyrants as Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Genghis Khan and so many others. We come to loathe these bullies who used their power to intimate and control others. They have gone down in history as evil men.

Biblical examples of such egotistical bullies are well known by those who study the scriptures. Cain overpowering Abel comes to mind (Genesis 4). Joseph’s jealous older brothers selling him into slavery is another (Genesis 37-44). How about the gang of young men from Bethel who bullied Elisha by taunting him “*Go away you bald-head! Go away you bald-head*!” (2 Kgs. 2:24 - NRSV). Another example is the satraps who were full of hatred and plotted to kill Daniel in a lion’s den when he was made the chief leader by King Darius (Daniel 6). I’m also thinking of Haman’s furious bullying of Mordecai, intending to hang him on a hastily built gallows (Esther). The Pharisees and scribes inciting the mob to scream, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” is history’s greatest example of bullying (Lk. 23:21).

“*Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due season*” (I Pet 5:6). That is the only honor that lasts. “*The last shall be first*” is the way of the Christ-follower. Our mindset is, and always will be, “*Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion”* (Rom. 12:16).

I never knew what happened to Billy Welch. I used to hate him for his bully ways. Now I truly hope and pray in his old age, if still alive, he has become a Christian and “*associates with the humble*.” I want to see him in heaven, even welcoming him as my next-door neighbor.

You first. – Rick