

# **The Flattery of Lips**

By Don Potter

*Copyright 2002. All rights reserved.*

There are a few things that will keep a praise leader from being really effective in his ministering to God and His people. One of them is unconfessed sin. Another is operating out of ones own desire to lead and not a call from God. Having an agenda contrary to the plan of the Holy Spirit is a hindrance. Selfish ambition will put the brakes on the strongest of calls to ministry, but none is more calculated or destructive than believing flattery. Nothing will take the legs out from under a strong man faster than him striving to live up to the image flattery has spoken about him.

Since flattery or compliments, in some form, can be a part of everyday life to a praise leader and musician or performer, it would be beneficial to look at this subject a bit closer.

## **Control**

All of us know what flattery sounds like and how it is used, but there are subtle ways it finds a hold on ones life that can destroy much. Let me share a true story with you.

When I was a young man, (before I knew the Lord,) I met a couple that had a strong influence on me. The husband was a classical guitar teacher and a divine appointment for my life. It has taken years to realize how important his input has been to me. I was greatly encouraged by him.

On the other hand, his wife had a different influence on me. She would say to me regularly, "When you walk in the room, you light the whole place up. It is wonderful to have you here." That sounds innocent at first, but after months of similar statements, I hung on her every word. Then one day, when she was mad at her husband, she greeted me with, "Oh my, is there something wrong? You look so pale, are you alright?" Immediately I felt sick and was completely under her control. She then began to unload her anger against her husband and in a short time I was offended at a man I once loved.

As a result, the time that God had intended for me to be trained was cut short by her negative opinion of her husband. That opinion became mine and blocked my ability to receive from him. I missed some of the best years of my training by letting flattery control me.

You may feel you would have been stronger than I and wouldn't be taken so easily. Perhaps you're right, but the enemy knows our weaknesses and will take advantage every chance he gets. It's time to become aware of this tactic and gain victory over it.

I want to look at why some use flattery, and most of all how dangerous it truly is. It would be best to start with what flattery means.

### **Kolakeria (Greek)**

There is a difference between encouragement and flattery. The Greek definition of flattery means "motives of self-interest". If someone uses flattery on you, they want something. On the other hand, when someone says they like the way you play the piano or guitar they are trying to say, "your dedication to learning to play an instrument is becoming evident." That is encouragement. That kind of encouragement will cause someone to continue the pursuit of their craft, free from the strife that comes from trying to live up to the overstatements.

The encyclopedia's definition of encouragement, means, "to inspire with hope, courage or confidence." The Greek word for encouragement is "parakaleo" which means, "to call near, or invoke and comfort someone." The Bible instructs us to encourage one another (Heb. 10:25), but it warns us about flattery (Rom. 16:18). When someone is struggling through a trial, we are to encourage them with hope, but there is a tendency for many of us to not want to see anyone suffering, and our encouragement can step over the line and into flattery. That is one of the ways our flattery has the mark of control and manipulation in it.

In a way, Peter, the disciple of Jesus, was trying to control the Lord by saying he didn't want Him to go to Jerusalem and suffer (Matt. 16:22). In these scriptures Peter uses the word "rebuke" when speaking to Jesus. That word means "to forbid", but it also means, "show honor, to raise the price of, to admonish". Peter was trying to tell Jesus that there was a higher value for Him to stay with His disciples, than to fulfill the purposes of God by dying. I'm sure Peter was hurting inside at the thought of his friend dying, so he was willing to use any ploy to stop the pain. Peter was using manipulative flattery with the hope of controlling the mind of the Savior of the world. Jesus dealt with that spirit the only way that is effective. He commanded Satan to get behind Him.

### **Pathah (Hebrew)**

The Hebrew explains the word flattery pretty much the same as Greek but with a few more colorful illustrations. It's a primitive root; "usually figuratively (in a mental or moral sense) to be (causatively, make) simple or (in a sinister way) delude: allure, deceive, enlarge, entice, persuade."

The intent of flattery is to make a person simple, or just delude and deceive them. To make someone simple is an attempt to strip them of their astuteness and discernment. There is great power in flattery and freewheeling compliments. That power is just about always used to control or manipulate in some way.

Psalm 78:35 tells of Israel flattering the Lord with their mouths, and that was for the purpose of deluding, alluring or trying to make simple the King of kings: *"And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant."*

It's one thing to try to control another man or a leader using a flattering tongue, but it's quite another to try that trick on God Almighty. We all use words to control others on a very regular basis, and flattery is the worst of these weapons. But when it comes to Jehovah God, there can be no false pretense, or over-used platitudes that will bring God under our control.

God is not like man who thinks he's worthy of the compliments he's been getting. He is worthy of every word of praise or adoration that can be conceived of, but don't speak it because you believe He needs to hear it, speak it because you believe it's true.

### **How Flattery Can Get You Off God's Plan**

There is a story in 1 Kings that tells of a man of God obeying his instructions from the Lord to the best he could. All was well until an old prophet deceived him. The old prophet represented honor and authority and he used flattery to change the man of God's appointed task. I believe the old prophet wanted a taste of the new anointing that was on the man of God and was willing to lie a little to get it. The man of God was killed as a result and God's full instructions were never carried out.

*Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. "For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" So he went another way, and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel. Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." And he said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. "For a command {came} to me by the word of the LORD, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.'" And he said to him, "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" {But} he lied to him. So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water. Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the*

*prophet who had brought him back; and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water"; your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'" And it came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told {it} in the city where the old prophet lived. Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard {it,} he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him." (1 Kings 13:7-26)*

If someone has any control over you as a result of their compliments, first ask God to forgive you for receiving this to yourself without giving it to Him, and then pray to be freed from such a disease.

### **How Did Jesus Handle Flattery?**

*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Matthew 19:16?17 KJV)*

*And they came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll?tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." (Mark 12:14?15 NAS)*

In both these scriptures Jesus knows the motives of the men asking for something. In both cases their motives were of selfish origin and He knew it. It is right after someone says how much they admire a certain attribute in you, that you are the most likely to make your worst decision.

### **Paul's Reaction**

*And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. (Acts 16:16?17 KJV)*

I would have considered it a compliment if someone said this of me. But even in this truth that was being spoken there was manipulation. Her flattery was labeled correctly as "soothsaying" or "divination." It is demonic to use flattery, even if what you are saying has truth in it.

*And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. (Acts 16:18 KJV)*

## **Conclusion**

During my thirty-five years in the mainstream music business, I watched flattery completely destroy musicians and performers (including myself) on a regular basis. That is, receiving and using flattery to get what you want. Now that I'm in ministry, I find that Christians are unaware of this stronghold. "Shmoozing" as it was called in the music business, is happening in Christian circles but goes by the name of "networking." It's really a "political spirit" and it works undercover as advancing your ministry. It starts pretty innocent at first but it's not long before it becomes full-grown manipulation.

The Lord is raising the standard of praise in the church. Along with that will come a higher level of deception among musicians. There must be freedom from the political spirit and manipulation through flattery before this higher anointing can be fully realized.