

## FALSE RESPECT

Job 40:12 ... “Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; tread down the wicked in their place.”

Thousands of years of foreign influence has deeply affected Filipinos. Early visitors from Northeast Africa, India and China came to trade, but implanted their own culture, genetics, and social structure onto the indigenous peoples that were the first Filipinos. Malays came, bringing their language, traditions, dress, music, and more. Arabs followed, imposing their form of governance, religion, social class system, and slavery. Then the Spanish planted their flag, named the islands “Philippines,” injected Spanish culture, expanded on the class system, and ruled with an iron thumb for about four hundred years. When Spain lost the Spanish-American War, America became the country’s god-father and helped the country develop its own government, military, education system, modern agriculture, and – yes – it introduced yet more culture and traditions that were foreign to Filipinos. But only 43 years later, the Japanese invaded with the goal of enslaving the entire country. The Philippines became an independent nation in 1946, but that did not stop foreign influence. The Philippines nearly fell to Chinese branded Communism in the 1960s. That war is still being fought today, but now includes radical Islamic elements. It seems that Filipinos cannot get a break.

The oppressive class system introduced by East Indians, Arabs, and Spanish is the belief that we must each be confined to a certain class. The rich are at the top and others fall into lower classes depending on their wealth, education, positions, and authority. But, ultimately, we are citizens of God’s creation which has no borders. The culture in God’s kingdom is very different than Philippine culture, or that of any other people group or nation. In God’s kingdom there is no recognition of classes; you are not confined to the place or status you were born into; the sky is the limit and God can grant you the sky when you follow him.

One demonstration of the class system is the expectation that you must respect people above your class – which is false respect – even if they do not deserve it, and you can take advantage of those in lower classes. People elevate themselves to a class and demand that others respect them. Humble people bow to those in authority, parents submit to teachers and school heads, the poor submit to the wealthy, and employees submit to unfair and unethical demands of their employers. People occupying the invisible upper classes often ignore the principle that respect must be earned; they believe they can buy it, demand it, or be voted into it. They reject Biblical truth that we are all equal in God’s eyes.

Cultural reform seldom happens through rebellion by the oppressed. But individual reform can happen when those who mistreat others, come to a saving knowledge of Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to correct their ideas and behaviors. You may have a boss who lords it over you, a parent who dominates your life inappropriately, a sibling who controls you, a teacher who has not earned your respect, or a pastor or priest who treats you lower than himself. The best thing you can do is pray for that person and demonstrate humility, kindness, love and patience. In that way, you can be more influential than by complaining, resisting, or rebelling. In the end, as shown in today’s verse, God knows what to do with the proud who demand respect undeservedly.

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