It is a common practice of the world today to clap for someone who performs as a way of cheering for them. When our chorus sings at rehabs and elderly care facilities, the people often clap after each song. The better the performance is, the longer the round of applause. This attention is somewhat addictive. Our flesh likes it because we feel their approval.

Then in our own settings we are tempted to give a round of applause, too. At a school program we might want to cheer the children on with clapping our hands. You can see their faces beam when they sense that approval. After the bridegroom speaks at a wedding reception, some choose to join in a round of applause.

But is a round of applause a good thing for the Christian? What does God see and feel when we clap for one another? Is it an innocent thing of encouragement? We must discern the answer to these questions.

We have a shocking story in Acts 12:21-23, “And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

Does this story sound as though the people clapped for Herod? Is there any parallel between our applause today and what they did for Herod? Was Herod struck dead just because he was a wicked man receiving praise of men? Could a round of applause today actually express worship and encourage the same sort of pride for which God struck down Herod?

Jesus chided the Pharisees of His day in John 5:44, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” This desire for receiving honor of men stood in the way of true faith in Jesus. It hindered their acceptance of Truth. It blinded their eyes to their real condition before God. Jesus still chides those who seek the praise of men!

Giving a round of applause to people who just performed or spoke puts the glory on the individuals, not the heavenly Father who gave these abilities to men. It robs God of His rightful praise for accomplishments. It tempts hearts to become proud of how well they did. It becomes an integral part of the vanity of show business. It tempts us to pick songs that will bring more vigorous applause. It prompts us to say witty things to impress people and receive their clap of approval. A round of applause may encourage someone, but it comes with so many snares and temptations. It leads us to the edge of the destruction that pride brings.

As God’s children, let’s say no to the applause spirit. Compliments and personal encouragements are a much better way to express appreciation for people who have worked hard or sacrificed for the Kingdom. Let’s keep the frivolity of applause out of our wedding receptions. If others who have not this conviction begin to applaud, we can keep ourselves from going along.

But over and beyond refraining to applaud, let’s worship God for times we are blessed by others. Let’s breathe a prayer of thanks for hymns that touch our hearts and speak peace to our souls. Let’s praise God for faithful brethren who inspire us. May God be glorified when men and women of God do well!

~Luke Bennetch