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BOAST IN THE LORD

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?” “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”—Jer. 9:23,24; 1 Cor. 1:20,31.

THINGS highly esteemed among men are wisdom, power and riches. But it is not the wisdom that cometh down from above, nor the power of godliness, nor the true heavenly riches that moth cannot destroy nor rust corrupt that is sought after by the world. Men of the world have not learned the value of these, and therefore they “spend their strength for naught, and their labor for that which satisfieth not.” “The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” the faith that lays hold upon the might of the Lord is the beginning of power; and the poverty that freely surrenders all things to the will and service of God is the beginning of true riches. Worldly

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wisdom, which has not its foundation in the reverence of the Lord, tends to self-exaltation and pride; power in the hands of the ungodly tends to haughtiness and overbearing selfishness; and riches, among those who have not learned from God the responsibilities of stewardship, tend only to dwarf the soul, rendering it impervious to the noble sentiments of love and brotherly kindness.

The man who, by dint of labor and strife, succeeds in a measure in gaining one or all of these earthly prizes generally considers himself a wise man; for he does not realize how transient are the treasures, how unsatisfactory they will prove in the end, what snares are in them, nor how great is the value of the heavenly treasure which he has missed while grasping after fleeting earthly things.

To the worldly who have never known the treasures of divine grace these earthly things are of paramount importance; but to the child of God, if possessed, they only increase the responsibilities of his stewardship; for they are not his, but the Lord’s, all being included in his consecration. Whatever he has of human learning—education—must be held in subservience to the wisdom of God. No human theories or philosophies that conflict with the Word of God may be entertained. A

“Thus saith the Lord” must be the end of all controversy when human reasonings come in conflict with divine wisdom; for the wisdom of this world that arrays itself in opposition to the heavenly wisdom is “foolishness with God,” and will by and by be brought to most ignominious humiliation. So also the human might that lifts its puny arm in defiance of Jehovah’s power shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy, and the hoarded riches shall be scattered to the winds.

What folly is it then—especially for any one who has been enlightened by the truth, and made a child and heir of God—to forget the importance and value of the unseen heavenly treasure and turn to minding earthly things. For any to glory in such a course is to glory in their shame and folly. But let it not be so with us: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” “Let him glory in this,” saith the Lord, “that he understandeth and knoweth me.” “And this is life eternal,” said Jesus, “that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”—John 17:3.

This is the knowledge that does not puff up, the wisdom that cometh down from above. The beginning of this wisdom is indeed the reverence of the Lord. Nor can we grow in this wisdom except by continued growth in the reverence of the Lord. If to any degree we cease to reverence supremely the Lord’s words, or if we cease to cultivate his acquaintance through our privilege of communion and fellowship with him in prayer, in the study of his Word, meditation upon his glorious character and teachings, and

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in obedience to his will, to the extent of our neglect we fail to realize the blessings of that wisdom that cometh down from above.

But if, in the use of these privileges, we open our hearts to receive all that divine grace has in store for us, then, indeed, we may glory in the Lord. Let such a one “glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.” To thus know the Lord is not merely to know of him, to know something of his works and ways, but it is to know him by that intimate fellowship and communion which, by a living faith, seals the testimonies of his Word upon our hearts and makes us to realize that they are ours personally, that the Lord himself is our personal friend and helper and counselor and guide. We thus become acquainted with his spirit, his principles and methods of action,—we understand him,—we know how to interpret his providences, to mark his leadings, to observe his attitude toward us and thus daily to walk with him. Thus also we are led to a fuller appreciation of the Lord’s righteousness and of his loving kindness, which will in due time establish justice in all the earth. Well, indeed, may we glory in the Lord and in the fact of his great condescension to us personally, when thus we come to understand and know him.

In this blessed sense of the divine love and care, we may say in the words of the Psalmist, “My

soul shall *make her boast in the Lord*. I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him.”—Psa. 34:1-9.

How precious is this experience of the child of God! but it can never be the experience of a proud heart; “for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace [his favor] to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (1 Pet. 5:5,6.) It is hard for those who are rich in the wisdom or power or wealth of this world to do this. (Matt. 19:24-26.) It was hard for the scribes and Pharisees who were rich in titles and honors and praise of men; it was hard for the whole Jewish nation who were proud of being the seed of Abraham to whom pertained the promises of God; it was hard for the Greeks who were proud of their worldly wisdom and intellectual attainments; it was hard for the Romans who were proud of their power and prestige among the nations. And it is hard to-day for all those who have pride in any thing. It is hard for all religionists whose pride in the sectarian religious systems of Christendom blinds their eyes to the truth now due; it is hard also for those who boast in human philosophies and science, falsely so called; who are proud of being inventors of something new and strange, and who desire to be thought great and to lead men after them; it is hard for all those who reverence the opinions of men more than the words of the Lord. All those who either are rich or desire to be rich in the things

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of this present life, and specially those who are “rich” in a good opinion of themselves, or in self will, find it hard to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Indeed, the Apostle intimates that the greatest battle of each one coming to a knowledge of the truth is along this line; for it is after pointing to the severe humiliation of our Lord Jesus that he says, “Wherefore, my beloved, work out your own salvation [in like manner] with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you [by this severe discipline, this humbling process] both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil. 2:12,13.

Those who have endeavored in all sincerity to do so have always found the grace of God sufficient for them; but very few are ever disposed to make the attempt. To all the worldly-wise the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and they have no disposition to take up their cross daily and follow Christ.

It is for this reason that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are

called” to share with the Lord in the glory of his Kingdom. They are generally so engrossed with the things of the present life—its pursuits, its cares, its pleasures, etc.—that they have no ear for the Lord’s call. They are not humble enough even to hear the call; much less are they humble enough to obey it and to walk the narrow way of self-sacrifice in which the Lord leads.

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world [those who are not noted for worldly wisdom or influence or wealth] to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world [the humble poor], and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” (1 Cor. 1:26-29.) How truly the wise are being confounded to-day by the power of the truth in the hands of the humblest of God’s consecrated children! Systems of error which are the growth of centuries are put to confusion and are tottering before it, and the sages of all the sects are troubled by it; for it is becoming more and more apparent to all men that “the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”—Isa. 29:14.

Why has God chosen these weak, inferior instruments for his great work? why does he not employ the eloquent tongues, the pens of ready writers, and the prestige of great names? Paul tells us why. It is in order “that *no flesh should glory in his presence.*” The great work of vanquishing sin and establishing righteousness in the earth is the Lord’s work: no human power is adequate to the emergencies of the case. Yet God is pleased to allow his power to operate through any human instrument that is meet for his use; *i.e.*, that can be used without injury to itself. If God were to work his wonders through those whose hearts are inclined to pride, that pride would grow, and would arrogate to self the glory that belongs to God, instead of appreciating the honor of being a servant of God, an instrument in his mighty hand—“for the Master’s use made meet.”

The Lord’s use of even the weakest instruments, of those having even a very small measure of talent for his service, sometimes proves an exaltation too great, and that which was a blessing becomes a curse through pride and vain-glory. Such is the perversity of human nature, and such the subtlety of the Adversary in gaining the advantage, that the very texts above cited sometimes become a stumbling-block to many who are not only poor financially, but who are deficient in intellect and education, and who even lack instruction in the divine Word. They forget that the Lord said, “Blessed are ye poor *i.e.*, those who were poor (or became so) as his disciples]” (Luke 6:20); or, as Matthew (5:3) records it, “Blessed are the poor *in spirit.*” And they forget that the ignorant as well as the learned, the poor as well as the rich, can become “puffed up in their fleshly mind.” It is sad to see “a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing” (Gal. 6:3), thus deceiving himself,—but specially so, when even the rudiments of education and Christlikeness are lacking. We believe that modesty and simplicity are traits to be cultivated by rich and poor alike, who are blessed with a knowledge of the truth, and that any “confounding of the mighty” should

be done kindly and in meekness (Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:25), and not in a combative spirit or with a show of gratification over their defeat.

Above almost every thing else, therefore, beloved, let us guard well our humility. It is only when we are little in our own eyes that God can use us with safety to ourselves. And yet he does not shield us from every test of fidelity. If therefore the Lord gives you a little exaltation to-day, a little encouragement of success in his service, receive it humbly, meekly remembering your own unworthiness and insufficiency except as God is pleased to work through you; and be just as ready to receive the humiliations of tomorrow as necessary for your discipline and the proper balancing of your character. If the success of yesterday makes you fret under the humiliation of to-day, then beware: you are not as roundly developed spiritually as you should be. Whatever may be the triumphs of the truth through us, let us always remember that we are among “the things *that are not*.” Let us endeavor therefore to make the Apostle Paul’s experience our own, who said,—“I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, and to abound and to suffer need. I can do all [these] things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”—Phil. 4:11-13.

In God’s dealings with his people at all times we can see his care in guarding them against pride and self-sufficiency. If he would choose Israel to be his peculiar people, he permits them first to be enslaved for four hundred years,

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and then with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm he gathers them to the promised land. Moses, too, the chosen deliverer, was of humble birth. He was slow of speech, and needed Aaron to supplement this weakness. And Paul had his “thorn in the flesh,” from which the Lord was not pleased to deliver him, though thrice he besought the Lord to remove it; and the Lord said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness [i.e., my strength, operating through this imperfect earthen vessel, will be more manifest to men than if the vessel were a perfect and polished one. In that case men might ascribe the greatness of the work to the talent of

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Paul, and by and by conclude that since Paul is only a man it is only presumption for him to assume to teach other men, etc. But if the power is seen to be of God, and merely working through Paul as a ready instrument—meek, willing and energetic—then the testimony of the grace of God will be weighty with them: and so it was].”

To this explanation and assurance from the Lord Paul meekly replied, “Most gladly therefore will I rather *glory in my infirmities*, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”—2 Cor. 12:8,9.

The Lord with unerring wisdom has always chosen the meek for every great work. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. (Num. 12:3.) Meekness was a marked characteristic of all the prophets and ancient worthies. The Lord Jesus was meek and lowly of heart (Matt. 11:29), who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. He was of humble birth, born in a manger and reared in the despised town of Nazareth, that he might be called a Nazarene. The twelve apostles were all plain men, mostly fishermen; and so also the whole Gospel Church—not the church nominal, but the true ones written in heaven—have generally been the poor of this world, who were willing to be humbled yet more and more, that the power of Christ might be manifested through them.

Let every one therefore humble himself under the mighty hand of God. This is not the time for exaltation, but for humiliation and trial. The exaltation will come in due time to the faithful. Let our present glory be in that we understand and know the Lord, and in that he condescends to make use of these poor earthen vessels in his service, that it may be manifest to all men that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of men.—2 Cor. 4:7.

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