

## **Glorying in the Lord**

When we come to consider the system of salvation as instituted by our Creator, we find that the entire process is designed to elevate God, and not man. So it is written that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ... and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:27-29). Our reading in 2 Corinthians 10 demonstrates the point: we must glory in God, and not commend ourselves for being righteous: “But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth” (2 Cor. 10:17-18).

These words allude back to Jeremiah chapter 9, which we shall consider for our exhortation today. The full text reads:

“Thus saith Yahweh, 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 Yahweh which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 9:23-24).

In these words, we have three aspects in which men ought not to glory: wisdom, might, and riches: we shall consider each of these in turn.

### ***GLORYING IN WISDOM***

In the chapter we began with, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, the apostle describes how that in His system of salvation, Yahweh has set at nought the wisdom of men:

“... I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe ...” (1 Cor. 1:19-21).

The Almighty then, has “made foolish the wisdom of this world”. There is an interesting example of this, in the case of Ahithophel and David. When Absalom the son of David turned against his father, Ahithophel, the king’s counsellor rebelled with him. Ahithophel was renowned for his wise advice: “... the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom” (2 Sam. 16:23). But though he were ever so wise, he became foolish when he turned against David, Yahweh’s anointed. So David prayed: “O Yahweh, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2 Sam. 15:31). So it was that God destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and so provided salvation to David.

But Ahithophel, it would appear, was a proud man. He could not take rejection, and so when he saw that his self-perceived wisdom was not followed, he killed himself:

“and when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father” (2 Sam. 17:23). The exhortation then, is not to be like Ahithophel, not to be wise in our own eyes, but trust in the wisdom of God, even though it appears to be “foolishness” to men.

### **GLORYING IN MIGHT**

When we consider the circumstance of one who gloried in might, yet was defeated by the lowly, we think of Goliath, the great Philistine who warred against Israel. Goliath’s might was physically impressive:

“his height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he has greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, and his spear’s head weighted six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him” (1 Sam. 17:4-7).

Even Saul said to David, when he presented himself before him: “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth” (1 Sam. 17:33). Here was indeed a mighty man who gloried in his might. But David was different. He did not glory in his own prowess, but the power of the God who he served:

“then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee **in the name of Yahweh of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (1 Sam. 17:45).

By the means of the mighty man of the Philistines being defeated by a “stripling” (1 Sam. 17:56), salvation was brought to Israel. Even so it is written in 1 Corinthians 1: “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, Yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are” (1 Cor. 1:27-28). The exhortation then, is for us not to be like the Philistine who trusted in his own might, but rather humble ourselves to be like David who trusted in the power of God to save.

### **GLORYING IN RICHES**

Our master told a parable regarding “a certain rich man” who gloried in his riches:

“he thought within himself: What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this I will do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Lu. 12:17-19).

So it was that he trusted in his own prosperity – however: “God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be,

which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God” (Luk. 12:20-21).

Another rich man that comes to mind is Solomon, who was also a wise man. Ecclesiastes 2 recounts how he gathered to himself an abundance of this world’s goods and pleasures – yet he came to recognise that all such things are futile in the fulfilment in the purpose of God: “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Ecc. 2:11).

The exhortation then, is not to trust in the temporary advantages of wealth, but to trust in the Living God to provide. As Paul has it to Timothy:

“charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the Living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17).

Not glorying in wisdom, might, or riches, all that is left is for us to glory in Yahweh:

### **GLORYING IN YAHWEH**

“Let him that glorieth glory in this, that *he understandeth and knoweth me ...*” (Jer. 9:24).

Here is a remarkable situation: we must glory in the understanding and knowledge of God! There is another truth that is expressed in Isaiah 55:

“for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

From this it is sometimes thought that the ways of Yahweh are incomprehensible to mortal men. Yet Jeremiah 9 tells us that we should “understand” and “know” him! The point here, is that the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14) without undergoing a change into a spiritually minded disciple. Though the ways of Yahweh are above the ways of man, we should seek to ascend in our thoughts to His level. Hence we are also told: “the way of life is above to the wise, that he might depart from hell beneath” (Prov. 15:24). And again, “if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). We must seek after heavenly things, setting our thoughts and desires on “things above”, forsaking worldly pleasures.

The Lord Jesus Christ also spoke about knowing God, saying in his prayer to his Father:

“this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jno. 17:3)

Eternal life then, is bound up with knowing the only true God, and his beloved Son. And the word “know” signifies more than an intellectual appreciation: it speaks

of a living relationship and an intimate acquaintance. We do not glory in present day advantage, but with trust in the Living God.

The Apostle Paul provides an example of this. He regarded present advantages as being mere refuse when compared with the glory laid up for those who would seek it:

“what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8).

Again, he wrote: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...” (Gal. 6:14).

Finally, we see the same principles in our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not glory in the things of this life, but set his focus upon things to come. He

“made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:7-11).

Here is the Divine principle: humility before elevation. The entire system of salvation is designed to glorify God and not man—hence even when Messiah was exalted, it was “to the glory of God the Father,” and not for his own glorification. We then must not trust in our own wisdom, or might, or the uncertainty of riches, but look for better days to come. We glory in the exalted position we have of being the children of Yahweh, and set our hearts on things above, where Christ sits at his Father’s Right Hand. And we look past the present days of mortal weakness, to the future blessedness which will be given to the disciples of Messiah when he comes again.

*Christopher Maddocks*