

WHO SHALL BE GREATEST?

"There arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me. And whosoever receiveth me, the same is great." Luke 9:48.

Selfish aspirations to supremacy are not in harmony with the will of God; they do not come from a right and proper exercise of mind; and consequently they form no part of any perfect character. "Godliness," says the Apostle, "with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. 6:6.) And said Jesus, "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23:12.) We have no intimation that either Jesus, or any of the angels that kept their first estate, ever aspired to anything beyond that sphere to which divine wisdom had appointed them. It was because of such unlawful aspiration to position and power to which he was never invited, that Satan fell; and it was to such ambition that he tempted Eve, saying, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." Gen. 3:5.

The example of Jesus was a perfect illustration of the Father's pleasure, in that he was obedient to the extent of humbling himself; first to become a man, a nature much lower than his former nature, and then when a man, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And because of this obedience, proved by his extreme humiliation, God hath now highly exalted him. (Phil. 2:6-9.) It would be the very height of presumption on the part of any human being, as it was on the part of Satan, to aspire to the divine nature if he were not invited to that position by God himself; and the Scriptures, when referring to the future high exaltation of the Church, make a special note of the fact that they were all "called, and chosen, and faithful" to the conditions of the call (Rev. 17:14); and consequently their

aspiration was not an unlawful one, but a grateful acceptance of the grandest favor of God, giving evidence of their full faith in the divine promise, and being obedient to the divinely appointed conditions.

The love which God will have to prevail among all his creatures of every name and order, is also illustrated in the fact that throughout his plan, any exaltation of some of his creatures above others, is for the greater advantage and blessing of others. This principle in the divine economy was expressed by Jesus, when he said, "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." (Luke 22:26,27.) This should not only be considered a warning to the individual seeking preferment in the Church, but also as an instruction to the Church to accept as its honored servants, only such as he describes; and furthermore, it expresses the will of God, and shows us which members of the "body" God will use in serving the body with meat in due season.

To aspire to advancement for self-glory or self-gratification, to desire personal preferment above others, is contrary to the spirit of God's plan, which is love – a love that places a neighbor on an equality with self, and which only desires advancement for the grandly benevolent purpose of increased ability to serve others.

But notwithstanding the plain teachings of the Scriptures on this subject, these selfish aspirations have been a stumbling stone to very many of God's children. And even those fully consecrated to God need to watch constantly lest they fall under this temptation to selfishness. If we would be pleasing to God, we must have the spirit of a little child with regard to others, and an unselfish, guileless spirit, full of love and without hypocrisy.

If we engage in the Lord's work for any other purpose, or with any other motives than those of the purest benevolence, we may or may not receive the reward sought; we must run the risk; but we will never receive the sure reward of the faithful overcomers. Those who aspire to the promised favor of the divine nature, should think much of the joy

set before them of participating with their Lord in the grand work of restoring all things, of bringing speedily to the groaning creation life, and health, and happiness, and every blessing which a perfect heart can crave. And not only so, but of carrying the glorious work of blessing to all things in heaven, as well as in earth. This is our future mission, and the extent to which we enter into the spirit of our future mission, and thereby prove our worthiness of that honor, is measurable by our present efforts to prosecute the work to the extent of our present ability. Thus our Father measures us, and thus we should measure ourselves if we would know how we stand in his estimation.

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