

ST. PETER'S EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS

"Humble yourselves...under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." – 1 Peter 5:6.

AS THOSE who have received Divine grace and the knowledge of the Divine purpose, the Lord's people have certain ambitions which are right and proper, and which should be rightly exercised, regulated and governed. No one should be without a laudable ambition. We cannot imagine God to be without ambition. Those who have little or none pass through life in a kind of maze, accomplishing very little for themselves or others, and usually fail in all they undertake.

There are, however, noble and ignoble ambitions. Some people are ambitious to become great, renowned; others are ambitious to rule; still others are ambitious for wealth, for social distinction, or for titles and honor amongst men. These are all selfish ambitions, yet they are the power that moves the world today – in business, social, political and even religious circles. These are all wrong ambitions; and though they may not all result in evil, yet they are all selfish, and tend toward evil. Many are seduced by selfish ambitions into doing those things of which their consciences do not approve.

The Christian has set before him the most noble ambition possible. God is calling from the world a people for His Name. Before these He sets the loftiest ambition. These are invited to become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. This is an ambition which inspires them to develop all the higher qualities of mind and character, in order to prepare themselves for the society, friendship and fellowship of the Heavenly Father and the Lord. Let us have this high ambition ever before us, as an incentive to the most earnest endeavor to heed the Word of the Lord.

Those who take this course are very pleasing to the Father. He has a great work to be done, and is seeking a people who will do it. Christ Jesus is the Head of this great work, and His Kingdom is to rule and bless the world, that in the ages to come, God may show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us. (Eph. 2:7.) Those who appreciate this high calling wish to be where God has invited them to be. Those who do not care for what God has offered or who do not wish to conform to the terms should not enter the race for the prize.

Those who have the heavenly ambition should not forget that they have the treasure of the new nature in earthen vessels. To this class it becomes a laudable ambition to serve one another and to build one another up in the most holy faith. The Bride is to make herself ready. (Rev. 19:7.) So these should seek to get ready themselves and to help others of the dear family of God.

DANGER INVOLVED IN THE ELDERSHIP

To desire the office of a bishop, a shepherd, is a good ambition. (I Tim. 3:1.) If one properly attends to the shepherding of the flock, he will not have time for other interests. Those who have been called to the position of Eldership amongst the Lord's people should consider this an honor and a privilege from the Lord; and they should be very careful to seek it, not for filthy lucre's sake, but with a ready mind. (I Peter 5:1-4.) But in seeking this position let each one remember that there is danger of the development of pride and the assumption of power.

Those who have the high privilege of serving as an Elder Brother should watch themselves to see that they do not lord it over God's heritage. They should remember that they are not the Chief Shepherd, but only under-shepherds. If any should lord it over the flock, he would bring injury to himself as well as to the Church; for in thus doing he would be cultivating a spirit of pride.

St. Peter tells us that "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." (I Peter 5:5.) Therefore if in the Lord's service one is humble, his course not only inures to the benefit of the Class, but it is the only way by which anyone will gain a position in the Kingdom. The Eldership is an honorable office which not only has great privileges attached to it, but has also great temptation and great danger. St. James says, "My brethren, be not many [of you] masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." – James 3:1.

The Apostle exhorts those that are Elders doing a work that is necessary to be done, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." Everything is being done by the mighty power of God, by which He is causing all things to work together for good. We cannot interfere with the Divine will. We might permit pride or fond desire to hinder our own progress, but we cannot hinder the Plan of God.

We all desire to seek the best way to serve others and yet to gain the great reward. St. Peter shows us that way – "Humble yourselves." As the poet has expressed it,

"I am afraid to touch
Things that involve so much."

This spirit will make us very fearful of developing any pride or bombast or desire of lording it over others. So, then, we humble ourselves and remember that God will especially bless those who are more lowly, more trustful in the Lord, and in due time will exalt them – at the Second Coming of our Lord.

Sometimes, indeed, the humble-minded of the Lord's people may be less esteemed in the Church than are some who lack this important quality of character. There is in mankind a general tendency toward brow-beating. They would rather have some one who will ride rough-shod over them than one who is gentle and

moderate. Therefore they may not like us. But we are not to seek what they would like best in us. Rather we are to remember that we are to serve the Lord in His way, and that our chief responsibility in the Lord's sight is for *ourselves*. We are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time. [R5185 : page 57]

PRIDE IN KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH INJURIOUS

All these matters show us that our proper attitude is that of humility. The sentiment of our hearts should not be that of pride, but of meekness, humility, faithfulness.

Pride is selfishness gone to seed. The selfish spirit greedily gathers to itself as much as possible of all that it esteems good and valuable – wealth, learning, honor, fame and distinction among men. A measure of success in the acquisition of these treasures leads the selfish soul to a feeling of complacency, independence and indifference to the well-being of others. This spirit, gradually, but rapidly developing into arrogance, self-assertive pride, will continue to ripen with every gleam of the sunlight of temporal prosperity. As selfishness continues to ripen, it swells itself to ridiculous proportions and delights to vaunt itself, and gloats over its imagined importance and worthiness of honor and praise.

How much easier and how much wiser is the course of humility! The humble spirit seeketh not its own, is not puffed up, does not attempt to speculate upon inflated values, does not think of itself more highly than it ought to think, but thinks soberly – neither overrating nor underrating its own acquirements or achievements. Humility strives always to do business on a solid basis, though it contends lawfully to acquire a real worthiness and to achieve the true glory of the Divine commendation and favor.

There is a disposition on the part of many to be rather boastful on account of the Truth, as though we had originated the Truth. How

foolish this is! We have made no truth. We have merely gotten rid of some of the errors that formerly blinded our eyes. *The Truth is God's*. He has allowed us to see out of the darkness of ignorance and superstition into the Truth of His Plan. If a man who had seen a beautiful picture should then boast as though he had painted it, we would say, "Foolish man! You did not *make* that picture. You merely *looked at it*. You have nothing to boast of concerning it."

We did not make any part of God's Plan of the Ages. If we had attempted to do so, we would have made a failure of it. Our attitude of mind, then, should be, "Come, we will show you what God has arranged, what God has pictured." Thus we would glorify God and be helpful to others; for to whatever extent we manifest pride or self-consciousness in the Truth, to that extent we do injury to ourselves and to others. The world would say, "We have just as able Doctors of Divinity in our denominations as you have – just as wise to teach us the Truth."

Our proper course, therefore, is to make it plain at the very beginning that we are of the right spirit – the [R5186 : page 57] meek, humble spirit of the Master. God is permitting us to see things in His Word, concerning which it is His due time to turn on the light. The picture was there all along, but the clouds and darkness made it so dim that we were not able to discern its beauties. Now the light is being turned on, and, as the poet has expressed it,

"Wonderful things in the Bible we see."

Instead of self-confidence, wisdom dictates a distrustfulness of self, remembering its weaknesses and imperfections, and correspondingly the greater reverence for God and reliance upon Him, which more than anything else will strengthen us and enable us to depart from the evil of our fallen estate.

It is indeed no easy matter to tread the pathway of humility, to continually check the human aspirations, and to keep the sacrifice

on the altar until it is fully consumed. But thus it is that we are to work out our own salvation to the Divine nature with fear and trembling, lest we come short of worthiness for the prize promised to the faithful overcomers who tread closely in the footsteps of our blessed Forerunner, who was meek and lowly of heart. – Phil. 2:8,12.

It is when we are thus humble and faithful that the Lord makes us His chosen vessels to bear His name to others. Thus, emptied of self and filled with His Spirit, and with His Truth, we can go forth, strong in the Lord of Hosts and in His mighty Power do valiant service as soldiers of the Cross.

