

BOASTING

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph 2:8-10)

God is a “Jealous God” (Ex. 20:5). He will not give His glory to another (Is. 42:8). The Hebrews were forbidden to make an altar with dressed stones, for by using a tool on the altar it became defiled (Ex. 20:25). In other words, when we come to worship God, nothing should detract from our focus on God. If someone carved on a stone altar, they may “boast” about it.

Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we have no right to boast about anything. Our boasting is excluded by the principle of faith (Rom. 3:27). Even after we have done everything our Lord commands us to do, we must still confess that we are unworthy servants (Lk. 17:10). The strong desire to honor God has led some to conclude that “salvation is by grace, through faith, plus nothing”. The assumption is that if you do anything in order to be saved, it must detract from the unique honor which is only due to God. Let us consider this more carefully, for there is a danger that the wicked one can trick us into “boasting” about “not boasting”.

Naaman, the Syrian commander, was told by Elisha that in order to be healed of leprosy he had to wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Ki. 5:10). When he obeyed, he was healed. There is no indication, however, that he ever boasted about washing in the Jordan. Naaman knew that God had healed him. He claimed no credit for himself, but gave all the glory to God. Naaman said: **“Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.” (2 Kings 5:15)**

When Jesus met a man born blind, He put mud on his eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam (Jn. 9:7). When the blind man did so, he was healed. The blind man, however, never boasted to anyone that he had healed himself. He knew for certain that Jesus had healed him. That’s why he boldly testified: **“Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” (John 9:32-33)**

When Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus he was told: **“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:6)** When he did what he was commanded to do, a man named Ananias came to him and said: **“... now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)** Paul immediately obeyed and his sins were forgiven. He never boasted, however, that he had saved himself by being baptized. He knew better than that! He knew that it was only Jesus who saved him and he never said or did anything that would take away from the glory that only Christ deserves.

Herod, the wicked king, gloried himself. He put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and delivered a public address. Because he refused to give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down and he died (Acts 12:23). It didn’t have to be that way. Paul boasted about preaching without being paid (1 Cor. 9:15). Paul also boasted about the authority God had given him to build up believers (2 Cor. 10:8). His boasting, however, was always **“boasting in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17)**. Paul never lost sight of own personal debt to Christ, and his great need to glorify God. That’s why he “boasted” about his weakness, for it was through his weakness that he came to experience the power of God (2 Cor. 12:7 - 10). Paul’s boasting was always “in the Lord”. Ours should be too!

Let’s keep it simple. The mother of Jesus told the servants at the wedding: **“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn. 2:5)**. The very idea that these servants would boast about turning water into wine is ridiculous. It was by this miracle that Jesus manifested His glory, not theirs (Jn. 2:11). When we do what Christ commands us, our boasting can never be in ourselves, but only be “in the Lord”!