

SOMETHING TO BOAST ABOUT

“This is what the LORD says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the LORD.” (Jer 9:23-24)

Jeremiah makes reference to 3 earthly achievements about which we should not boast: (1) wisdom, (2) strength, (3) riches. Obviously, to excel in any of these three areas requires not only the blessings of God, but also intelligence and hard work. In the light of eternity, however, they are nothing to boast about. When we stand before God in Judgement, the only thing to boast about is understanding and knowing God.

Solomon prayed for wisdom, but later wrote: **“I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.” (Eccl 1:17)** The late Paul Anderson holds the Guinness world record for strength, back lifting 6,270 pounds. So what! Bill Gates dropped out of school, but through wise decisions and much hard work became the world’s richest man. So what! Earthly wisdom, strength, and money mean nothing at the Judgement.

Jesus once told the story of a certain rich man whose ground produced a bumper crop (see Lk. 12:16 - 21). He boasted that he had much enough wealth to last him many years. What really matters is that the Sovereign of the universe called him a fool and took his life. Jesus concluded the story by saying: **“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.” (Luke 12:21)** Jesus also told another story about another rich man (see Lk. 16:19 - 31). This man had it good for a few years on earth but will be tormented forever in the flames of Hades. Why boast about that?

Unfortunately, it is not easy to convince “successful” people about their need to understand and know God. Not many wise and noble become Christians (1 Cor. 1:26) How vividly trying to witness to a “successful” man almost fifty years ago. He was terminally ill and elected to die at home. With a certain measure of pride he related to me the details of his preparation for death. His funeral, burial and even his tomb stone were planned and paid for. A trust had been established for his large estate. When he was through talking I dared to ask him if he was prepared to meet God. At this point he became angry and our conversation was over. How sad! His haunting story reminds me of the words of Paul that “blindness in part” had happened to Israel (Rom. 11:25). They were not totally blind, in fact they could function well in almost every area of life. Their blindness was spiritual, and they were totally incapable of seeing their need for Christ.

The Greek word translated as “blindness” in Rom. 11:25 (KJV) is “porosis”. It is found only 3 times in the N.T. Scriptures (Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18; Mk. 3:5). The primary meaning of this word is to cover with a callus, that’s why some versions translate it as “hardened”. Fortunately, the Word of God is living and active and sharper than a double-edged sword. It penetrates through calluses to the very essence of our being (Heb. 4:12).

Thus when we meet with “successful” people who “boast” of their earthly achievements, we need to penetrate the veneer of their pride with the power of God’s Word. They need to face up to the “penetrating” question posed by Jesus **“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26)**. Or perhaps they need to consider the inspired words of Paul to the “successful” people in the Areopagus at Athens. These great thinkers were absolutely ignorant about their need for a right relationship with God. Paul warned: **“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31)**