

## How to Glory in the Lord

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

**<sup>17</sup> But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. <sup>18</sup> For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.**

Every one of us has to make this crucial choice: what is at the center of my existence? In an Inquisition during 1616, Signore Galilei stood before his accusers. He was accused of the heresy found in his book, *Sidereus Nuncias* (meaning *The Starry Messenger*). With a new telescope, he had made careful observations of the various phases of the planet Venus. He had also studied the moons of Jupiter. His findings led him to think carefully about something closer to home: the daily rise and fall of the sea level that we refer to as “tides.” Signore Galilei’s conclusion was this: the Earth is in motion. But for these findings, he now stood accused of heresy.

The “scientific truth” that “everyone knew” was this: the Earth is the center of the universe. Everything in our solar system is in orbit around our globe. This “truth” was so widely accepted that another man had his contrary findings published – but only after his death. His name was Nicolaus Copernicus, and he had dared to challenge this widely accepted belief. “Everyone knew” that the Earth was the center of the solar system: this is called “the geocentric model.” But Copernicus has proposed a “heliocentric model:” that the Earth is in orbit around the Sun. Galileo Galilei agreed with Copernicus, and was bold enough to publish his findings while he was still alive. Now he stood accused of heresy. His books were banned, and he was ordered not to teach the heliocentric model again. But in 1632, he published his *Dialogue Between the Two Chief World Systems* defending the heliocentric model. Another Inquisition formed in 1633, and Galileo was found guilty of heresy and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. Now almost everyone knows the truth. Today, you and I are called to challenge another widespread belief. This is also a crucial choice: what is at the center of your existence? Our text presents you with a choice: is life in orbit around you or around the Lord? Are you supposed to glorify yourself or glorify the Lord? Who gets the glory? Who gets the praise? At the crossroad, when you see your great need, will you adore God’s glorious deeds? In today’s text, the choice is clear: set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior.

### The Problem in the Culture

What gives preaching authority? What makes it trustworthy? In 1 Corinthians 1, the Apostle Paul pointed out that “**the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom**” (1 Corinthians 1:22). In their cultural thinking, those things gave authority to religious or philosophical proclamations. But Paul overturned this teaching by proclaiming “**But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;**” This verse highlights the glory – the unique excellence – of our God. We praise the One who uses the foolish and the weak to magnify His glory. What was Paul’s purpose in writing this? 1 Corinthians 1:31 holds the answer: “**That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**” Where was this written in the Old Testament? We will turn there in just a few moments. In 1 Corinthians chapters 2 and 3, Paul went on to urge his readers to seek God’s wisdom instead of following mere men: to set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior. The Sun really is the center of our solar system; God’s Son really is the center of our existence.

## The Problem of Making Comparisons

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians apparently accomplished its purpose. But now the false teachers were in an uproar. They were trying to undermine Paul by every possible means, including personal attacks. His approach to this teaches you and me how to face critics who make personal attacks. Consider the critical comments that they were making against Paul. Once again the question concerned the authority of Paul to preach and lead (2 Corinthians 10:8). His critics had sunk to making disparaging remarks about his writing, his appearance, and his speech (2 Corinthians 10:10) **"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."** Paul identified the central problem in 2 Corinthians 10:12: **"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."**

This problem is still with us today, the problem of making comparisons with others. Advertisers know how to exploit it, and fund raisers know how to raise money with it. The manufacturers of makeup, jewelry, diets, cars, vacations, houses and furnishings make millions cultivating comparisons. Preachers of a prosperity gospel know how to stir up your envy to fill up pockets – their pockets. But Paul's example helps us bring this to a screeching halt. **"We dare not . . . compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."** Paul emphasized that making personal comparisons was a foolhardy choice. As he did, he showed you and me what to do when we face harsh, personal criticism. And he taught us the importance of our text: **"<sup>17</sup> But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. <sup>18</sup> For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."** The invitation to compare yourself with others is an invitation to glorify yourself. This seems so natural! Everyone wants approval, right? How do you escape from it? Paul's instruction in verses 17-18 commands you to make a choice: glory in the Lord (not yourself). Trust God's Word to accept the fact that those who commend themselves will never be approved by the Lord. Grasping for the world's approval, they will never find the Lord's approval. The one who is approved is the one whom the Lord commends. So set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior. Let your life express His unique excellence; make Him the center of your existence.

Proverbs 25:27 gives you a powerful illustration of this truth. **"It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory."** Have you ever eaten so much honey that it made you feel sick? It certainly is sweet to the taste but if you eat too much and you start to feel "sicky-icky." Even a child knows this. But the Bible's proverbs have a marvelous way of leading you from you do know to what you don't know. The men and women who are constantly searching for their own glory will not find the glory they seek. This verse is a powerful commentary on the self-esteem movement. In a never-ending search for personal glory, they only make their hearts sick. So set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior. Make the glorifying God central to your existence.

## What Is At Stake?

In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, Paul uses a most unusual approach to get his point across. Having told his readers that making comparisons was unwise, Paul decided to "play the fool" for a few lines. He did so to turn the tables on his critics – very much like a court jester would mock the nobles in a king's court.<sup>i</sup>

You can see Paul playing the part of a fool beginning in 2 Corinthians 11:1 **“Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.”** (Paul went on to play this part, as is evident in 2 Corinthians 11:16-23 and following.)

But why would he do such a thing? Consider his motives carefully in 2 Corinthians 11:2-4. Knowing that they were being opposed by false prophets and deceitful workers who were following Satan, Paul desired to cut off their empty glory (2 Corinthians 11:11-15). Listen to Paul’s motives: **“<sup>2</sup> For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity [singlemindedness] that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”** Satan attacked the first Adam through his bride, Eve. Now he uses his wiles against the bride of the Second Adam (Christ) by attacking His bride, the Church. Paul chose to play the fool briefly to show them what the foolhardy path looked like.

What was at stake? The Gospel was at stake. For those who were looking for acceptance or approval, Paul would point to the Lord: **“<sup>6</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. <sup>7</sup> In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;”** (Ephesians 1:6-7) Those who were seeking to commend themselves in pursuit of the world’s approval were mistaken. It was and is a fool’s game. God, who granted us redemption and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, blessed us with acceptance in His Beloved One. We know the richness of His grace. But those false teachers in Corinth were preaching another Jesus and another gospel. So Paul gave all of us this safeguard: **<sup>17</sup> But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. <sup>18</sup> For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.”** As believers, the Christ of the Gospel is at the center of our existence.

### **As It Is Written**

In 1 Corinthians 1:31, Paul indicated that this principle was written in the Old Testament. Let’s turn to Jeremiah 9. In this chapter, Jeremiah lamented the depravity of his people (vs. 1-2, 10-11). Their tongues were like bows, and their lies were like arrows (vs. 3-6, 8) to deceive and hurt their neighbors. Doesn’t this sound like our culture today? So the Lord intended to melt their culture like a metal smith (vs. 7, 9) with sweeping vengeance. Verses 21-22 use the personification of Death – coming like “The Grim Reaper” – to warn the people of their impending doom. It is against this black backdrop that we see the great light of verses 23-24:

**“Thus saith the LORD, 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: <sup>24</sup> But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”**

- The wise man should not glory in his wisdom
- The mighty man should not glory in his might
- The rich man should not glory in his riches

How would we recognize a depraved culture? People glory in their wisdom, their strength and their riches. That's what their existence is centered around. But these verses confront us with that choice: to set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior. And what does that mean?

- The one who would glory should glory in this: that he understands and knows God
  - He is the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice and righteousness.
  - In these things, the Lord takes delight.

We need to learn the importance of this choice, and instruct our children to choose wisely. This is exactly what was missing in the culture of that day, according to Jeremiah 9:3 and 6.

### **How to Apply This Text**

- ❖ Spend some time thinking about this question: What is it in my lifestyle that tells me that life is all about me? How can I see that I have made myself the center of my existence? And what should I do to change my thinking – to make the Lord the center of my existence?
- ❖ Make the choice: Set aside the glory of self to glorify the Savior.
- ❖ Stop comparing yourself with others because it is foolhardy to do so.
- ❖ When an advertisement tempts you to compare, make up your mind that you will never buy that product.
- ❖ Set aside the world's teaching on self-concept and self-commendation as a dangerous lie.
- ❖ Learn to be like Paul when you receive harsh criticism of your service or appearance
- ❖ Stop glorying in your wisdom, your strength and your wealth. Learn what it means to know and understand the God of loving kindness, justice and righteousness. Meet Him at the crossroads, looking for His glorious deeds to meet your greatest needs.
- ❖ Teach your children to know God. (In our bookstore, you will find a little booklet, entitled, *"Who Will Teach Your Child to Know God?"* by Dr. Ken Hay).

### **Discussion Questions for Family Discussion Groups**

- How can we see that our culture is given over to the glory of "self" and the glory of men?
- What have you seen happen among your acquaintances when "The Grim Reaper" of Jeremiah 9:22 suddenly surprises them with the death of someone near them?
- What have you learned about the emptiness of pursuing personal glory? (What could you share to help others avoid making the same mistakes and find acceptance in God's Beloved One?)
- How have you learned to stop making comparisons between yourself and others?
- What lessons have you learned in how to receive harsh criticism from others?
- What stories or lessons can you pass along to help us all teach our children and grandchildren how to know God?

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<sup>i</sup> Many court jesters were shrewd political commentators. They knew how to play a part in order to mock a court official or a proposed position. Sometimes they enriched themselves by receiving payment from court officials who wanted them to disparage others before the king.