

A Letter on 'The Praise of Men'

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of pride and the importance of praising God alone, rather than men.

Scripture: Psalm 115:1, Proverbs 29:5, Matthew 23:12, Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Galatians 6:3, Philippians 2:3-4, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5, Revelation 5:9-10

Topics: "Humility", "Pride"

Description

John Nelson Darby addresses the dangers of pride and the misguided praise of men, emphasizing that such flattery can lead to spiritual harm and distract from true communion with God. He warns that pride is a persistent enemy that can obscure our understanding of our own spiritual state and that the most genuine Christians are often those who remain unnoticed and humble. Darby encourages believers to focus their praise solely on God, as He alone is worthy of honor, and to strive for humility by esteeming others above themselves. He concludes by urging his friend to refrain from elevating him in any way, preferring to be recognized simply as a brother in Christ.

Transcript

My dear Friend and Brother in Jesus Christ:

It gives me much pleasure to see your translation of -. I reserve the pleasure of reading it, or rather of having it read to me, for moments in which the Lord says to us, as He did to the apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while." But I cannot refrain from telling you, my dear friend, that the pleasure that the appearance of your work gave me has been somewhat abated by the too favorable opinion which you have expressed in your preface respecting me. Before I had read a word in your translation, I made a present of a copy to a very dear and sincere friend of mine, who brought me word that you had spoken in praise of my piety in your preface. The Passage produced the same effect on my friend that it did on me, when I afterwards saw it. I hope, therefore, that you will not take in ill-part what I am about to say to you on the subject, and which is the fruit of a tolerably long experience.

Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and of all our enemies it is that which dies the slowest and hardest, even the children of the world are able to discern this. Madame De Stael said, on her death-bed, "Do you know what is the last to die in man? It is self-love." God hates pride above all things, because it gives to man the place that belongs to Him who is above, exalted over all. Pride intercepts communion with God, and draws down His chastisement, for "God resists the proud." He will destroy the name of the proud, and we are told that "there is a day appointed when the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and

the haughtiness of man laid low." I am sure, then, you will feel, my dear friend, that one can not do another a greater injury than by praising him, and feeding his pride. "He that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a snare for his feet," and, "A flattering mouth worketh ruin." Be assured, moreover, that we are too short-sighted to be able to judge of the degree of our brother's piety; we are not able to judge it aright without the balance of the sanctuary, and that is in the hand of Him who searches the heart. Judge nothing therefore before the time. until the Lord come, and makes manifest the counsels of the heart, and renders to every man his praise. Till then let us not judge our brethren, whether for good or for evil, but with becoming moderation, and remember that the surest and best judgment is what we form of ourselves when we esteem others better than ourselves.

If I were to ask you how you know that I am one of the most advanced in the Christian career, and an eminent servant of God, you would, no doubt, be at a loss to reply. You would perhaps cite my published works; but do you not know, my dear friend and brother - You who can preach an edifying sermon as well as I can that the eyes see further than the feet go? and that unhappily we are not always, nor in all things, what our sermons are; that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." I will not tell you the opinion I have of my will, for in doing so, I will probably all the while be seeking my own glory; and, while seeking my own glory, appear humble - which I am not. I had rather tell you what our Master thinks of me - He that searcheth the heart and speaks the truth, who is "the Amen, the faithful Witness," and has often spoken in my inmost soul, and I thank Him for it; but, believe me, He has never told me I am an "eminent Christian and advanced in the ways of godliness." On the contrary, He tells me very plainly that if I knew my own place, I should find it that of the chief of sinners, and least of all saints. His judgment, surely, my dear friend, I should take rather than yours.

The most eminent Christian is one of those of whom no one has ever heard anyone speak, some poor laborer, or servant, whose all is Christ, and who does all for His eye, and His alone. The first shall be last. Let us be persuaded, my dear friend, to praise the Lord alone. He only is worthy of being praised, revered, and adored. His goodness is never sufficiently celebrated. The song of the blessed (Rev. 5) praises none but Him who redeemed them with His blood. It contains not one word of praise for any of their own number - not a word that classes them into eminent, or not eminent - all distinctions are lost in the common title the redeemed, which is the happiness and glory of the whole Body.

Let us strive to bring our hearts into unison with that song, in which we all hope that our feeble voices will one day mingle. This will be our happiness, even here below, and contribute to God's glory, which is wronged by the praise that Christians too often bestow on each other. We cannot have two mouths - one for God's praise, and one for man's. May we, then, do now what the seraphim do above, who with two wings cover their faces, as a token of their confusion before the holy presence of the Lord; with two cover their feet, as if to hide their steps from themselves; and with the remaining two fly to execute their Lord's will, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of His glory."

Excuse these few lines of Christian exhortation, which I am sure will, sooner or later, become useful to you, by becoming part of your own experience. Remember me in your prayers, as I pray that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon you and your labors. If ever you print another edition - as I hope you will - strike out, if you please, the two passages to which I have drawn your attention; and call me simply "a brother, and minister in the Lord." This is honor enough, and needs no addition.

Note:

This letter was copied from a tract from Bible Truth Publishers, and may still be available from them. Thanks to their publication, (and possibly others) its words are still in existence, for it is nowhere found in Darby's Collected Writings, Letters, or his writings in the public prints.

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