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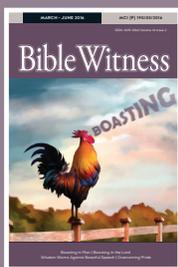
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Bible Witness



Boasting in Man | Boasting in the Lord
Wisdom Warns Against Boastful Speech | Overcoming Pride



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CONTENTS

Boasting

- 3** Editorial
- 4** Boasting in Man
- 8** Boasting in the Lord
- 15** Wisdom Warns Against Boastful Speech
- 18** Overcoming Pride

Children's Page

- 23** Bible Trivia - Exodus 25
- 24** Henry Martyn (1781 - 1812)

About the cover design

He who boasts is like a rooster which arrogantly attempts to establish his superiority. He seems to be saying, "I am mighty; let all around know it!"

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The magazine is distributed free from 2006 onwards. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Postage and handling charges for 2 years (12 issues):

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USE OF ARTICLES

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Editorial

Dear readers,

Should we boast? Most of us would immediately respond, “No, we should not; boasting is wrong!” But are all boastings wrong? Did not the psalmist say, “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2a)? And did not the apostle Paul declare, “I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little” (2 Corinthians 11:16)?

In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words translated as “boasting” have both good and bad connotations. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *hālal*, which is occasionally translated as “boast”, is also translated as “praise”. The Hebrew word *Halleluiah* (“Praise ye the LORD”) is derived from it. This is likewise the case in the New Testament, where the Greek word for “boast” (*kaucháomai*), is also used in both ways. Thus, the good or bad nature of the boasting is determined by the object of the boasting. When the boasting is about the goodness and greatness of God or the excellence of others, it is proper and honourable. But when the boasting is about oneself, it is condemned as improper and abhorrent.

The articles inside will present to readers the proper, biblical understanding of “boasting”, that we may always conduct ourselves in a humble and God-honouring manner. The best remedy for the evil of self-boasting is to boast in the Lord. He who honours the Lord shall be honoured, but he who honours himself shall be condemned.

We pray that you will be nourished by the reading of Bible Witness. Thank you for your prayers and support, which we value very much. Please continue to pray for the efforts of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church to obtain bigger premises to accommodate Bible Witness Media Ministry and the church activities.

Joyfully in His service,
Prabhudas Koshy

BOASTING *man*

Prabhudas Koshy

We live in a 'selfie-world'.

Man's tendency to boast of himself has been on shameless display in the social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The craze of snapping self-portraits and posting them on social media has caught on with a generation enamoured with self-promotion. Some even say, "My day is not complete until the selfie is posted." Alas, narcissistic tendencies of man have found a platform for free expression in the social media! Self-centredness and an excessive desire to be admired by others are plaguing our modern society.

Though self-boasting seems to give self-satisfaction, those who are engaged in it are unaware of its maladies. They are deluded by the vain glory of self-praise. They pride themselves in their looks, abilities, achievements, will-power and self-righteousness. Scripture warns us that "in the last days perilous times shall come", when "men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud," etc. (2 Timothy 3:1-2).

Disdainful Speech of Self-Boasting

To boast about oneself is to talk in a bragging manner, and is manifested by prideful speaking about oneself and about the things one possesses or does. God disdains this and regards it as vile and abominable. A boastful person is depicted as wicked, materialistic, arrogant, vulgar, accursed and suchlike. "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity" (Psalm 10:3-7).

Scripture tells us that prideful, swelling speech characterises Satan

(Isaiah 14:12-15), Antichrist (Daniel 7:8, 11, 25; 8:11; 11:36-37; Revelation 13:5-6), false teachers (2 Peter 2:18; 1 Timothy 6:4), and many churchgoers of the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-2; Jude 16), as well as all that are wicked (Psalms 17:9-10; 73:8-9). The apostle Paul classifies the proud and the boasters in the same category as the haters of God (Romans 1:30). It is then obvious that the persistent habit of self-boasting is a sure mark of the unregenerate person. Hence, no child of God should indulge in it.

Misguided Exultation in Self-Boasting

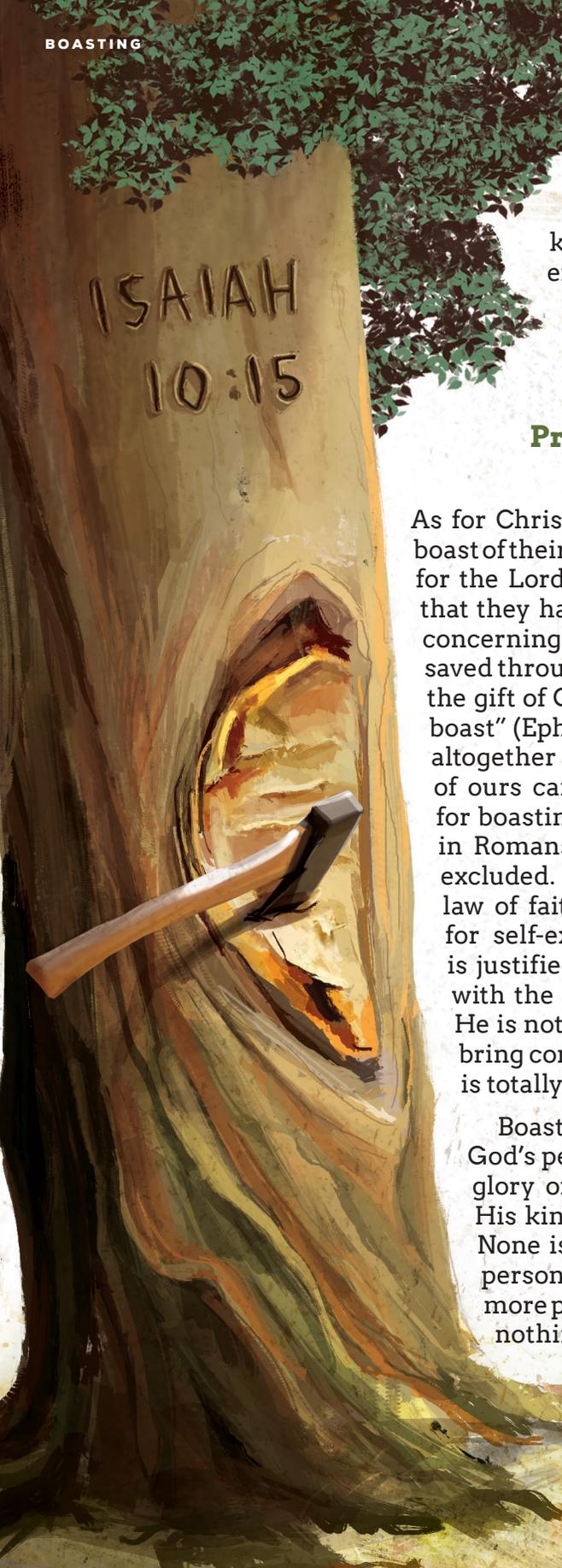
Self-boasting is an outrageous display of one's arrogance and flippant conduct before God. Lofty speech disregards and flouts the glory of the Almighty God. God's Word tells us that "no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). God derides anyone who boasts in His presence.

While denouncing the boastings of the Assyrian monarch, who had enjoyed great military victories (having been used as an instrument in the LORD's hand, as it were), the prophet Isaiah mockingly asked, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood" (Isaiah 10:15). Similarly, when the king of Tyrus became presumptuous in his self-exultation (by boasting that he was God!), the prophet Ezekiel was called by the LORD God to express His utter derision towards him. "Son

of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God" (Ezekiel 28:2). All such self-exultation is misguided and nothing short of devilish!

Man is warned not to be rash with his mouth, "for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). The omnipotent God, who "created the heavens, and ... spread forth the earth", repeatedly reminds man that "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:5a, 8; cf. Isaiah 48:11b). All proud and lofty speech is ultimately self-deluding and will be dealt with severely by God. "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psalm 12:3-4; cf. Psalms 31:18; 59:12-13). The Lord's command to man is that he should cease from this misguided vanity. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Samuel 2:3).

Hence, it is utterly foolish to gloat over one's abilities, achievements and possessions (which can make one blind to one's spiritual needs), instead of attributing them to God's mercy and grace (which are the soul's real need). This is corroborated by Jeremiah the prophet, who declared, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man



ISAIAH
10:15

glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 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" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Prohibition of Self-Boasting in God's People

As for Christians, it is God's will that they do not boast of their salvation, spiritual blessings or service for the Lord. Paul specifically reminds Christians that they have nothing to boast about themselves concerning their salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Since salvation by faith is altogether God's gracious gift to us and no works of ours can merit salvation, there is no ground for boasting by any Christian. Truly, as Paul asks in Romans 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." In other words, there is no room for self-exultation in a Christian's life, for he is justified by faith in Christ who provides him with the perfect atonement and righteousness. He is not justified by his works, which can only bring condemnation to him. Thus, self-boasting is totally excluded.

Boasting should never be heard among God's people as it is an affront to the grace and glory of God. None is called to be a child of His kingdom because of personal excellence. None is given a role to serve Him because of personal goodness or ability. If a believer has more possessions or abilities than another, it is nothing more than what God has graciously bestowed upon him; hence it is grossly inappropriate for God's people to boast. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now

if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it" (1 Corinthians 4:7)? Each time we boast of ourselves, we rob God of the praise that belongs to Him alone. May we refrain from taking undue credit for our personal accomplishments, but rather gratefully acknowledge the source of our blessings and strengths, even our gracious God.

Word of Caution in Boasting about Others

We are also taught not to boast about other men above the glory of our Lord. "Therefore, let no man glory in men" (1 Corinthians 3:21). Certainly, commending others and rejoicing in others' good works are encouraged. However, Paul cautioned the Corinthian Christians to take heed, "that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6b). Paul particularly advised them to think appropriately of the preachers as "ministers" or servants of God, which he has mentioned earlier in the letter (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5-7; 4:1), and not to ascribe to them undue honour leading to "hero worship". He did not want them to boast in any of the preachers above and beyond what they actually were. Since all preachers are merely God's servants, Christians should regard all the preachers in that same way – as God's servants!

In a similar vein, Paul impressed upon the Corinthian believers to think and speak greatly of the inner reality of devotion and sanctity in his apostolic ministry, in contrast to the external appearance in which the false teachers boasted. "For we commend not ourselves again unto

you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart" (2 Corinthians 5:12). Nevertheless, the apostle also warned them not to go overboard with exaggerated praises and accolades, but to accord a delimited yet proper measure of acknowledgment of his labours, as is due to any God-given service. "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Corinthians 10:13). This is tantamount to Paul saying, "We glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God, but I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me." Clearly, we must refrain from presenting an exaggerated description of others, especially God's servants who have been mightily used by the Lord in His work.

Conclusion

The apostle James soberly observes, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (James 3:5)! Boasting is a common sin of the tongue; if we are not vigilant, the pride of our hearts will burst forth in our speech. Thus, James also sternly warns us, "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (James 4:16). Self-boasting is a consummate evil. It not only seeks to generate an improper interest in oneself, but also disregards God's glory. So, may the Lord help us to be vigilant to prevent the tendency within all of us to boast.

The title 'BOASTING IN THE LORD' is written in a large, stylized, orange-brown font. The letters are thick and have a brush-stroke texture. The words 'BOASTING' and 'LORD' are in a larger font size than 'IN THE'. The background is white with faint, repeating illustrations of various brass instruments like trumpets and trombones in a light yellow color.

BOASTING IN THE LORD

Prabhudas Koshy

The psalmist David said, “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2). Similarly, in another psalm it is said, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah” (Psalm 44:8). “Boasting” in the Lord is all about duly and joyfully acknowledging and exalting the Lord above oneself and everything else. It is about rejoicing in the Lord and all that He has done. An elevated feeling of gratitude, praise and rejoicing overwhelms the man who boasts in the Lord, and he spontaneously and sincerely exalts the Lord.

Since the soul that boasts in the Lord is most concerned about the Lord’s praise, it will be least concerned about its own glory. When the glory of the Lord is the soul’s uppermost passion, the soul boasts in

nothing but the Lord alone. That soul will be self-denying and full of thanksgiving before the Lord. As one strives to give all glory to God, not only will arrogance and self-glorifying dissipate, God’s praise alone will also fill one’s mouth all the time. The passion of every Christian then is to boast in the Lord!

Scripture instructs us, through many exhortations and examples, how we ought to boast or glory in the Lord.

Boast in the Knowledge of the Lord

The Lord has declared, “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" (Jeremiah 9:24).

Intellectual apprehension of the truth of God and His character is an absolute necessity to engender pure, genuine boasting. The people who have neglected or forsaken the Lord have nothing at all to really boast about. Their boasting is in vain! Their confidence in themselves – be it in their own knowledge or strength or riches – would prove futile. Only the knowledge and experience of God and His goodness provide steadfast rejoicing. There is no greater glory than that we live to know God, who has made us for His glory.

The only appropriate basis for boasting is that a person knows and understands the Lord and His greatness, even His "lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness". Real, perfect lasting glory belongs to God, and only in Him can there be legitimate boasting. Only in the Lord can His people find unfailing love, judgment and righteousness, which can grant them satisfaction, confidence, hope and joy. Only those who are given to enjoy God's great glory can really have reason for proper glorying or boasting. As the Westminster Catechism states, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." Until man subjects his passion and power to the glory and joy in the Lord, he has nothing worthy of boasting.

True glory of man comes about only when he has known his glorious God.

Much of the religiosity of our time is generated through the use of sensory appeals in church worship services. It is built upon the philosophy of getting people to attain emotional elation. Very little is achieved when it comes to filling the minds of the people with the sacred knowledge of God with clarity and precision. The religious "boasting" of many modern churchgoers is spiritually weak, for it is not built on sound knowledge of God's truth. They are like ancient Israel, whom the prophet Jeremiah rebuked: "For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:22). Likewise, the emotionalism of modern churchgoers, being without deep-seated understanding of and total devotion to God's glorious truths, is nothing but vain boasting!

What are you boasting about? Let it not be in any transient, perishing things of this temporal life, but in the unchanging glorious truths of our eternal God. Do you understand the truth of your God and proclaim it? Does your life show forth His righteousness and lovingkindness? Do you thus

glory in the Lord? Rejoice in the Lord's greatness and His wonderful works in your life!

Boast in the Cross of Christ

Instructively, the apostle Paul, while denouncing the glorying of the Judaizers who had infiltrated the Galatian church, unequivocally declared, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). Here, Paul contrasts his own sentiments and behaviour in relation to the cross of Christ with those of the Judaizers. Those false Jewish teachers taught the people to take glory in ceremonial rites, such as circumcision, as something which would secure and confirm their good standing before God. Instead of totally trusting and rejoicing in the atoning work of Christ on the cross, they foolishly boasted in their own self-righteousness, based on their keeping of religious ceremonies.

So, Paul cautioned the Galatian Christians against glorying in circumcision: "As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither

they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh" (Galatians 6:12-13). One of the reasons why Judaizers despised the cross of Christ (whereby Christ has achieved our redemption), was that they might escape persecution that was unleashed against Christians. They were lovers of themselves and were cowards, having nothing to show for themselves. While they ostentatiously spoke of their preference for circumcision, Paul gloriously spoke rather of his fascination with the perfect work of salvation accomplished on the cross of Christ. Though Christ's cross was sneered at by the Gentiles and abhorred by the Jews, Paul boasted of its infinite preciousness. It was the cross which had freed him from the servitude and guilt of sin, on top of the Pharisaic Jewish ceremonialism.

As for Paul, everything else in the world pales in significance in the face of the glory of the cross. The world, he says in Galatians 6:14, is to him a thing "crucified". It has no more attraction for him. He loathes everything that this world presents to him which distracts him from the cross of Christ. "The world" - i.e. the unregenerate men and their distorted philosophy of life - holds no pleasantness

or value to Paul. The world's allurements, fleshly displays and religions of human effort are tossed aside by Paul. The world has become absolutely distasteful and repulsive to him; he is instead totally absorbed by the fascinating glory of Christ and His redemption, which was effected in the cross. Paul thereby boasts in Christ and His cross.

Do you boast of Christ or of your worldly achievements? Do you boast of His cross or of your self-righteousness? What is your greatest fascination – Christ, the flesh or the world?

Boast in One's Infirmities for the Lord's Sake

It is interesting to note what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:30 – “If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.” In other words, Paul was saying, “If boasting is forced upon me as a moral necessity, I would then boast of the things which concern mine infirmities.” If there was anything Paul would boast about as his distinguishing mark of apostleship, it would be his many afflictions, which many would consider a disgrace. He was happy to bear witness of how he had suffered ill-treatment, physical abuse, incarceration, etc. Thus, he further wrote again,

“yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities” (2 Corinthians 12:5).

Paul gave a glimpse of his “infirmities” when he enumerated his sufferings in an earlier passage in this epistle – “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” (2 Corinthians 11:23-29).

Paul often joyfully spoke of the marks of sufferings on his body as though they were “medals of honour”. He pointed to them as “mementos” of his extraordinary experiences of Christ's abiding love,

consolation and strength. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, he wrote, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." In the midst of his sufferings, Paul was filled with an ecstatic joy of being one with Christ in His plan for gathering His church. In addressing the Colossian church, he unashamedly said, "I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:23b-24). Furthermore, one could almost feel the gleam of joy flowing from Paul's pen when he wrote to the Corinthian church: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10).

Christ and His Gospel give us new understanding and power

to face our afflictions with joy. Our infirmities become occasions for the realisation of divine wisdom and power in our lives, which will aid us to efficiently and successfully bear our testimony and fulfil our ministry. Undoubtedly, all of us who follow the Lord will be given grace and strength to glory in our infirmities!

Conclusion

When we boast in the Lord, we bring glory to Him who is worthy of all glory. It is, therefore, a necessary spiritual exercise for all Christians. Moreover, boasting in the Lord encourages others, as testified by the psalmist: "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psalm 34:2). Indeed, boasting in the Lord strengthens the troubled, comforts the mourning, uplifts the downcast, emboldens the faint-hearted, enlightens the gloomy, dispels depression and despair, and fortifies the faith of His people.

"The only appropriate basis for boasting is that a person knows and understands the Lord and His greatness, even His "lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness". Real, perfect lasting glory belongs to God, and only in Him can there be legitimate boasting."



Good old truths and music on the Internet

“Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” – *Jeremiah 6:16*

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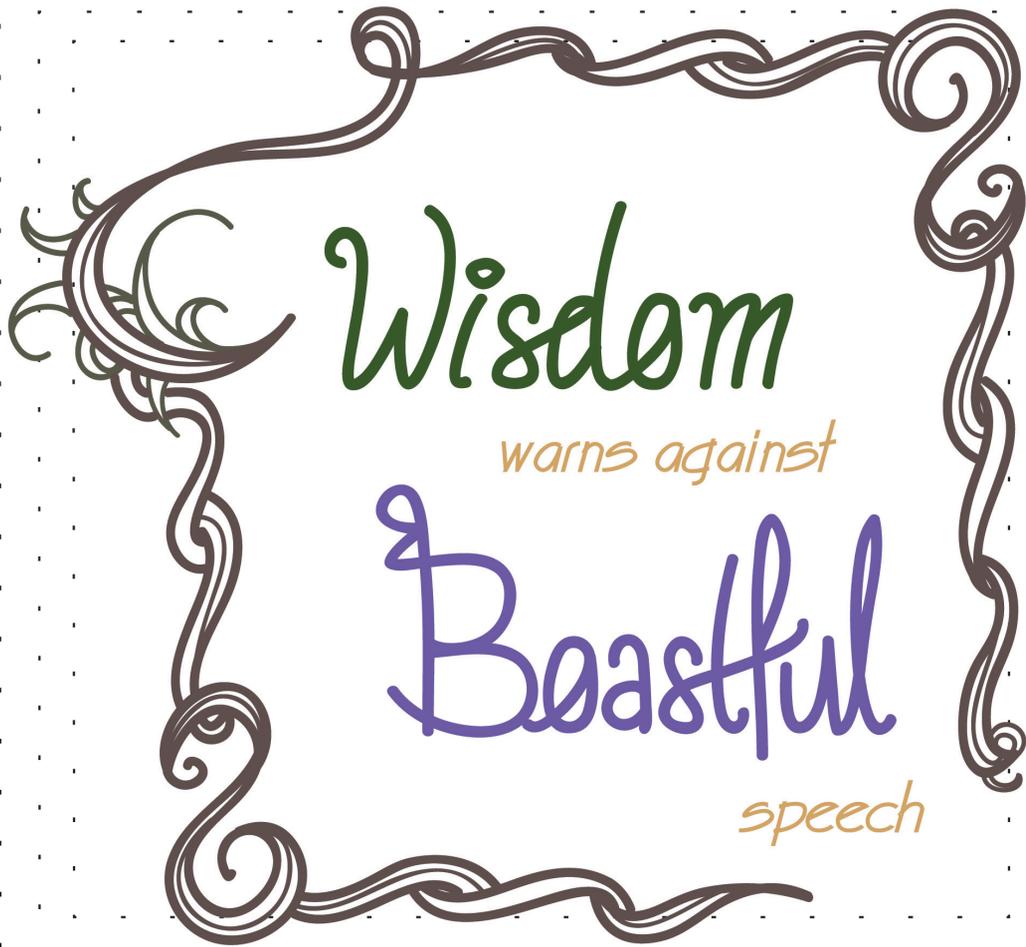


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*“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,
so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity:
for God loveth a cheerful giver.”
2 Corinthians 9:7*

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Prabhudas Koshy

Self-boasting is a sin that affects people of all ages – children, youths and adults alike.

The book of Proverbs cautions us against boastful speech. It is depicted as foolish utterances of an egoistic person, which will surely lead him to his own dishonour. The overall perception about boasting that the wisdom of Proverbs gives, is that it is not only unwise but also destructive. Self-exaltation will not lead to real, lasting excellency or advantage. So, God's people are exhorted to avoid all forms of prideful talk. Consider the following admonitions from the book of Proverbs:

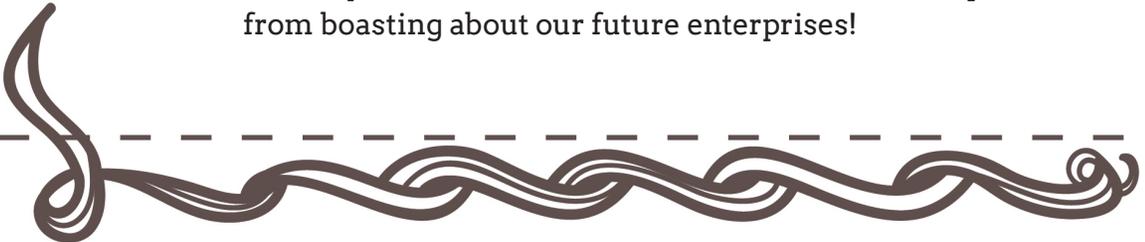


- **DO NOT ENGAGE IN SELF-PRAISE:**

“Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Proverbs 27:2). A man who praises himself is one who cannot feel happy until he hoists himself above others. That is certainly not a pretty sight. It is better that we be focused on getting our life and efforts to be praiseworthy before the Lord and His people, rather than praising ourselves. As it has been said, “Self-praise is no commendation.” To be commended by others is certainly to one’s credit and enhances one’s reputation. But to engage in self-commendation will result in one’s own hurt and disgrace! Hence, the apostle Paul also reminds us: “For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth” (2 Corinthians 10:18).

- **DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW:**

“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1). A person should not praise himself concerning what he will do the next day, simply because he really has no way of knowing for sure what will happen. Never arrogantly presume the future! The apostle James highlights the folly of disregarding this truth when he admonishes those who exult in self-assured planning: “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (James 4:13-16). Our ignorance of tomorrow and inability to control tomorrow’s events should stop us from boasting about our future enterprises!



- **DO NOT BOAST ABOUT YOUR UNJUST GAINS:**

“It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth” (Proverbs 20:14). This verse depicts a shrewd buyer who unjustly downplays the value of a product in order to get it at a low price, and then brags about the “cheap deal” that he has managed to “snatch” out of the seller. However, God’s children ought to be reminded that all our business dealings and affairs of life should display the glory of our heavenly Father rather than material glory. Rather than profit-making, our lives and activities should manifest fairness, equity, justice, righteousness, grace and compassion. Our desire must be singularly for divine virtues and glory, instead of material wealth and its accompanying glamour!

- **DO NOT BOASTFULLY SPEAK OF A GIFT NOT GIVEN YET:**

“Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain” (Proverbs 25:14). “False gifts” are gifts promised but not given. False promises of gifts are truly like clouds without rain which leave many eager and expectant farmers devastated. What great disappointment and distress false promises have inflicted on others! We must not boast of what we have promised, which remains an empty promise until it is delivered! In other words, we should not boast of a promise that we have not made good yet. Neither should we make any promise if we know we cannot follow through its delivery.

From the above selected admonitions from Proverbs, God’s people indeed must beware of and avoid all forms of boastful speech. Finally, we must also realise that prideful speech leads to violence and punishment: “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride” (Proverbs 14:3a). The foolish talk of a person, who is arrogant, hardened and thick-headed in his ways, results in him being punished with a rod. Unguarded words of arrogance can also engender violence, and can act as “a rod” hurting others. So, let us guard our speech, and let it be rid of a self-exalting spirit that troubles others and ourselves.

OVERCOMING

pride

Eliezer Ortega



Pride, simply put, is the belief that one is better or more important than others.

It manifests itself in a haughty or arrogant spirit that robs one of the desire to put God's honour first and the interests of others before self; in short, it renders one ineffective in God's service. The Bible is replete with warnings against allowing one's service and testimony – whether wilfully or unwittingly – to be tragically marred by pride.

Pride Disqualifies

Proverbs 16:18 sombrely testifies: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The apostle Paul, in delineating the spiritual qualifications of an elder, specifically warns against appointing "a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). This indicates that even a fervent, promising Christian who is spiritually gifted, if preoccupied with an overwhelming sense of self-importance, can destroy his usefulness for the Lord and disqualify himself as an exemplary influence. Similarly, the apostle John, in his third epistle, "wrote unto the church" to caution her against the arrogant actions and abuse of authority by a self-elevating, domineering church leader (cf. 3 John 9-10). John deplores such a spirit of pride, which certainly disqualifies anyone from God's service.

It goes without saying that even God's people are not exempt from this sin rearing its ugly head in their lives. There is the constant danger that anyone of us could easily fall into the clutches of pride. Before pride overcomes us, let us overcome pride. The apostle James, in his epistle, wants his readers to know how they may overcome pride.

Recognise Ongoing Battle with Pride

Scripture testifies that "the spirit ... in us lusteth to envy" (James 4:5). The word "spirit" here refers to the immaterial part of man's being, as distinct from man's body. The spirit is the seat of a man's intellect, emotion and will, which is said to have a strong inclination towards "envy". Man's natural tendency is to resent others having a better deal than oneself. At the root of envy is preoccupation with self-elevation – in other words, pride! It is therefore not surprising to note that in many Greek writings, the word "envy" has often been used in close association with pride.

James knew too well that though we are a new creature in Christ, the wretched flesh (with its downward pull towards sin, including the pride of life) is still present in us, ever lurking to bring us "into captivity

to the law of sin" (cf. Romans 7:23, 25). James is here reminding us that as long as we are still in this flesh while living on this earth, we have to constantly contend with this craving to "be number one"! As natural as a heavy body would move downward, so is our bent towards "the pride of life". Realising this ongoing spiritual battle with pride will keep us vigilant in overcoming pride each time it "pops its head up".

But we are not without help. Being "partakers of the divine nature" through Christ (2 Peter 1:4), we need no longer be controlled by the flesh but by the Holy Spirit who has made His permanent dwelling in us. But what if weakness and inability to overcome overwhelm us? James adds in 4:6, "But he giveth more grace." God sees to it that His grace is adequate to meet our testings. It is the same grace which God assures would be "sufficient" for Paul when he was greatly weighed down in bearing his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Whenever the pride of life comes in strong upon us, let us remember that we have a strong and mighty God who gives and assures us of His grace. The more we are struck by our sense of inadequacy, the more acutely conscious we are of our absolute dependence on God, and the more freely God's grace flows towards us. Thus, when we are weak in ourselves, we are then most strong in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:10).

Submit / Draw Nigh to God

James further says in 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." The linking word "therefore" signifies a consequent action or event from the preceding discussion, i.e. God's

bestowing of grace. The word "submit" means to place or set oneself under another. It signifies that an agent is acting upon the subject. It has the idea of one controlling the other, the superior controlling the inferior. James is saying that our lives are to be governed by God's will and pleasure. According to James, one's submission to God hinges on the twin commands: "Resist the devil" and "Draw nigh to God" (vv. 7b, 8a). One could not exist without the other.

Now, to resist means to stand against, oppose, withstand, reject, or refuse. This word carries with it a conscious, deliberate and urgent action on the part of the subject and there has to be no middle ground. We can never put ourselves in submission to God if we do not resist the devil. Sadly, many of God's people have succumbed to Satan's ploys and deceptions. One of Satan's chief avenues of temptation is through pride. That was how Satan "provoked David to number Israel" in an act of foolish pride (1 Chronicles 21:1, 8). That would also have been how Satan attempted to induce Paul to "be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). And that will also be how Satan continues to make proud suggestions to us which are very tempting.

The devil knows how and when to stir up our thoughts, plant insinuations or offer cunning suggestions. He can use events, people, successes, failures, our service, prayers, etc. to instil pride in us. To all these, Satan is extremely observant and he will unscrupulously manipulate such things to make great influence upon our lives. However, the Bible tells us

that we must resist such thoughts, insinuations and suggestions by Satan. When a Christian resists the devil, God's Word promises that "he will flee from you". Whatever power Satan may have, the Christian can be absolutely sure that he has been given the ability to overcome that power. To "resist the devil" is the only way to get rid of him!

Equally important is to "draw nigh to God". When James exhorts his readers to draw nigh to God, it implies there is a distance, gap or separation. Indeed, "the proud he knoweth afar off" (Psalm 138:6b). Whenever pride (or any sin) stirs within us, it has the effect of separating us from God. The infinite, eternal, unchangeable, thrice-holy God, whom no fallen creature can ever approach, stands at an unbridgeable distance from sinful men. The only way to draw nigh to God is to "cleanse your hands ... and purify your hearts" (v. 8b) through Christ.

The "hands" signify one's outer behaviour. They need cleansing because they are dirty. Whatever we do that would boost our ego and give us occasions for outward shows of arrogance will cause our hands to become dirty. Our hands are dirtied when we say things that would put a person down and lift ourselves up, or when we do things to oppress other people and put ourselves way above the rest. Cleansing of hands thus signifies that we should ask for the forgiveness of our sins.

Moreover, James adds to his exhortation the importance to purify the hearts. The heart is where the stimuli of one's behaviour are stored. An inflated estimation of self can so easily arise from that "storehouse"!

To call people to cleanse their hands without the call to purify the heart is pointless. Let us, like the psalmist, cry out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24), whereupon we must acknowledge our sins. Let us pray that God will "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins (which include the subtle sin of pride); let them not have dominion over me" (Psalm 19:13). Only then can we be acceptable in God's sight and come boldly unto His throne of grace. And the promise of God is that if we draw near to Him with clean hands and pure hearts, He will draw near to us.

Bear with Mean Things / Experiences

In v. 9, James highlights a rather surprising God-ordained means of preventing Christians from being lifted up with pride – afflictions! "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep". This goes against the grain of the world's thinking. Unbelievers, when suffering afflictions, would cry foul and protest against the infringement of their human rights. Mourning and weeping are viewed as base and mean things, which are frowned upon as uncivilised and incompatible with high society. However, James stresses the need of such experiences in our lives. Afflictions have a preventive purpose – to take away our self-sufficiency and prevent us from being too cocksure of ourselves. Mourning and weeping are a sign of our soul's sensitivity to our sins and the sins of others, as well as a realisation of our human frailty and depravity.

This is a hard lesson to accept, though a greatly profitable one. The example of Peter bears this out. When Peter failed to take the Lord Jesus' warning seriously but chose rather to appear self-confident about his devotion to Christ (Luke 22:31-33), his boasting set him up for the most humiliating experience of his self-assured life: he denied his Master thrice! He was so filled with remorse that he "went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62). Ironically, such "mourning and weeping" made him realise how weak and feeble he was, and how misguided his self-assuredness had been! Being devoid of self-boasting, he was later restored and made useful in service again.

James' point here is most instructional. Since afflictions have the profitable effect of keeping our ego in check and preventing us from thinking too highly of our position, lot, ability, etc., a ready disposition to bear hardships and toil (i.e. to be afflicted) will stand us in good stead in our Christian struggle against pride.

Be Humbled in God's Sight

Recognising the ongoing battle with pride, coupled with submitting and drawing nigh to God, as well as bearing with mean things and experiences will, according to James, then lead us to be humbled "in the sight of the Lord" (v. 10a). The Greek verb translated as "humble yourselves" is in the passive voice, which literally means "be humbled" or "allow yourselves to be humbled". This tells us that there is an external agent acting upon us, i.e. God Himself.

In other words, we are the recipients of God's grace working in our lives. We cannot actively do something to be rid of pride; it is something which God does to us. God acts and brings circumstances, events into our lives; we respond by being willing to accept our lot – that is how we are made humble in the process.

The promise is this: if we allow ourselves to be humbled under the mighty hand of God, "he shall lift you up" (v. 10b). Oh, what amazing paradox! If we are willing to be placed in a lower position by God, God will in due time exalt us. This exaltation is not a deliberate, conscious self-exaltation. It is effected by external means, and will not require any scheming or manipulation on our part. It is something that we do not seek out, but is something bestowed upon us, by virtue of God's wonder-working grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Realising that we can do nothing without Christ, let us have this mindset of the psalmist: "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me" (Psalm 131:1).

Conclusion

Truly, the sin of pride is a very dangerous sin to trifle with. It is the cause of Lucifer's downfall. Almost every other sin could be linked to the sin of pride. But thank God that He has not left us without instruction or warning against this treacherous "enemy" lurking within us. Take heed – let us overcome pride before pride overcomes us!

Bible Trivia - Exodus 25

Sarah Yong

Following the instructions given for the Ark of the Covenant and the Table of Shewbread in Exodus 25, the LORD continued to instruct Moses concerning another item in the Tabernacle, namely the Golden Candlestick. Read verses 31 to 40 to find the answers to complete the statements that follow. Then fill in each answer accordingly in the crossword below.



- The candlestick shall be made of _____ gold. (down)
- It would have six _____ coming out of the sides of it, with three on one side and three on the other. (down)
- There were to be bowls shaped like _____, with a knop and a flower in each branch. (across)
- There shall be a _____ under every two branches. (down)
- Seven _____ were to be lit, that they may give light. (across)
- The tongs and the _____ thereof shall also be made of pure gold. (across)
- A _____ of pure gold shall be used to make all these vessels. (down)
- All things pertaining to the tabernacle must be made according to the _____ given in the mount. (across)
- Leviticus 24:2 states that _____ oil was to be used to cause the lamps to burn continually. (down)

ANSWERS TO BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 25 (VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1, P. 23)

- (A) 1) SHITTIM 2) SABBATH 3) OVERLAY 4) TWELVE 5) BORDER
 6) AARON 7) STAVES 8) COVENANT 9) DISHES
 (B) SHEWBREAD

Henry Martyn (1781 - 1812)

"Burnt out for God!"

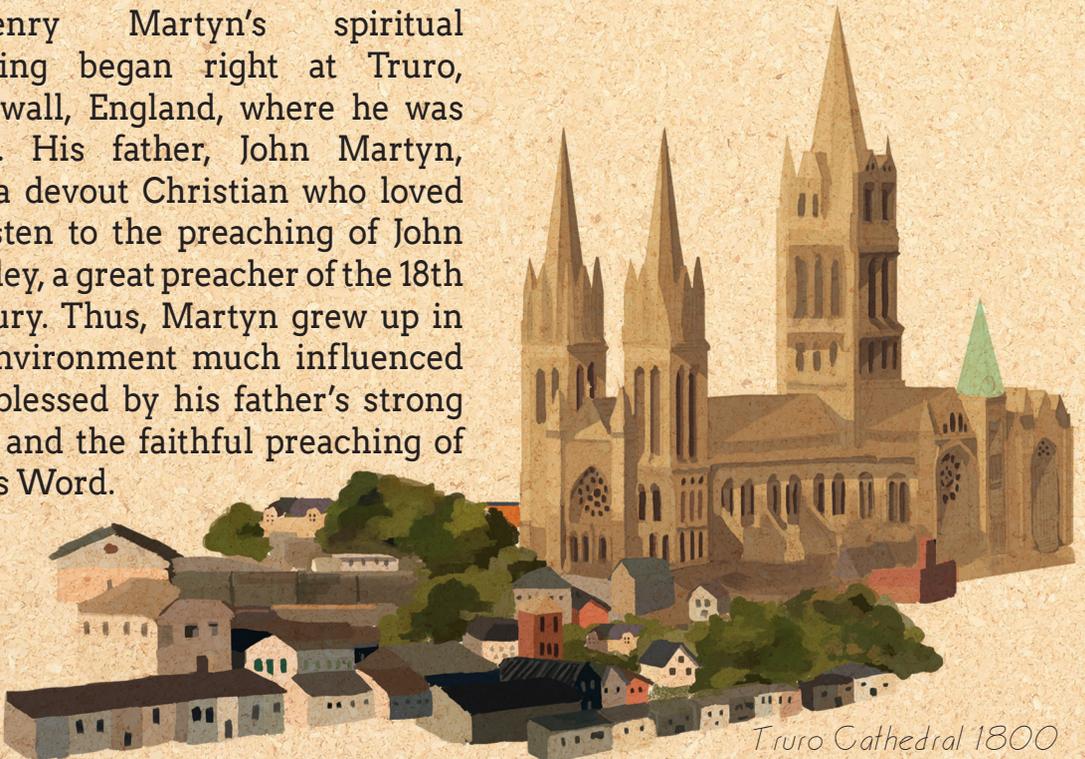
*(Retold from 'They were Pilgrims', written by Marcus L. Loane,
published by The Banner of Truth Trust)*

Retold by Jenny Lok Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy



Henry Martyn once wrote in his journal: "I feel pressed in spirit to do something for God... now let me burn out for God". These words clearly expressed his one ardent desire in life: to give his all to the Lord and serve Him faithfully till the end. In fact, that was what God had intended Henry Martyn to be – "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

Henry Martyn's spiritual training began right at Truro, Cornwall, England, where he was born. His father, John Martyn, was a devout Christian who loved to listen to the preaching of John Wesley, a great preacher of the 18th century. Thus, Martyn grew up in an environment much influenced and blessed by his father's strong faith and the faithful preaching of God's Word.



Truro Cathedral 1800

When Martyn was 7 years old, he studied at Truro Grammar School. He was brilliant and excelled in the Classics (study of the languages and literature of ancient Greece and Rome). In 1799, he officially joined St. John's College, Cambridge, where he majored in Mathematics. Soon he made it to the top of his year. Though he was highly intelligent, he was very much a bad-tempered boy in his early years. He could neither see the sinfulness in his behaviour nor understand what it meant to be a godly Christian boy.

The turning point came when he received news of his father's sudden death in 1800. He was shocked and very sorrowful. It made him ponder over the matter of life after death. Encouraged by his friend John Kempthorne (who was his senior in school), Martyn turned to the Bible for comfort. He started with Acts and then the rest of the New Testament. Gradually, he began to seek God in prayer, pleading for His mercy and forgiveness through Christ. A revival had begun in his heart!



Henry Martyn started attending Sunday services at the Church of the Holy Trinity, where Charles Simeon was the vicar. Simeon was like a father to Martyn and lovingly guided him in his spiritual life. Martyn started to grow in his desire to walk closely with God. In October 1802, he finally gave himself fully to the Lord's service and began his preparation for ordination to be Simeon's curate (or assistant priest). His ordination eventually took place in 1803 at Ely, a cathedral city in England. Through Simeon, he heard of the wonderful work of William Carey (also known as "the father of modern missions") in India. Having also read the journals of David Brainerd (missionary to the North American Indians), he was thus moved to heed the missionary call. He joyfully declared, "I wish for no service but the service of God: to labour for souls on earth and to do His (heavenly) will". He accepted an invitation to be a chaplain with the East India Company, where his main task was to minister to the English in India and find opportunities to reach out to the natives with the Gospel. Before he set sail for Calcutta, India, Martyn was ordained to the priesthood in the Chapel Royal at St. James on 10 March 1805.



Four months later, Henry Martyn began his missionary journey as the only chaplain in a convoy of 150 ships. On board the "Union", Martyn watched as his beloved England slowly disappeared from view. Straining his eyes for a last glimpse of his homeland, his mind was filled with thoughts of his beloved friends at Cornwall and Cambridge – particularly Lydia Grenfell, whom he had grown to love dearly since 1803. His prayer was that one day, God would permit him to marry Lydia! For a while, he was feeling homesick and lonely, but he knew that preaching God's Word must come first.

Soon Martyn was busy sharing the Good News with almost every person he could find on board the crowded ship – from the scholar to the soldier, and from the seamen to the ship's carpenter. Oftentimes, he had to bear with angry faces that would curse and swear at him, but some 200 to 300 people would still come to the weekly Sunday service which he was allowed to hold on the deck. By and by, the young, frail-looking Martyn came to be highly regarded as a shining witness for Christ. All this while, he never ceased to feed on God's Word and would spend time in earnest prayer whenever he was not preaching. He truly believed that one should "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Gradually, his presence was so much felt that the "Union" was named "a very praying ship"!

On 16 May 1806, after a long voyage, Henry Martyn reached Calcutta at the peak of its hot season, which in a way reflected his soul that was "on fire" for the Lord. He subsequently met up with David Brown, who was in charge of the Old Mission Church. He stayed with the Browns and was invited to preach often in that church. During this time, he also had frequent discussions over Bible translations with several Western missionaries, including William Carey (who was a great inspiration to his mission work)! Ever ready to serve, Martyn awaited his first assignment with eager anticipation...

(to be continued)

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