

SEEKING GREAT THINGS
By Elder Ralph Harris
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In Jeremiah 45:5 we find the prophet telling Baruch not to seek great things for himself, and I am confident that the things Jeremiah had in mind were things that men of the world count great. Such things almost always run counter to a close walk with God. I have seen some of our own people pursue places in high society, and I have never seen anything to indicate to me that it added anything to their spiritual health and well being, but rather did injury to it. It has appeared to me that those who sought such places may very well have been guilty, at least to some extent, of desiring notoriety and recognition. Is it not possible that they have secretly desired to be honored of men and to make a name for themselves in the world? Have any of us always been totally exempt from inordinately wanting to be admired by men and well esteemed by them? These vain things and the pursuit of them discovers a disposition and a mind-set that ill becomes the professed followers of the meek and lowly Lamb of God.

I well remember some of my own youthful ambitions of notoriety and recognition, and as I reflect back upon them now they seem so childish and foolish and empty. It is a great mercy that the Lord stripped me of those ambitions at a very early age and made me content to be His *nobody* if it would honor Him.

It is certainly not uncommon for some of God's people to also seek worldly wealth. There are those who "will be rich." That is, it is their *desire* to be rich (See I Tim. 6:9). This likewise, it appears to me, is one of the more prominent of the "great things" that they are tempted to seek after "*for themselves.*" I believe the Lord would tell them the same thing Jeremiah told Baruch, "Seek them not."

Down through the years the words of Luke 16:15 have kept ringing in my ears: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"---also Luke 12:15: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And yet again, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). If we lay up treasures in heaven we can be sure they will be exempt from decay and theft (See Matt. 6:19-20). But if our hearts are set upon becoming rich in this world's goods, we shall find at last that we would have been better off to have sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

Even the Disciples of Christ, in their early, immature state, were not immune to an ambitious spirit. This was clearly reflected in the request of James and John to sit the one on Christ's right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom (See Matt. 20:20-

28 and Mark 10:35-45). His lesson to them was that the only way to be chief among His believing people is in servitude to them. This is just the opposite of the world's view of greatness. Their view is that a man has achieved greatness when he can exercise authority and dominion over others, but the Lord's way is to "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

The seeking of great things for ourselves is an example of self-exaltation, and the Scriptures tell us plainly that "whoever exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 14:11). If we truly believe this it will tend greatly to keep us in a meek and lowly frame, for we are also told in this same verse that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The only truly great things in this world are the things of the Spirit of God--the things that pertain to His kingdom and glory. These we may seek without restriction, and they are of infinitely more value than anything the world esteems great