

Boasting in the Lord

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Jer. 9:23 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:

Jer. 9:24 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.

Humans have been given the highest of all positions and opportunities of any creatures on earth. Only to man has God given the capacity for what we could call “advanced comprehension.” We notice that hogs and monkeys, among other species, are able to reason out certain things, but we have also learned that compared to the reasoning power of man, those abilities are puny. Hogs figure out a way to get more food or do a better job of protecting their young. But man has learned not only how to get more food, but how to make that food, and how to alter its genetic structure to produce more. He has learned how to invent and manufacture complex ways to protect his young. Monkeys figure out a way to manipulate colored blocks to get rewards, or the can be taught a kind of limited hand and vocal language to express what they are thinking. But man has started with raw materials and built his own rewards of every conceivable sort. He has developed a language to express abstract thought, and has even invented and improved ways to interpret other languages, and to even have a language that expresses laws and theories (such as algebra, calculus, physics, and quantum mechanics). So, we can see by man’s expressions of what is on his mind that God has endowed him with a mind that is unique for creatures occupying earth. But, for all this, the Lord reveals to us in this text that man has an awful weakness; that weakness is the tendency to imagine himself smarter than he is, more powerful than he is, and in possession of more wealth than he is (**v.23**).

Our text points out this weakness of man in order to point us to another way of thinking than that normally seen among carnal humanity. It is on this we want to focus. May the Lord help us to see that in **v.24** He points us to what is the greatest mental achievement of mankind. In this verse, He instructs us about what to “glory” in. Now, we don’t use the word “glory” or “glorying” much anymore, so what does this word mean in modern English. It means to “shine” or to “boast” about. So, we have a reason to boast or brag about our God. The verse doesn’t teach us that we may brag as though we had gotten something by our own power; as we will see when we look at the things the Lord singles out about Himself. We’ll see that these are things about Him we can boast about.

- I. What is the first thing the Lord says we can boast about? Understanding and Knowing God
- You might think this is something that people can brag on themselves about, but the very capacity to understand and know God literally destroys every reason for personal bragging. Why?
 - Because we got our first understanding about God through grace...God’s unmerited favor in which He revealed Himself to us.
 - ▶ **Mat. 16:17** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
 - If a 10 carat diamond fell out of the sky and hit you on the shoulder or fell in your

shopping cart would you say that you worked to find and mine that diamond? You didn't work to get that!

- There was a man who was blind from birth mentioned in Jn. 9. Jesus Christ healed that man. Would he have had any right to say that he discovered healing for himself?
 - Then, any additional understanding and knowledge of God we have gotten comes through divine intervention.
- ▶ **Mat. 11:27** All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; **neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.**
- ▶ In **Eph. 1**, Paul mentions that he prays for the Ephesians to have more knowledge of Jesus Christ. What does he say? **Eph. 1:16-17** - "...making mention of you in my prayers. **17** That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:**
- ▶ Folks, all revelation for mankind about our Great God has come as an act of unmerited favor through Jesus Christ
- ▶ (Talk about the Daughters of the American Revolution policy - letter on offering table)
- When Christ makes God known to us by grace through the new birth, we stand in a new place of learning. In that new place we are then able to understand and come to know the Lord more.
- ▶ You can talk to a kindergarten child about letters and words, and meanings in sentences but they won't understand until you teach them how to read and write. Then those letters, those words, those sentences, those books become meaningful to them. Just so, when God ever brings a human to the new birth, they are then capable of understanding about Him, of knowing more about Him.
- ▶ To fully appreciate what the Lord is teaching us here, we need to first realize that billions of humans across the world are totally incapable of understanding the things of God. They have eyes but they don't see; ears, but they don't hear.
- Do you sometimes shake your head in amazement when people tell you things they believe about God that are so ridiculous you can't imagine where they got such ideas.
 - One such idea is that God is the kind of character who would give eternal salvation to someone and then take it away, or let that one whom he appointed to receive salvation fritter it away (you know the bible never mentions a temporary God-given salvation...everlasting and eternal are always connected with it).
 - There are multitudes of doctrines in a multitude of religions that state things about God that His message never verifies or supports.
- But, we are freed from that human condition of ignorance and are enabled to understand the Lord as He is.
- ▶ There was a man in the country of the Gadarenes (**Luke 8**) who was possessed of demons. Christ cast out those demons and gave the man back his mind. The bible tells us when that man became sane and able to think he was found clothed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, in his right mind.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit enables this: **John 16:13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

- ▶ Dedicated discipleship enables us to take advantage of the Holy Spirit's guiding and teaching (how many of you believers realize that your commitment and dedication to being disciples-in- action determines your level of understanding about God and freedom in Him?): **John 8:31-32** "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; **32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

II. What is it about God that He highlights as areas of our understanding and knowledge of Him:

■ Lovingkindness

- ▶ This first thought is going to sound out of tune, but did you know that there is a belief among many people of the world that God loves everybody? Now, this is a popular doctrine because it allows humans to treat God any way they want to because He will still do them good because He loves them. But, let's think for a moment about one other thing this wild belief does. It makes God incompetent, and not God at all. Why?
 - Because, the entire message of God to man declares Him to be all-powerful. So, when God loves everybody, you either have to eliminate that portion of the scriptures which clearly teaches about eternal punishment, or you have to declare that, although God loves everybody, His best efforts cannot keep them from eternal damnation...which makes Him incompetent and not all-powerful.
- ▶ But what do you as believers KNOW and UNDERSTAND about God's lovingkindness?
 - He showed His love for you by showing you the real Christ as the sacrificial Lamb, as your sin offering, and bringing you to Him as your Savior
 - He shows His love for you by giving you guidance and blessings
 - He shows His love for you by assuring you that He is now, and always will be keeping you (preserving you).
 - He shows His love for you by teaching you that eternal blessings wait for you

■ Judgment

- ▶ If you will think about God's judgment as either **a verdict, an evaluation and assessment, a decision or conclusion by Him**, or **fair dealing with humans according to their actions and attitudes** you will be covering most aspects of His judgment that is meant here.
 - In a country where sanity still prevails, juries hear and see evidence presented in cases about crimes and wrongdoings and after hearing and seeing everything, they hand down a decision, often called a verdict. In this verdict they have made a decision based on all that they know about a subject that has come before the courts. Let's see God right now as a 3 person jury...a jury which sees and knows EVERYTHING about every case involving every man who has ever lived. Knowing everything, and being completely without any agenda except the upholding of truth and holiness, God will render a verdict about each person, and will decide how to deal with each person based on that. This is one of the main features of what we define as the judgment of God.
- ▶ There are religious people throughout the world that teach many things about God's judgment that show they have no idea about how His judgments work

- Some religions believe God is a thundering deity who is only always angry, and always only demanding retribution for wrong; they believe His main business is to punish (such a god would have a tunnel-visioned judgment which would not be fair or balanced).
- On the other hand, some religions portray Him as a benevolent observer who simply lets creation go on its way, but doesn't take any active role in what mankind is doing (such a god would not practice "judgment" at all)
- But, let me say that only folks who have, by grace, come to understand and know God can actually come to have a clear view of His judgment
- ▶ Time won't allow coverage of all this, but let's summarize by saying that we can find reason to boast about God because:
 - His verdicts, evaluations or conclusions about how something is, and what must be done about it are always right
 - ✓ We don't see all the aspects of why God denied Moses the privilege of going into the Promised Land because of one moment of anger; but we know that verdict was right, because He is the perfect and all-wise God.
 - His decisions to take action or not take action, to exercise divine power or to let things continue, to stop the actions of men or to allow them to go on...all these decisions are right and perfect
 - ✓ We don't fully understand why God allowed wicked men to abuse Jeremiah so that he spent his entire ministry either in prison or weeping...or both. But, we know that God's decision to take no action against Jeremiah's enemies while this was going on was right and perfect.
 - ✓ We don't fully understand why God is allowing a handful of men to destroy America without Him taking any action to stop it. But, we know that His decision to take no action to save our country is right and perfect
 - ✓ His dealings with humanity, regardless of the outcomes, are always right and perfect; this is what we know and understand about His judgments.

■ Righteousness

- ▶ Righteousness is a word to describe the uprightness and even-handedness of God
- ▶ One of the chief aspects of God's righteousness is what we call justice; giving what is due. That is, righteousness demands fairness, and divine righteousness demands divine fairness.
- ▶ Now, one of the biggest complaints that some organized religions and many unjust men alike have against God is His punishment of sin. They say that God has no right to punish men for sin, because He made them the way they are. I need to say that God DID NOT make man the way he is right now. SIN made man the way he is right now, and sinning continues to define a man's character. As it turns out, it also defines what a man gets as his just due. God made man upright, in His own image. God told man to stay upright by obeying Him. But man did not listen. The result is fallen man.
- ▶ This antagonism about God punishing sin has spawned a so-called Christian religion that teaches that salvation is going to be universal..that every human being will be saved at the last.
 - Such a belief or teaching literally teaches that God is unjust, because it portrays Him

as giving rebels what they don't deserve (pardon for their rejection of Him as God; without them doing what is demanded of them to get it) instead of giving them what justice demands and what they deserve (condemnation and punishment for unbelief and pursuit of sin as a result of that unbelief).

- ▶ Now, believing that all humans will be saved at last is a really convenient religion because it supposedly frees those who believe it from any responsibility toward God.
- ▶ But, how does this kind of thinking fit with what you know as someone who “understands and knows God?”
 - You know that God demands perfect righteousness from His creatures, that such a demand by Him is right, and is based upon the perfect righteousness He has and is ("the Lord is righteous in all his ways" [**Psalms 145:17**]). You also know that without perfect righteousness there will be no salvation
 - You know that because of a sinful nature, perfect righteousness is impossible for any human to attain
 - You know that God provided a substitute or representative who was perfectly righteous. He provided this representative for any man who would believe His message and accept that substitute as his representative. When someone trusts that representative as his righteousness before God, then God views that believer as perfectly righteous.
 - And, God is perfectly righteous in doing so, because His Son, the substitute, was perfectly righteous, yet paid the sin debt for those who believe that they might have His righteousness.
 - You and I can boast about God who has provided a source of righteousness for us and a way to get that righteousness. This is a glorious characteristic of God!
- One last comment (see v. 24 of text): God delights in revealing knowledge and understanding to believers, and in exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness.