

24-09-01-The Best Way to Boast

self-reliance, boasting, mercy, justice, righteousness, relationship

Jer 9:23-24

Only connecting with God brings solid confidence and safety.

INTRODUCTION:

–Memorizing Scripture during Lent has blessed me. Before reading my text in the NIV, let me recite it from the NKJV.... Now in the NIV: Jer 9:23-24 NIV, *This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. These verses are set in a prediction of God's judgment on Judah. Jerusalem's fall to Babylon shows that those who heard these words first did not heed them. Yet this message is as crucial and urgent now as then. Then, it spoke of faulty political confidence. Today it still speaks about personally misplaced trusts... HOM.idea.*

I. It's Unsafe to Put Confidence Where it Doesn't Belong

- A. Worldly wisdom is *untrustworthy*: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom" (New wisdom can turn old wisdom into folly. [Blood-letting and strychnine were once wise remedies in old medical science; and someday, immune-system boosters may render vaccines obsolete.]
- B. Worldly power is also *unreliable*– "Let not the strong man boast of his strength..." [Age & disease can weaken wise minds and mighty muscles.]
 1. [Judah's trusted in Egyptian power for help, but Egypt too fell to Babylon!]
 2. [Nebuchadnezzar's own boast of power was in vain– Dan 4:30-32, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle... until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."]
- C. Worldly wealth is a popular trust, but just as *unstable* as worldly power or worldly knowledge– "Let not the rich man boast of his riches..." [Riches are subject to stock-market crashes, inflation, mis-management and theft.] (Temporal wealth is temporary– Prov 23:5 (NKJV), Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.)

TRANS: [An epigram by the Greek poet Phocylides was anonymously rendered into English verse: "If wisdom, strength, or riches be thy lot, / Boast not; but rather think thou hast them not. / For God alone, from whom those gifts proceed / Is wise, is mighty, and is rich indeed."] And that's the point: *wisdom, power, wealth...* they're gifts from God. On the *horizontal level* in this world, they serve their God-given purposes best in a *vertical connection* with God.

II. Solid Confidence Comes by Connecting with God– "but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,"

- A. Proper boasting?– 1 Cor 1:20, 30-31, Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?... It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God–that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."
- B. God sets human concerns for *knowledge, might and riches* next to His delight in *mercy, equity, and righteousness as an invitation to connect so well with Him and His ways that we can boast about it!*
 1. We can't fathom the depths of God, so this call to "understand" is more about *apprehending* Him than *comprehending* Him. *How?*
 2. God made Himself available and knowable through Jesus Christ. [The word "know" here is the term describing intimacy between spouses.] (We're invited to get so intimate with Christ and His Cross that we can *confidently boast* as Paul did in Gal 6:14, May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.)

CONCLUSION:

[Dave Dravecky, the SF Giant player who lost his pitching arm and shoulder to cancer, co-authored the *NIV Encouragement Bible* with his wife Jan (who's also a cancer-survivor) and the famous quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada. He writes about knowing God: "God wants me to know him, to plumb the depths of his being, to feel the beat of his heart and to know intimately the nuances of his personality. He isn't content with my shallow, shadowy image of him. He knows that my ultimate happiness, the fulfillment of my every desire, is found as I discover who he really is."]

Let's pray...