

Let Him Who Boasts...
Jeremiah 9:23-25

Intro: This week we've been reading the prophecies of Jeremiah. The prophet lived during the sinful and last days of Israel before its destruction. Therefore the prophecies of Jeremiah are focused on Israel's sins and the impending doom of the nation, the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity by the Babylonians. Yet in spite of the decreed destruction Jeremiah pleads with his people to realize that there is a way out for those who turn to God. Consider this short oracle:

Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

What was God saying to Israel and how can we benefit from understanding this message?

Jeremiah's message to Israel

A day of judgment was coming

God's day of wrath for Israel's sins was about to arrive. Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by an invading army—the Babylonians. Within twenty years of Jeremiah's prophetic call the city of Jerusalem was to be destroyed with a devastating destruction.

When that day came, deliverance would not come through physical things that the world delights in:

Wisdom—Perhaps the Israelites thought that through wisdom they could avoid the judgment of God. They would use wise diplomacy or they would use skilful battle strategy against their enemies.

Power—Perhaps the Israelites thought that through power they could avoid the judgment of God. They would build their arsenals and fortify their walls and make political alliances that would make them more invulnerable.

Riches—Or maybe the Israelites thought that through wealth they could avoid the judgment of God. They would buy the favor of a foreign king to come to their aid or pay tribute to the invading conqueror.

Yet, none of these things would bring deliverance in the day of God's wrath.

Instead, when that day came, deliverance would only come through spiritual things that God delights in:

Deliverance would come to those who understood and knew God and the things in which He delighted:

Lovingkindness—Compassionate actions toward others

Justice—Fairness in dealing with others

Righteousness—Right conduct in treating others

Those who trusted in God and His word and lived a life in keeping with His nature would escape in the day of wrath.

Thus, the exhortation is intended to shake the proud from their complacency trust in themselves, in their wisdom, power, and money, and to urge them to put their confidence in the Lord who alone could truly bring salvation to those who in appreciation of His nature sought live like Him in lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness.

The message is that God's way of salvation does not depend upon what the world values and that caters to human glory and pride. Instead God's way of salvation depends upon spiritual values that bring glory to Him!

It was not the last time that such a message would be needed!

Paul's Application of Jeremiah's Message (1 Cor. 1)

The Day of Judgment and wrath awaits us as well!

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)

When that day comes, deliverance will not come through what the world delights in:

Human wisdom, human power, human wealth

Already that approach had caused both Jews and Greeks to reject the only way of salvation.

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

Because the Greek gloried in wisdom they reject the gospel as foolishness. Because the Jews gloried in power, the crucified Christ was a stumbling-block to them. Both had missed the important principle of Jeremiah 9!

In addition, the initial responses to the gospel had confirmed that people of human wisdom, power and wealth were not commonly among those obedience to the gospel.

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; (1 Corinthians 1:26)

The three classes conform quite well to Jeremiah's exhortation, i.e. not many wise, strong, or rich respond to the gospel.

God has chosen a way of salvation that eliminates human self-glorying and that promotes His glory.

but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

God has deliberately bypassed all the things that the world values in His plan to save man. The reason is clear! He wants us to eliminate human glory.

Salvation is not grounded in our doing, in our wisdom, power, and wealth; but in His doing, His wisdom, His power, His riches.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Paul is not saying that there is nothing we can do to receive God's salvation! He is saying that every human being is dependent upon God for His deliverance and not himself. Paul mentions four aspects of salvation that totally depend upon God.

Wisdom to know the way

Justification to be forgiven

Sanctification to be made holy

Redemption to be raised from the dead

Thus, the person who comes to God for salvation has understood the message of Jeremiah 9! He understands that nothing he has can secure escape from the wrath of God. Therefore Jeremiah's exhortation to Israel applies also to the believer in Jesus Christ!

that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31)

Conclusion: Let those who are in Jesus Christ "boast in the Lord". Let us join with Paul in saying, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14) Whatever hope we have for eternity is rooted not in our efforts but in the shed blood of Jesus! By His doing...

And thus even our efforts to serve Him should be seen in this light. Our good deeds are not a ladder by which we may climb to heaven. And even if we, like Paul, should preach the gospel in places where no one else has ever gone or to people who have never heard, our response should be the same, *“But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord”*. (2 Corinthians 10:17)

Let those who are not in Christ understand that we cannot get to heaven by our own education, influence, or wealth; but by His doing, by the grace, love, mercy and work of God in our behalf.

So that maybe you could say *“just as I am, without one plea but that they blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, Oh Lamb of God, I come”*.

“Nothing can for sin atone, nothing but the blood of Jesus. Naught of good that I have done, nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; no other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.