

“The Right Kind of Boasting”¹ #1163 (series #3 of 9) Scripture text: Jeremiah 8:18-9:26

Introduction: It’s easy to boast, isn’t it? Boys and girls, it can be easy to boast.

Boasting is talking proudly about something you have done. We also call it “bragging.” 吹牛
Boys and girls, what have you boasted吹牛about? How did you brag about something?

Well, maybe you bragged about getting an A on a test. A 90 or a 94.

You tell everyone in the classroom, or during recess time. You boast about your good grade.
Or maybe, you won a race in a sport event; or your team came in first place. You won.

And you proudly tell others about it. That’s an example of boasting, or bragging.

-Now, it’s possible, that some teens and adults suffer from the opposite extreme.

Some of us were raised, to never mention our accomplishment or success in school or in life.

Our parents were quick to warn us about pride. Some of our parents never praised us for anything...but they were quick to criticize us. As a result, some of us have developed low self-esteem. We rarely have good thoughts about ourselves.

If that is your tendency, please be careful in how you apply this sermon to yourself.

-But for most of us, it’s our tendency to want to boast and brag.

-From the end of Jeremiah, chapter 9, come those fairly well-known words of the Lord:

“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,” the LORD God.

-Now, the verb translated “to boast” is based on the Hebrew verb, which means,

to praise, or to glory in something or someone. It’s the Hebrew verb “halal”(BDB, p. 237-9).
We get the word “Hallelujah” from that Hebrew verb.

Literally “hallelujah” means: “Praise the Lord. Give glory to the Lord.”

In the Arabic form, halal is that which is praised or commended. As in halal food.

In verse 24, the LORD says: “Let him who boasts (him who glories in something, or finds something praiseworthy) boast about this:

that he understands and knows me. That I am the LORD....”

But the people of Judah were far from the LORD. They did not understand the LORD and His ways.

-So the tone of this whole chapter, indeed for most of the book, is a tone of sadness:

[Read 8:21-22; 9:1. Jeremiah is mourning, weeping, lamenting. 感叹

¹ Loosely based on Chapter 5 of book by Philip Graham Ryken, Courage to Stand: Jeremiah’s Message for Post-Christian Times (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009) pp. 69-82.

Why? First because his people, the people of Judah have been sinning so greatly against the Lord. Also, Jeremiah is mourning and weeping because

the Lord had poured out his judgement on his people. He had punished them.

-Let me remind you that these chapters of the book of Jere. are not in strict chronological order.

It seems that already the Babylonian army had invaded the land of Judah.

Already, thousands of the inhabitants of Judah had been taken into captivity to Babylon.

Chapter 8:19 refers to the cry of God's people from a "land far away."

Why were so many killed, and so many others taken as captives? Because of Judah's many sins.

-In chapter 9, the Lord particularly emphasizes the sins of deception and lying. [Read 9:3-6.

You see, deceit and lies usually accompany other sins.

For example, if you hurt someone, it's hard to admit it. Much easier to cover it up. Even lie.

If you slander someone, later, you will often refuse to admit it. You cover it up.

If you have lust in your heart, or murder on your mind, generally, you won't be honest about it.

So, you see, lies and deceptions usually accompany other sins.

-For example, a couple of weeks ago a judge sentenced Mr. Conrad Black to another 14 months in a Florida prison. He had been out on bail, appealing his sentence.

His lawyers were hoping the judge would take his time already served, as sufficient time.

But she didn't. The Judge sentenced Mr. Black to the remainder of his sent., 14 more mos.

In her statements, the judge explained why. That Conrad Black hadn't taken any responsibility for his crimes. Even though he had been convicted of cheating the shareholders of his company. And that he tried to cover up his cheating. Yet Conrad Black refused to admit any wrongdoing. He refused to show any genuine remorse. 悔恨

So it was with the people of Judah, in the days of the prophet Jeremiah.

Here they were, worshipping other gods, such as Baal and Asherah.

They were taking other men's wives, and having secret affairs.

They were defrauding 骗取 the poor in the land, and taking advantage of widows and orphans.

And, on top of it all, they were lying about it. They were refusing to be honest about their sin.

-So, now, finally, after Jeremiah had been warning the people, for 25 years or more,

the LORD sent in the Babylonian armies. The enemy soldiers marched into Jerusalem.

Thousands were slain in the streets. Soldiers showed no mercy to young men, or women.

Anyone who survived the destruction was left to grieve over slain family members and friends.

[Read vs. 17. In that near-eastern culture, even yet today, some of the women were professional mourners. They were experienced in weeping and wailing. 哀号

Their high pitched, wailing sounds filled the streets. Day after day.

-[And vs. 20. Ah, death like a robber, crept in through the windows of each home.

It reminds us of the time of Moses, with the Israelites as slaves in the land of Egypt.

How in that final plague, the LORD sent his angel of death into each Egyptian home.

The oldest son in each family was struck down.

But in the homes of the Israelites, no one perished. Why not?

Because the blood of the lamb was smeared 涂抹 on the doorframes of their homes.

But 600-700 years later, in the time of Jeremiah, the LORD did not spare His people.

There was no blood atoning for the peoples' sins. Instead they had to pay the price.

Well, that's *the context. The setting.*

2. What were the people thinking? 2.A. All during the 25, 30, 35 years, perhaps, of Jeremiah's warning them of certain destruction, *why had they not repented of their sin?*

And why had they persisted in their evil ways?

-We get some clues, in this chapter, and in the previous chapters. In previous sermons, we already noted how the people were deceiving themselves. They were living in lies.

They refused to admit the truth about themselves...how wicked they had become.

But more was going on, among the people in Judah, at the time.

[Read Jeremiah 5:27-28a. You see, many of the people of Judah, by that time, had become rich and powerful. They had grown "fat and sleek 时尚."

That is to say, they had plenty of money, and plenty of food.

And with their money, many men had become politically powerful.

So the people of Judah had come to rely upon their riches and on their power.

What can happen to us? they thought, "we have wealth and we have power."

-And there was even more, going on, among the people. [Read Jeremiah 7:1-4 and 8:8-9.

You see, the people and the leaders were depending on the Temple building, in Jerusalem.

They were proud of the fact that the LORD made His dwelling in their midst.

They were a special people, a chosen people.

Yes, they knew some sin was in their midst 中间, but, hadn't God said that He had made an everlasting

covenant with Abraham and his descendants? And that Temple building...

there God made His name known. Surely God would protect that holy building!!

And, the law...God's direct words to them. Of all the people in the earth, God had spoken to them!! Didn't that give them extra wisdom, extra knowledge?

-That same attitude was still being shown 600 years later, in the time of Jesus.

Think of how the Pharisees...kept on saying: "We have Abraham as our father. We are the chosen people of God. We are His very special people."

So, the people of Judah boasted. Nothing, they thought, could ever happen to them.

2.B. So we also sometimes boast today. Let's not first apply these words to the world.

God was applying these words first to his covenant people, to the church of that day.

How easy it is for us, to step back and think to ourselves:

"Look at me. Look at what I have accomplished. Look at me and my family.

Look at our Reformed Christians schools and our Reformed, Christian churches....!"

Oh, we are clever, so we won't say it, not outright. But, oh, how often we think it.

In vs. 23, we find **three particular things** that we sometimes boast about:

wisdom, strength, and riches.

-Some of us can easily boast in **our wisdom**. We might have better than average intelligence.

We got good grades in school. Maybe we have graduated from a good university.

Or maybe we landed good jobs...we are praised on the job as being so talented.

Or, maybe we know the Bible so well. We have memorized Bible verses and catechism answers.

But Paul says in 1 Cor chapter 8, knowledge "puffs up" a person.

They become wise in their own eyes. What is wisdom, if it is without God, without Jesus?

In 1 Cor 1 we read that all the wisdom of the world, if it is just that, worldly wisdom, is as foolishness to God.

Are you boasting in, taking pride in, your wisdom? Examine yourself...

-A second thing about which we can boast, is **our strength**.

This generally occurs in our younger years, when we have peak physical strength.

Maybe we are exceptional in a certain sport. Or maybe we can put in long hours at work.

We have lots of physical strength and energy....other people comment on it.

Strength can also be power. Not physical, muscular power...but political power, or career power, or even power in church.

Again, we are too clever to say it, but we might start to think it: "Look at me. I can influence

so many people. I'm in a powerful position. Look at me, on the job....handling things that other workers cannot handle. Wow." And we might boast about it, ever so slightly. But what is power...either bodily, physical power, or power in some position of responsibility? Let me tell you, if you don't know it already. In a few years, your physical power will be declining.

They say that by age 30, you have passed your peak, physically. Most of us past.... Oh, you might still have some power at work, or be in a position of great influence.

But you can be diagnosed with deadly disease. Your heart could stop beating. Without the LORD at the center of your life...without Jesus at the core of your being.

Who are you? What are you? The line from the old popular song says it honestly:

"All we are is dust in the wind." Just dust....dust in the wind.

-And then about the third things, about which so many people boast: **Riches. Wealth.**

"Look at how much I am getting paid. Look at how much I earn. Look at what I have accumulated. I came to this country with nothing in my pocket, now look at what I have done."

So easy, isn't it...to boast? To take pride in our accomplishments.

3. But, the LORD says this [Read vs. 23-24. Emphasize vs. 24.

The apostle Paul later echoes these words, in 1 Cor 1. In fact, let's turn there, p. 1773.

[Read 1 Cor 1:26-31. Vs. 31, footnote....to Jer 9:24.

If you want something to be proud of, in a good and right way, look to Jesus.

Jesus is our Saviour. Saving us from our sin, our faults, our failures.

And how that humbles us? That we must admit we need saving, we need rescue. Why?

Because we are filled with sin...in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

That in ourselves, there is really no good thing...nothing that pleases a holy and just God.

That we desperately need Jesus....Jesus who rescues us from the wrath of God which was upon us because of our sin. Jesus has now become for us, true wisdom:

that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

-So, if you have anything to boast about...boast in Jesus, not in yourself or your accomplishments.

Take a righteous pride in Jesus. Delight yourself in what Jesus has done for you.

Living a perfect and righteous life. The only righteous man on planet earth

And then, taking all you sins, and shedding his blood to atone for all of them.

Take a holy pride in Jesus....boast to others about Jesus, his love for you, his work for you,
his forgiveness of your sin, his continuing interceding for you, and his preparing a place for you.
Not because you are so good, or wise, or rich. But only because Jesus is so good, so wise, so rich.

-So the LORD says, to Jeremiah, and to His people, Judah:

“Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me. The LORD.”

And we know the Lord, not because we are so smart, so wise, in figuring him out.

We only know the Lord because He choose us....He chose to reveal himself to us.

If he didn't we would be lost.

So even our knowing and understanding the LORD is His work. His revelation to us.

The Lord opening our sin-blinded eyes. His enlivening our sin-deadened hearts.

Our pride and our joy...is only the Lord.

Let him who boasts, who glories in something, glory only in the Lord.

And to that, all God's people said: AMEN.