

Boasting Is Good and Proper

Commentary for September 17, 2012 — When God Says It Is

Today, boasting is defined as excess vanity, speaking with exaggeration and excessive pride about oneself. In the Bible boasting was generally considered a very unwise practice.

“... But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

• *Matthew 23:11–12*

But the Bible also shows that there is a proper time to boast. In fact, God says that boasting is a good thing for His people to do under certain circumstances. God through Jeremiah the prophet tells us who should not boast and then he tells us when it is proper to boast.

“Thus says YHWH,

**‘Let not [1] a wise man BOAST of his wisdom, and
let not [2] the mighty man BOAST of his might,
let not [3] a rich man BOAST of his riches;**

but let him who BOASTS BOAST of this,

**that he understands and knows Me that I am YHWH who exercises
lovingkindness,
justice, and
righteousness on earth;**

for I delight in these things,’ declares YHWH.”

• *Jeremiah 9:23–24, New American Standard*

This verse says **“let him who boasts boast of this ... that I am YHWH who ...”** does marvelous things for mankind on earth. This passage is mentioned in two New Testament verses. In the first instance, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian *ekklesia* about himself regarding his status in the world and what he might properly boast about in life. He directly quotes Jeremiah 9:24:

“God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might BOAST [about himself] in the presence of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who BOASTS, BOAST of the Lord.’”

• *1 Corinthians 1:28–31, RSV*

God chose us. But he chose us as **“low and despised”** in the eyes of the world. That describes me! It probably describes you also. The King James Version translates verse 28 as **“base things of the world, and things which are despised”** The Concordant Version translates it as **“the ignoble and the contemptible things of the world.”**

To be precise, Paul is referencing the LXX Greek translation, which itself is translated into English by Lancelot Brenton:

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not the wise man BOAST in his wisdom, and let not the strong man BOAST in his strength, and let not the rich man BOAST in his wealth; but let him that BOASTS BOAST in this, the understanding and knowing that I am the Lord that exercise mercy, and judgment, and righteousness, upon the earth; for in these things is my pleasure, says the Lord.’”

• *Jeremiah 9:23–24, Brenton translation*

This same verse is quoted a second time (besides 1 Corinthians 1:31) by the apostle Paul, again to the same Corinthians *ekklesia*:

“‘Let him who BOASTS, BOAST of the Lord.’ For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.”

• *2 Corinthians 10:17–18, Concordant Version*

The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesian *ekklesia* explains more about why we should boast of God.

“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should BOAST. For we are his workmanship, ...”

• *Ephesians 2:8–10*

We can boast of God and in God because He is working through us to accomplish His will within us. We are the object of His work. This is true for you individually. It is true for the *ekklesia*, the Body of Christ, and it will eventually be true for the entire human race, all the sons and daughters of the first Adam, accomplished by God the Father through the last Adam, Christ Jesus. Here are some other examples of how “boast” is used in a Psalm:

“I say to the BOASTful, ‘Do not BOAST,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn.’”

• *Psalms 75:4, RSV*

(NOTE: All too often, when the King James Version translates the verb “glory,” a better translation is “boast.” One wonders, what does it mean for a man to have “glory” or “to glory” (as a verb) in something, unless it means “to boast”? Unfortunately the English word “glory” is used to translate several Hebrew terms. This causes confusion.) Continuing:

“My soul shall make her BOAST in YHWH: the humble shall hear [thereof], and be glad.”

• *Psalms 34:2, Concordant Version*

“In God we BOAST all the day long, and praise your name for ever [for the eon].”

• *Psalms 44:8, Concordant Version*

So we are free to boast, and God even tells us to do so, when the object of our boasting is to praise God and His accomplishments and “workmanship” on us, all for our benefit, all for our salvation, all because of His love for you. Go ahead, boast in God!

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