

Words of Delight
Jeremiah 9:23-24
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

A. Introduction: For today's text I selected one of my favorite passages, Jeremiah 9, verses 23-24. It's been quite a few years since I preached from this passage so I decided to revisit it today with this message that I've titled, "Words of Delight," the reference being to that in which God takes delight.

1. By way of introduction, I'd like for us to first turn to the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 12. Ecclesiastes is a book God used the great King Solomon to record for us. Now Solomon was very distinguished among the kings of Israel
 - a. Solomon was a very wise and influential king. In fact, In I Kings 4:31 we're told **"...he was wiser than all men...<and that>...his fame was in all nations round about."**
 - b. Solomon was also a very rich king. I Kings 10:23 says, **"So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom."**
 - c. Solomon was also a mighty king. He reigned over a vast kingdom and was very influential. People came from all over to seek his counsel. In I Kings 10:24 we're told **"all the earth sought ... to hear his wisdom..."**

Ecclesiastes is like a sermon in print by King Solomon whose chief subject is the true way (God's way) of eternal life, and of happiness and blessedness contrasted with the ways of man in his natural wisdom (and with respect to the pleasures and riches of this world) – Solomon concluding that man's natural presumed way to eternal life was all vanity – futile. The book of Ecclesiastes begins in chapter 1 with this, **"The words of the Preacher, <Solomon speaking of himself> the son of David, king in Jerusalem.** And right away in verse 2 he jumps in with **"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."** This very wise, rich, and mighty king concludes that all which he could bring to bear regarding the weightier issues of eternal life counted for nothing / vanity / futility. He concludes that man moves rapidly down the road to eternity to face God's justice and that man, in his mightiest state is found altogether lacking what he needs.

Now look with me in Ecclesiastes chapter 12. Having repeated in verse 8 that **"...all is vanity."** He adds in verse 9, **"And moreover..."** <i.e. – or better that you hear the conclusion of the matter; and he continues...> **because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.** ¹⁰**The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.**

Now know that in the Hebrew, the words translated as “**acceptable words**” means “words in which one takes delight” – similar to the phrase we’ll find in our text, Jeremiah 9. It is imperative that we discover and embrace these “acceptable words,” these “words of delight” for they are the words that convey truth about God in which He takes delight. He’s referring to the Gospel – words that are “**upright**” (unmixed or unadulterated with the vain doctrines and ideas of natural man); Now In Jeremiah 9, verses 23-24a, God commands us where not to look as well as where to look for eternal salvation and concludes at the end of verse 24 by saying, “**...for in these things I delight.**” God is telling us precisely in these 2 verses that which pleases Him. Some may say, “Well I choose to think salvation is like this or that” but know that God is the One who tells us what is acceptable in His sight – and He is the judge of all. And I think that is why I love these verses so much. It’s like an open book quiz as to the essence of the Gospel – the way of salvation, according to God.

- B. Jerimiah 9:23-24: Look with me at these verses: “**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: ²⁴But 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.**”

To begin with, know that we have a description of one group of people in vs. 23 whose hope is diametrically opposed to those described in vs. 24. And I believe this is descriptive of each of the two ways in which all men approach God: Grace or works – God’s way of salvation in which He delights or fallen man’s contrived way by some work of his hand. And God tells us here in what we are not to glory in as well as in Whom and what we are to glory. To “glory” in something refers to that in which we would boast, rejoice in, or base our hope for eternity upon. We glory in that which we think will find us acceptance with God. And let’s start with our consideration of that in which God directs us to glory, in verse 24, and then we’ll come back and consider by contrast that which we’re told not to glory in from verse 23. In verse 24, notice He says, “**...let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...**” Now let’s pause right there for a second. Knowing God is a big deal. In fact Christ prayed in John 17:3, “**And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**” But the specific understanding and knowledge which we’re to glory in is an understanding that excludes one’s own knowledge as being a condition of salvation (that would be glorying in our own wisdom which verse 23 specifically forbids). This understanding and knowledge has an object. It is referring to WHAT (or better in Whom) we are to glory or place our hope. We are to know the Lord as described herein. The Lord here is Yahweh – God Himself. He is “**...the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth:...**”

- C. Grace: So let's begin by looking at God's way of salvation— the way of grace here in verse 24.
1. **"Exercised"** = First we're to know the Lord who exercised something in the earth. To exercise something is to execute, accomplish, finish these things that are listed and that – **"in the earth."** This speaks of Christ in His incarnation – in what He (the God-man) accomplished in His life and death on earth!
 2. He exercised **"Lovingkindness"** – When we think of God's love, we begin with His eternal purpose to save – to show mercy to a people. God's electing love is unconditional (an "election of grace") but always remember that election is not simply God's choosing of a people, but it is a choosing of them unto salvation in Christ – that is the sense of how His lovingkindness is exercised **"in the earth."** Seeing the saved as objects of God's everlasting love in Christ in no way negates the absolute necessity of God engaging all that He is – all His attributes to accomplish these things in time for them. He exercised lovingkindness in the earth by His redemptive cross work some 2000 years ago.
 3. We're to look to the One who exercised **"Judgment"** in the earth. This is carrying out the judicial sentence (God the Father killed Christ, God the Son, to extract the debt owed to His justice for the sins that were charged or imputed to Him). Judgment was executed on the cross for all those for whom He lived and died – all the objects of His everlasting love.
 4. And we're to look to the One who exercised **"Righteousness"** – perfect satisfaction to God's law and justice whereby God can be consistent with His character – be both a loving Savior and still be a just Judge. We're told in Isaiah 45 to look to this God for salvation – a "just God and a Savior."
 5. And how does Christ's exercise of loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth get applied to those for whom this work was rendered? 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, **"For he <God the Father> hath made him <God the Son> to be sin for us, <Him> who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.** Christ died for sins He had no part in producing so that those for whom He died might have His righteousness put to their account – a righteousness which they no part in producing.
- D. Now let's go back and contrast this with the way of works as set forth in verse 23, the way of natural religion: Verse 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:**
1. Think of Solomon. If any mortal man in history had cause to glory or boast in his wisdom, might, or riches it would be Solomon and yet he concluded it was all vanity as he sought (and was taught) the Gospel – the words of delight or how God can accept sinners such as we by the doing and dying of a Substitute – by that which He alone exercised in the earth.

2. When first considering this, we may have a tendency to discount that these forbidden ways of salvation applied to each of us. And yet this verse describe ways that are natural to us all – and therefore is consistent with God’s declaration that we all must repent or perish. But who really imagines that gaining eternal life is based on:
 - a. Their wisdom – or how smart they are? or
 - b. How mighty, powerful, or influential they are? or
 - c. How rich?

I don’t know anyone who openly would think they are going to find acceptance with God because of how smart, powerful, or rich they are; yet many believe these temporal blessing to be indicators of God’s eternal blessings and favor toward us.

3. Glorying in my wisdom

- a. To glory in my wisdom doesn’t necessarily mean I’m claiming to be accepted by God because I’m smarter than those who are not so blessed. It is to glory – to place my hope in a way of salvation that naturally seems right to me (that’s my wisdom). But as we’re told in Prov. 16:25 ***“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*** So we all start off in that sense, glorying in what naturally seems right to us whereby we presume to do our part to get ourselves saved, imagining that salvation is conditioned in some way, to some degree on us, the sinner, rather than on Christ alone who met all the conditions necessary for the sinners He saves – all based upon that which He exercised in the earth.
- b. We glory in our wisdom when we imagine that anything other than (or in addition to) the imputed righteousness of Christ could gain God’s acceptance and favor and / or remove what otherwise would have been His just wrath due unto our sins.

4. Glorying in my might – When I once believed (as most still do) that salvation was conditioned upon me, the sinner, (my acceptance, my faith, my decision, etc.) then I was unwittingly relying upon my power (my might) to save myself. That was glorying in my might

5. Glorying in my Riches – Many are inclined to believe that their station in this life is evidence of God’s eternal favor and thereby, glory in their riches. And even if one credits God with enabling them to meet some condition for their own salvation, let us recognize that this is to presume that you now possess (or have been given) the wherewithal / the riches to save your self. That too, is how one might glory in their riches, assigning to themselves what actually took the doing and dying of the Lord of glory. Dare we place that which proceeds from us in rivalry with that – with the doing and dying of Christ?

E. How is such “glorying” in these things manifested in our day?

1. Vast majority of so-called “Christendom” believe in the doctrine of universal redemption, believing that God loves everyone and Christ died for everyone.

a. While adhering to that doctrine, I too imagined that I gloried in Christ, presuming to base my hope in those things set forth in vs. 24. However, this was not upright (or unmixed) thinking:

(2) Love – I thought I was resting in the love of God exercised by Christ, but what kind of worthless love would that be from One all powerful, all wise, and so completely able to save but who would instead allow the vast majority of these alleged objects of His love to perish? That’s not the love of God. **“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”** That’s His justice-satisfying sacrifice whereby God’s wrath is appeased – poured out on Christ. To be loved of God is to have your sin debt taken care of by your Substitute and Surety.

(3) Judgment – And while I may have thought I was considering all sins to have been judged in Christ, the reality of my doctrine exposed that sin was not really taken care of by Christ and justice was not upheld. What sort of unjust monster would extract the punishment for sins through the shedding of the infinitely valuable blood of His dear Son and still send sinners to hell whose sins had presumably been paid for (remission made) by His death on the cross? That wouldn’t be executing a just judgment in the earth.

(4) Righteousness – And while I may have thought I was looking to the righteousness of God in Christ, the reality of my doctrine exposed that I was looking at “another” righteousness – going about to establish one of my own as Paul described the religious (but lost) folks in Rom. 10:1-4. For all who believe that even one person for whom Christ died will perish, they thereby expose that they didn’t really see Christ’s work on the cross as a finished satisfaction. They do not see His work as it is – as righteousness having been exercised or finished – the providing of a perfect satisfaction to God’s justice whereby they are declared not guilty but righteous.

b. God won’t tolerate such glorying in self for He will not share His glory. Psa. 147:10-11 tells us that **“...he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”**

c. Clearly, my former hope (as with any others of like mind) was based upon:

(1) my wisdom (a way of my own imagination),

(2) my might (conditioned on me ultimately),

(3) and my riches – me having the wherewithal to procure my own salvation. No – Christ purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

2. The Perceived Insufficiency of Christ Alone – The beliefs of other so-called “Christians” expose that they glory in these same forbidden things as the real difference makers. While it may be more subtle, their gospel / their body of faith / their doctrine exposes the view that what Christ exercised or accomplished in the earth is really not quite sufficient for them. They may rightly conclude that they must have Christ’s work of righteousness imputed to them, but then deny that this (His work alone) really got the job done. I’m thinking of those who insist upon finding righteousness within themselves. Some even go so far as to say the imputation of righteousness is not how the saved are made righteous but instead is merely God’s recognition of an inherent righteousness already found within the sinner – a false and deadly understanding of the glorious doctrine of imputation. Others agree that Christ’s finished work, His righteousness, is the ground of our salvation but they go on to suggest that His work is merely the foundation and there remains a completing work to be done by (or in) the sinner. Consider how this is contrary to Christ’s parable of the house built on the rock in contrast to the house built on sand. In that story, the only distinguishing characteristic of the house that would stand under what was typifying the deluge of God’s judgment was the foundation, the ground – in other words, what their hope was built upon – in that which they gloried.

Those who seem so close to the truth of God’s way of salvation, but cling to one last strand that would enable them to look to themselves for their hope rather than to the cross alone are still glorying in their own wisdom for this too is contrary to the wisdom of God – to His way. They are glorying in their own might as their eyes are diverted away from the cross and instead relying on that which they have the power or might to make happen. And so they imagine they will attain entrance into heaven based upon that found within them – relying on their own riches to save them rather than the righteousness of God in Christ. Hear God in Galatians 6:14 – ***“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,…”***

F. Conclusion:

1. Look again at 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.” – This is what God delights in and what His preachers set forth – the words of delight!

2. I'd like to close by reading a complementary passage from I Cor. 1:26-31:

Paul wrote this to the believers at Corinth, saying...

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: ²⁷But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹That no flesh should glory in his presence. ³⁰But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

When it comes to the way of salvation, the wise man has no wisdom, nor the mighty man strength, nor the rich man riches, unless God has graciously put them in Christ and by the blood-bought gift of faith made Christ to be their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption. And so this passage concludes with...

³¹That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

I pray that is where you'll glory – where you'll place your trust. For in the Lord (in His person and work) and there alone is where the sinner finds acceptance, where God is glorified, Christ is exalted, and all boasting in the sinner is excluded. We're to glory in the Lord! Believe this Gospel – these “words of delight.”

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.