

Boasting In Christ (James 1:9-18)

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Amen. What a joy it is to be worshiping today. So thankful for the many wonderful things that we celebrate today.

! And I pray that as we go through Scripture, we'll be reminded of our greatest celebration of all, and that is that we have a Savior and His name is Jesus.

And so hopefully as we make our way through and continue in our study of James, that will be something that comes very clearly to us today. But before we get into that, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever been around somebody who likes to boast a lot?

They like to share many things, their accomplishments, and they want everybody to know how wonderful they are, all the things they've accomplished, how great it is. And even when somebody else has some good news that they want to share about how God has blessed them, this person has to one-up them.

They've got to share a little bit more. They've got to make sure they are the one who comes out on top. And I'm sure that as we think about that, there's probably somebody that comes to each of our minds as we think about that.

[1 : 1 0] And if nobody comes to mind, well, then maybe you're that person. No, I'm joking with that. But as we think about this, as we think about boasting and whatnot, nobody likes to be around someone who's constantly lifting themselves up at the expense of others.

In fact, we try to teach our kids not to do that. We try to make sure that we teach them not to be braggadocious and to share their accomplishments. And hopefully we try to avoid doing it ourselves.

It's not only socially inappropriate, but it's also warned against in Scripture, especially when it comes to our faith, especially when it comes to our relationship with God.

Paul in Ephesians 2 is telling everybody that each and every one of us is dead in our trespasses and sins, that each and every one of us has no hope, but God made a way that we can have a relationship with Him again.

And then he says, after making it very clear where our hope comes from, he says this, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it's what?

[2 : 2 2] It's a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. And then Paul again in Philippians chapter 3, he reminds us that where our confidence is found, our confidence is found in none other than Jesus.

He's telling the believers there, he says, look, don't put any confidence in your abilities. Don't put any confidence in your background and what you have done. And in fact, he says, if any of you think you have confidence in the flesh, he says, look, I have more.

And then he lists all of his credentials out, showing how he has lived as good of a life as anyone possibly could have lived. And then he says this, he says, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

All throughout Scripture we are reminded that we are on our own and on our own have no reason for confidence in the flesh.

[3 : 3 9] We're reminded over and over again, if left to ourselves, we have no reason for confidence in the flesh. And in our passage today, we are called to look at our life, to think about what it is that we're putting our confidence in, and to realize that our only hope is a good Father who loves us more than we could ever imagine.

And so if you have a copy of God's Word this morning, I want to invite you to open with me to James chapter 1. We're going to pick up where we left off last week, starting in verse 9, and make our way down through verse 18.

But this is what God's Word says, starting in James 1, 9. It says, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

[5 : 15] Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

And so from this passage, as we look at it this morning, I hope that we'll be able to see a few reminders that will give us a renewed confidence and joy that comes only from a relationship with God.

And the first reminder for us to consider this morning is to think about this question. I want you to consider this question. What is it that you're boasting in? What are you boasting in?

[6 : 16] It says, Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation. Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

After all of this talk here at the beginning about not boasting and how throughout the New Testament, we see over and over again that we should not boast in our abilities, what is James telling us here?

He's saying to boast. But what is he telling us to boast in? James is continuing to help his readers get from James 1-2 where he's telling us to consider it pure joy when we encounter various trials.

[7 : 19] He's telling us to get, he's helping us get from there where the trials are to this verse 12 of remaining steadfast in the trials. And up to this point, James has told believers to consider it pure joy.

And he's told them to ask for wisdom when they need it. And now at this point, James is telling them to boast. He's telling them to boast.

But a very important distinction must be made here. We're not boasting in anything other than Jesus Christ. We're not boasting in any of our abilities.

We're not boasting in anything that we have to offer. What we are boasting in is Jesus Christ. You see, the gospel eradicates all boasting in our abilities and our blessings and puts the focus squarely on Jesus.

Key to understanding this important truth is understanding that this is true across the board for all believers. This is true for every person who is a believer that we are to boast in Christ.

[8 : 27] It is true for those from very humble circumstances. And at the same time, it is true for those believers who are incredibly well off. We all must be dependent on Jesus.

And therefore, all of our boasting is rooted in the finished work of Jesus Christ. All of our boasting, all of our proclaiming is rooted and grounded in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Sam Albury, who is a commentator and wrote a book on James here, he rightly notes, he says, whatever end of the pecking order we may be at, his advice is the same.

We are to boast in our position. Not in our financial position, but in our spiritual position. The position we have before God, the position in which the gospel of Jesus Christ has placed us.

And I believe that James is distinguishing between the rich and the lowly here because this boasting in Christ can sometimes play out differently in our lives.

[9 : 34] For those of lowly means, there's a temptation to think, well, I have failed. I haven't been good enough. I'm looking around at all of my friends and peers and see how well off they are, see

how great they're doing.

And it makes me look at myself and think that I'm a failure, that I'm not enough, that I can't do this, that somehow, somewhere along the way, I made a mistake and I have failed.

I don't have what others have, and so that must mean that I am lacking something. And to this, James says, the message of the gospel, even to the poorest Christian, is that in Christ, you are somebody.

You're important. However poor you may be from a materialistic standpoint, James says to boast in your exaltation about your position in Christ.

And then to the wealthy brother, James says to boast in his humiliation. Now, how many of us in here like to boast in our humiliation? I don't think any of us like to share and boast in our humiliation, but this is what James is saying here.

[10:46] He says share, boast in your humiliation. You see, there's a real danger for the rich to be defined by their wealth. There is something that can be very deceptive about wealth.

And I think this is why Jesus warns that it's incredibly difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Because you see, when you have an abundance, when you have more than you could ever need, what you begin to have a hard time seeing is that you're desperate for something. Because this money is buying you all kinds of things that the world is telling you is important that the world is telling you can give you happiness, that can give you meaning. And so it's really hard to see that we're in desperate need of something when it's clouded by that excess.

It can give us a false sense of security because it's difficult to see the need for anything. James is saying, to those that may think this world has forgotten you, and to those who have no hope because of your humble means, remember, you are a child of the King.

If you're in Christ, you're a child of the King. And to those who think you may have it all, whether it be riches, talent, popularity, or whatever the case may be, remember, he says, remember that you need Jesus just like every other person.

[12:16] There's a song that we like to sing sometimes, I think primarily in the early service, although we'll be able to sing it in here in just a few weeks, Clay, because we'll be getting some new hymnals that will have this in there as well.

But it says this, the song is called My Worth Is Not In What I Own. And it says these in the first few lines, My worth is not in what I own, not in strength of flesh and bone, but in the costly wounds of love at the cross.

My worth is not in skill or name, in win or lose, in pride or shame, but in the blood of Christ that flowed at the cross.

You see, for us as believers, our worth is not found in anything in this world. Our worth is found in Jesus Christ. Whether you are wealthy or you don't know where your next meal is going to come from, we can all boast in Christ.

Much of this section is dealing with trials and propelling us forward to verse 12, where it says this, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

[13:27] For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. In order for us to remain steadfast in the midst of trials, Christians are to boast in their gospel identity.

We're to boast, we're to make much of who we are before God because of Christ. If you are a follower of Christ, then your lowly state doesn't define you any more than someone who is wealthy. Your trials and your hardships are not who you are. Your grief and your despair does not define you. You are a child of God.

Your debt has been bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And so this brings us to our next reminder that we see in this passage, and that is this, the origin and progression of sin, where sin begins and where sin leads to.

It says, let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

[14:44] But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. We already discussed how much we enjoy people who boast about themselves and how much we enjoy being around those who can't help but talk about themselves and lift themselves up.

But another group that we all enjoy is those who pass the blame, right? Those who can never do any wrong, those who have never done, made a mistake, and if they did, well then it was somebody else's fault that they made the mistake.

Putting the blame elsewhere is something that is incredibly common in our culture today, and I think it's something that we can think maybe only has been around for a little while.

But here's the truth. As soon as sin entered the world, we as people have been passing the blame. We've been trying to say that we are not guilty and passing the blame on to something else.

[15:50] In fact, if you remember in the garden after God asked Adam, have you eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Do you remember what Adam says? Adam says this. He says, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate.

In one sentence, Adam puts the blame on his wife and then in turn also puts the blame on God. In one sentence, he passes the blame off on his wife and passes the blame off on God.

Someone once said, to err is human and to blame it on the divine is even more human. It's something that we often find ourselves doing.

Kent Hughes, he gives three ways in which we find ourselves passing the blame off on God. He says, one way that we pass the blame off on God is that we just say that our sin is ordained by God. A common misconception is saying, since God is sovereign, which he is, that he has ordained that we succumb to sin. Truth is, God hates sin and he hates to see us sin.

[17:00] God does not ordain or approve of sin. God is not going to tell you not to do something and then at the same time force you to do what he's just told you not to do.

Others will try to blame it off and put it off on God saying that their fault is their circumstances that they find themselves in. God has placed them in the circumstances that are simply more that they can bear.

A student, for example, cheats on a test because he says, well, God has just given me the hardest professor there has ever been and so I just have to cheat on this test. Or maybe the thief says that he's stealing, blaming it on God for his poverty and so on and so forth where we're constantly blaming and putting the blame on our circumstances and ultimately on God for being in those circumstances.

Another common misconception is it's just part of our disposition. It's just who we are. God has given me passions and appetites so strong I can do nothing but yield to them.

God has made me this way and there's nothing I can do about it and so he's the one to blame for my actions. Well, this passage warns us about passing the buck like that.

[18:15] When it says, let no one say when he's tempted, I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one.

And so if God is not to blame for our sin, if we can't put it off on God, then who is to blame for our sin? We are.

We are, it says, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. We look no further than ourselves to see the origin of sin in our lives.

It's easy to look at this passage and think, well, James has just shifted gears. You know, it seems like it would have been a great place to cut off back in verse 12 because all of a sudden it seems like we have a whole new topic that we're dealing with here, Brett.

You know, we've been talking about these trials and these testing of our faith and now we're moving into these sin and temptations in our life and it would be real easy to say, well, there's a shift here but that's not the case and that's why we're going to continue in this because there's no line that's being drawn between verses 12 and 13.

[19:29] In fact, I love how Douglas Moon notes, he says, that James' concern is to help his readers resist the temptation that comes along with the trial.

Part of his concern here is to help us to resist the temptation that comes in the midst of trials. You see, as we go through trials, we must avoid the easy way out that leads to sin.

The easy way out that takes our mind off of what we're going through. The trials that we're going through seem so overwhelming and so oppressive that we begin looking for the easiest way out.

The first thing that we can come up with to take our mind off of our situation. The trials are weighing heavy on us and so we're looking for the first place that we can turn to to take our minds off of the trials.

And so it becomes real easy to look to things such as drugs or alcohol or pornography or inappropriate relationships at work and all of a sudden we're trying to find the first thing that's going to take our mind off of the trials, off of the hard times that we find ourselves in.

[20 : 40] You see, there will be plenty of temptations to take the easy way out. Giving in to these things can feel so right in the moment but that path leads to destruction.

That path leads to destruction. You see, sin is never clean. It's never easy. It's always messy. Verse 15, it says, Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Sin is always messy and it always leads us down a path further than we ever intended on going. Nobody ever intends on going down that path as far as sin leads but yet when we sin, when we take those easy way out, that's where it leads.

It is important to understand and to recognize that in the midst of trials, temptation is real and that it can be some of the most challenging times in our lives to resist it is when we are in the midst of those trials and so let us remember the words of James here.

He could not be clearer. The origin of temptation is not God. It's not even the devil. It's our own sinful heart. Our desire is brought under control only when it gives way to a stronger and more beautiful desire.

[22 : 04] Our desire to sin is brought under control only when we see something that is more valuable and beautiful to go after. You see, we're always going to follow that which is most important to us, that is which is most valuable to us.

Imagine that I had a table set up right here and I had a \$1 bill on the table and I had a \$100 bill on the table and I had just an infinite amount of money behind me that I could replace it with and I said, all right, everybody gets to come up and take one bill.

You can either take the \$1 bill or you can take the \$100 bill. Every single person in here would take the \$100 bill. Even my six-year-old daughter who thinks that she can save her allowance up to get an in-ground pool at our house, she understands that one is more valuable than the other.

She's completely convinced that at \$5 a week in a few months you'll have enough for an in-ground pool and I told her, sweetie, go for it. If you have enough, you can put that pool wherever you want to on our own property.

But even she understands that the \$100 is far more valuable than the one. We're always going to go after that which is most valuable to us.

[23 : 16] And so when you sin, what you are saying that in that moment, this sin or the immediate gratification that this sin offers is what's most important to you.

It's what's most valuable to you. But when we see Jesus for who he really is and keep our eyes fixed on him, then our ability to resist temptation is given new strength.

It's given new strength. Now I realize you may be thinking, well, Brett, this sounds great, but you don't know what I'm dealing with. You don't know the amount of pressure that I'm going through. You don't know how difficult this person is to live with. You don't know the pressure that I'm feeling in this moment. And I'm in the middle of it, and I don't see that there's any way out of it.

This trial is so pressing and this temptation is so much that it is more than I can bear. And I have to tell you that you're right. I don't know what it is that you're dealing with, and I don't know how long you've been dealing with it, but I do know there's a way out and that his name is Jesus.

[24 : 24] And so the final reminder that I want us to see today is I want us to clearly see the goodness of God. The goodness of God in this passage. He says, Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You see, God is not the author of temptation or anything evil. He is, rather, one who gives good gifts to his children, and the best gift that he gives his children is new life in Christ.

So don't believe the lies that others will tell you about God in the midst of your trials and temptations. Don't believe what they tell you is important in the middle of it. You deserve to do this or it's okay, it's understandable to go down this road.

Look at what you've been through. Know, stay firm, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Know what God's word says. This is why it's so important for us to know God's word.

[25 : 34] That's why on Sunday mornings we spend time going through scripture that we'll walk our way through verse by verse through scripture understanding what God has for us.

This is why we encourage you to get involved in live groups and Sunday school classes because not only do you experience this fellowship amongst other believers in these classes but you also dive deeper into God's word.

This is why we try to give you resources and encourage you to read the Bible on your own. In just a few weeks we'll be announcing that we're going to be encouraging our church over the last three months of the year to read the whole New Testament together.

The reason that we encourage you to do this is so that we can know the truth because if you don't know the truth it becomes really easy to believe a lie.

If you don't know God's word it becomes really easy to believe whatever anybody else will tell you about God's word. So know the word understand that it is pointing us to Jesus.

[26 : 37] David Platt reminds us of the truth found in these words when he says in your trials and temptations don't believe the lies. Remember that God is good so very good and he wants that which is good for you so trust him in your trials and turn to him in your temptations.

We see goodness displayed in several ways in this passage. We see it displayed in several ways. We see that his goodness is immutable. It says every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

We see that God's goodness is immutable because God is immutable. Now immutable is just a big theological term meaning he doesn't change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And so we see that God is unchangeable and his goodness is unchanging. We also see that his goodness is undeserved. Verse 18 says of his own will he brought us forth.

Not when we finally got our act together. Not when our good things outweighed our bad things. No, he's saying when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, that's when God came.

[28 : 00] This is undeserved. This is not our own doing. It is a gift of God. And finally, we see his goodness is final. It says we are a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You see, the first fruits are the initial batch of a farmer's crops that proves and guarantees the rest of the harvest is on its way. We, as first fruits, are reminded that this is just the beginning.

And there's so much more that is in store for us, so much more to come. And so as we close out this message, I want to make something very clear. Sin, it does lead to all kinds of death.

The death being talked about here most certainly is a physical death as well as an eternal spiritual death. But this death is also something that happens to each and every one of us.

The sin that comes in our lives, we have the death of our relationships. We have the death of our trust in the middle of those things. We experience all kinds of death because of sin.

[29 : 11] But I also want you to know that we serve a good father in heaven who loves to restore life, who loves to fix that which is broken, who loves reconciliation so much so that he gave his life so that the death does not have the final say in our lives.

You see, we serve a good father who wants to restore relationships. And as long as we continue in sin, as long as we continue to justify those things, it will continue to have a weight in our lives that God does not intend for it to.

Now, of course, once you are saved, your sins are paid for past, present, and future, and it's not going to affect where you spend eternity because of what Jesus has done. But one of the themes of James is that we understand that part of our faith, it produces something in us.

Our faith produces faithfulness. And so we want to be putting those things to death. Now, if this is new to you or maybe something you have known but has become real today, then I encourage you to give your life to Jesus.

If you've never come to him before, then come to him today. Let Jesus restore that broken relationship because here's the truth. Sin is real and it really destroys lives.

[30 : 35] It really has broken our relationship with God and it absolutely leads to eternal death. But each and every one of us has the opportunity to have that relationship with restored, bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

And so the question becomes, have you given your life to him? Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for what it tells us about you.

We thank you that it reminds us that our sin is real, that it's our own doing and Lord that because of sin it has broken not only relationships here on this earth but it has destroyed our relationship with

you.

But you look down and you didn't leave us in that brokenness. You sent your son to live the life we couldn't live, to die the death that we deserve so that those relationships can be restored.

And so Lord, help us to see that clearly today. Help us to look to you and see the goodness that you have given to us even in the midst of trials, even in the midst of difficulties when it's hard to see.

[31 : 47] God, remind us of what it is that you've done for us. And so Lord, I pray that as we think through this passage that we will think about what it is that we're boasting in, what it is that we're giving our lives to, what it is that we're putting our hope in.

And if it's in anything other than you, Lord, help us to see that clearly. God, we thank you so very much for all that you do and we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If God is speaking to you this morning, I want to encourage you to respond.

We're going to stand together and sing hymn number 249, Jesus Paid It All. And as we stand together and sing, if God is responding, won't you respond?