

# Let the One Who Boasts Boast in the LORD

*Deuteronomy 9:1-29*

## Introduction

Growing up, my dad would tell me, “Son, no one likes a bragger.” It was true for my dad, but it was also true for God. God resists the proud, the arrogant, the self-confident, but, as His Word tells us, show grace to the humble. In this morning’s passage, we are going to watch the LORD God caution us against pride and remind us that if we would boast, we should boast in what the LORD has done for us...

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## Deuteronomy 9:1-29

<sup>1</sup> Hear, Israel: You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. <sup>2</sup> The people are strong and tall—Anakites! You know about them and have heard it said: “Who can stand up against the Anakites?” <sup>3</sup> But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

<sup>4</sup> After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, “The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. <sup>5</sup> It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>6</sup> Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

<sup>7</sup> Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. <sup>8</sup> At Horeb you aroused the LORD’S wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. <sup>9</sup> When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water. <sup>10</sup> The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly.

<sup>11</sup> At the end of the forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD told me, “Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made an idol for themselves.”

<sup>13</sup> And the LORD said to me, “I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! <sup>14</sup> Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they.”

<sup>15</sup> So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. <sup>16</sup> When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you. <sup>17</sup> So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes.

<sup>18</sup> Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD’S sight and so arousing his anger. <sup>19</sup> I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the LORD listened to me. <sup>20</sup> And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. <sup>21</sup> Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain.

<sup>22</sup> You also made the LORD angry at Taberah, at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah.

<sup>23</sup> And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, “Go up and take possession of the land I have given you.” But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You did not trust him or obey him. <sup>24</sup> You have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you.

<sup>25</sup> I lay prostrate before the LORD those forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you. <sup>26</sup> I prayed to the LORD and said, “Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. <sup>27</sup> Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. <sup>28</sup> Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.’ <sup>29</sup> But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm.”

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## Exposition

### I. **All of God's Gifts Come to You by His Grace in Christ** (Vv. 1-6)

In verses 1-6, Moses addresses the misconception among the Israelites that they were inheriting the promised land because of their own righteousness. The good gifts of God came to the Israelites because of His grace, not their goodness. They were not to enter the land with arrogance and pride about their accomplishments but instead with gratitude for what God has accomplished against their enemies.

In speaking of the significance of verses 1-6, OT Scholar, Daniel Block wrote, "With his verdict of 'stiff-necked' Moses pricks Israel's balloon of inflated self-esteem and sets the stage for his portrayal of the Israelite's fundamentally flawed character. They have nothing to commend themselves to God: no physical greatness (7:7), or power (8:17), or moral character. Their election, occupation of the land, and prosperity within it are all gifts of divine grace, granted to them in spite of their lack of merit."

One of the implications of this point is that we should be a humble, self-aware people, who recognize our own inclinations to rebellion against God. While teaching on Deuteronomy 9, one theologian from the past remarked about our own need to be humble, stating, "When we see anyone sin, we should first weep over ourselves in their calamity, because we have either fallen like them or we can fall." So let me ask, "When you see someone sin, is your first thought, 'O' if were not for the grace of God, I would be just like them!' or is it, 'O' Lord, thank you that I am not like those people.'"

Jesus spoke of this in Luke 18:9-14, when he told the story of the sinner and the Pharisee praying in public. The Pharisee bragged about his righteousness, thanking God that he "was not the sinner." The sinner, however, simply asked God to have mercy on him. He understood that he desperately needed God. Which one are you? Do you realize that every good and perfect gift is a grace given to you by God that you would not possess if it wasn't for His goodness? Or do you believe you have earned it by your own good living?

Deuteronomy 9:1-6 teaches us that the proper response is when we lament over our own brokenness apart from Christ. We do not sit in self-righteous judgment over others, but in self-reflection over our own desperate need for God's grace in Christ.

Another implication of this passage is that in our feelings of inadequacy in the work that God has called us to, be that in our homes, in our schools, in our communities, in our small groups, in our careers, in our relationship, no matter where we encounter those feelings of "I'm just not enough," we can rest assured that our adequacy, our ability, our strength, is found in God and His grace (2 Corinthians 3:1ff). God's blessing does not depend on us, but on Him and His faithfulness. He will equip us with everything that we need exactly when we need it for us to fully the work that He has called us to. And He will be with us, just as He has promised to be for His glory and our good.

## II. **There is More Mercy in Christ than Sin in You** (Vv. 7-29)

At this point, I'm quoting a writer by the name of Richard Sibbes. When he reflected upon the sinfulness of humanity and the goodness of God, he could not help but conclude that God must be inexhaustibly rich in mercy and grace. He wrote, "There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us."

Verse 7-29 essentially serve to remind the Israelites that they whatever claim they make to "their own righteousness" was a farce. How on earth could a people with the history recounted in verses 7-29 now claim to be entering into the promised land because of their own righteousness? What a joke? If they were to enter the land, it would only be because of the grace of God! Thus, Moses reminded the people of their former ways in an effort to magnify the mercy and grace of God toward them.

Similarly, when we think about our former ways (Ephesians 2:2, 11, 13; 5:8; Colossians 1:21; 3:7), we do so not to excuse them or shy away from them but to consider them as washed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus who took our place under the judgment of God.

So, we do not need to shy away from the reality of our sin. God didn't, and neither should we. But we must not only talk about our sin. Sin is what we do when we have fallen short of God's glory, which is to say, "when we fail to measure up to God's standard, which He has been revealed, in part in the created order, and more fully, in His Word, the Scriptures."

***Yet, God does not intend to leave us in our sin.*** Instead, He exposes our sin that He might forgive us of our sin through Jesus. In this regard, God's Word kind of acts like an x-ray or an MRI or a CT scan, which reveals the true damage. But the purpose is not the exposure itself, but instead, the exposure serves the purpose of bringing about healing and restoration and redemption, which is what God does through Christ.

Our God redeems all who call upon Jesus, the sinless Son who came to be our Savior and Lord. The one, who like Moses, serves as a mediator between sinful people and a holy God. And we have a better mediator than Moses. We have Christ, who goes before us, who conquers the enemies that threaten us, who promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Christ brings us safely into the presence of God without fear of condemnation.

### **Conclusion**

When are confronted by the facts of our sins, failures, and brokenness before God, we should not run away from Him, but to Him, seeing that it is His grace that lets us stand and not be consumed. It is God's mercy that has made a way for you and me. We have no grounds for boasting in ourselves. We have no reason to be a spiritual bragger. Instead, as Deuteronomy 9 has taught us, let the one who boasts boast in the mercy and grace of Jesus our Lord.

Where are you boasting this morning?