

**May 24, 2017 Pastor Ben Hicks**

**Introduction**

Have you ever worked hard on an assignment and then received a bad grade because you missed a key part of the instructions? You did an excellent job, but you didn’t do the assignment, at least not as assigned. Few things are more frustrating than when you work incredibly hard and then for it all to come to nothing because you failed to follow the instructions.

All of us want to live successful lives, so what do you trust in to make you a success? What feature about yourself are you most proud of? If someone asked you, “What’s so special about you?” how would you respond? Unfortunately, there are many people today building their lives on shaky foundations. They seek to find purpose and meaning and validation from all the wrong sources and are proud of all the wrong things. God’s Word teaches that. . .

***The success of your life***

***will be measured by***

***your walk with your God.***

**What Does It Mean to Boast?**

The Hebrew word is *halal* (from which we get Hallelujah – praise God). Normally means “praise” or “extol,” but can mean ‘“to pride oneself’ often with overtones of ‘brag, boast.’”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. To boast in something means to feel a great sense of pride about it (Proverbs 20:14).
2. To boast in something means to rejoice in it, especially when the object is God (Psalm 34:3; 63:12; 64:11; 105:3; 1 Chronicles 16:10; Isaiah 41:16).
3. To boast in something means to trust it (Jeremiah 49:9; Psalm 49:7).

**What We Should Not Boast In**

1. **Wisdom**
2. **The definition (*chakam*, *chakmah*):** The Hebrew word for wisdom has the idea of skill. This skill is seen in a number of areas including, war, craftsmanship, and sailing, but primarily is used of skill in living. We might call this “the ability to make the right life choices.” Wisdom is highly praised throughout Scripture as a virtue (Prov 1:7, 4:5)
3. **The deficiencies** How could something as good as wisdom not be a ground for boasting? Why should someone not look to wisdom as a source of pride? Well, first of all, we need to be talking about God’s wisdom and not man’s (James 3:13-18). But even when we are talking about divine wisdom, wisdom is not the final answer to all of our problems. As good as wisdom is, wisdom has major limits (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18).
4. **Might**
5. **The definition (*gibbor, gebhurah*):** Although primarily a military term describing strength, a *gibbor*  is “anyone who is exceptionally important or powerful in some field.”[[2]](#footnote-2) In this context, military strength is most likely the main idea, but given these three general categories, it is legitimate to expand this field to cover talents, skills, abilities, strength, or any other physical ability or form of power one might look to.
6. **The deficiencies:** Physical strength is not wrong; it is simply the wrong thing to stake your life on. This is true because physical strength is fleeting (Psalm 90:10) and physical strength is insufficient (Isaiah 40:31).
7. **Wealth**
8. **The definition (*‘asir, ‘oser*):** This is just a common word for wealth, and normally lots of it. This wealth is presented in a positive light as a reward and gift from God (Proverbs 14:24).

1. **The deficiencies:** Again, this is not a bad thing unless it becomes the source of one’s boasting. Wealth and riches are God’s gifts but are ultimately futile if they become the rubric of success. Wealth can be lost or destroyed (Matthew 6:19-20, James 1:10) and can even be a spiritual liability (Matthew 6:21, Mark 10:23-25).

**What We Should Boast In**

Our boasting should not be in our own skills and abilities, but in our relationship with God (1 Corinthians 1:31), and a relationship with God is going to involve getting to know God well. Knowledge of God should consist in facts about Him that are true (“understands”) but should go beyond that to a deeper, personal knowledge (“knows”). We do this by studying His Word and praying to Him, asking Him to reveal Himself and then trusting Him to do so.

**This passage in particular reminds us that God is. . .**

* Personal, present, and sufficient (“I am [Yahweh]”)
* Loyal and loving (“steadfast love”)
* Always right in His dealing with others (“just”)
* Always measuring up to the standard (“righteousness”)

This passage ends by reminding us that these are things God delights in, because we should be seeking to know a person. We should know what it is God loves and hates, and why that is. And then we should seek to delight in and conform to what God delights in and conforms to. This is the key to true success.

***The only thing sadder than being a success at nothing is being a success at something with no eternal value!***

1. H. Cazelles, “hll I and II” edited G. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. H. Kosmala, “gabbar” edited G. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)