

Boasting in the Cross

Introduction. If I asked what you're the most proud of, what would you tell me? Your children or grandchildren? Your career? Your financial stockpile? Your common sense? Your awards and achievements? There's a lot of items that we would brag or boast about, or glory in.

Paul is concluding his important letter to the Galatians in 6:11-15. He's making a final appeal to those brethren to turn away from incorporating the Law of Moses into the gospel. In v. 14, Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The Judaizing teachers gloried in the external rudiments of the Law of Moses, but Paul was satisfied in glorying in the cross of Jesus Christ.

You might say, "But Paul's a preacher, so he's supposed to do this. I'm not on the hook for that!" On the contrary, the crucifixion is important to all of us, and we're going to look at what the world boasts in compared to what Paul boasts in, and then note the reasons for such boasting. We'll close with suggestions at how you can boast, glory, or delight in the cross of Christ.

I. The Boasting of the World

- A. The Jews boasted that they were children of Abraham (Luke 3:8; John 8:39).
 - 1. Paul could've boasted in this too, but he didn't (2 Corinthians 11:22).
 - 2. Our ancestors won't help us be saved, except by the incidental means of influence.
- B. The Pharisees boasted of their great superiority over others (Luke 18:9-14; Matthew 23:3-7).
 - 1. Paul could've boasted in this too, but he didn't (Philippians 3:4-6).
 - 2. The Pharisees were the "separated ones," the "holy ones." However, pride in our supposed sinlessness is wicked to God (Romans 3:23; 12:3).
- C. All of mankind boasts of their education, talents, and honors.
 - 1. Paul could've boasted in these too, but he didn't (Acts 22:3, 25).
 - 2. Those who intellectual are sometimes tempted to think of themselves as too intelligent to believe in God or to follow Christ (Proverbs 3:7; Isaiah 5:21).
 - 3. Too many feel exalted by wealth or worldly honors (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Paul treated these like refuse so that he could follow Jesus (Philippians 3:7-11).

II. The Boasting of the Apostle

- A. When Paul used the term "cross" he didn't mean the wood on which Jesus was crucified. It's a figure of speech called metonymy which represents the sufferings and death of the great Redeemer — that death by which atonement was made for the sins of the world.
- B. When Paul preached Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), he told people how to be saved by this great Redeemer. But sadly, Jesus wasn't someone who appealed to mankind for several reasons:
 - 1. His background and rank in the world was contemptible. Being a Galilean, Jesus was considered as poor and unlearned (John 1:46). Also, He was the

- son of a carpenter which was a best a modest profession (Luke 4:22; Matthew 13:55; Luke 9:58).
2. His teachings were contemptible. Instead of preaching a message of earthly and military deliverance, He spoke of humility, mercy, and forgiveness (John 18:36; Matthew 18:3-4; Luke 19:10).
 3. His work with those who were sinners and poor was contemptible. Jesus was willing to teach and serve those who were poor and who were sinners instead of catering to the religious establishment (Mark 2:15-17).
 4. His gospel, with its universal appeal, was contemptible. The Jews, who were children of Abraham, were very inhospitable to Gentiles (John 4:9). Jesus preached that salvation would be open and available to all (Mark 16:15).
 5. His death on a cross was contemptible. Crucifixion was a most humiliating way to die. It was reserved for terrible offenders (Galatians 3:13; 5:11).
- C. The crucifixion was a stigma on Jesus and His followers. The fleshly mind couldn't understand the gravity of the cross and rejected its purpose and power.

III. The Reasons for Boasting

- A. Paul was more than willing to boast in the cross and preach about it throughout the world (Colossians 1:23).
- B. The reasons he would boast or take delight in the cross can be summarized in five critical statements:
 1. The crucifixion provided the means to remove our guilt.
 - a) In the process of becoming our sacrifice for sins which removed our curse, the people perceived Jesus to be cursed by God (Galatians 3:13).
 - b) In the process of removing our sins, our guilt and shame are always removed. The conscience of all people who obey Christ can be cleansed (Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; cp. Psalm 51:10; 2 Timothy 1:3).
 2. The crucifixion provided us with all the blessings of salvation.
 - a) Sanctification (Romans 6:19-22).
 - b) Assurance (2 Corinthians 5:5).
 - c) Grace (2 Corinthians 9:8).
 - d) Inheritance (Colossians 1:12).
 - e) Pardon (Colossians 1:13-14).
 - f) Peace (Colossians 1:20-22).
 - g) Prayer (Hebrews 4:14-16).
 3. The crucifixion provides our only access to God.
 - a) Jesus is the only way of access to God (John 10:9; Acts 4:12).
 - b) He's our only provision of worship to God (Hebrews 13:15).
 4. The crucifixion provides us with great incentive to love and serve God.
 - a) If the great sacrifice of Jesus and all that was done on the cross can't affect the heart, then what could (Ephesians 2:4-6)?
 - b) A sense of obligation to Christ for His love and mercy will fill us with compassion for our fellow man (Luke 23:34).
 5. The crucifixion provided the means of our ultimate victory.
 - a) Satan wanted man's demise, but Christ won the victory over sin and death (John 16:33; Romans 6:21-22; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

- b) As long as we take up the whole armor of God and stand with His faithful, we'll be victorious (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Conclusion. Jeremiah 9:23-24 says, "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord." If you want to boast in the cross, then here's several actions you need to consistently take in your life:

- Seek God's kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).
- Seek the things above (Colossians 3:1-2).
- Learn about Christ and come to Him with body, soul, and spirit (John 6:44).
- Worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).
- Fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Don't brag about secular and temporal accomplishments. Those mean nothing. Boast in what Jesus has done for you. Develop your relationship with Jesus rather than simply "coming to church."

Have you experienced the saving power of the cross? Have you fled to it? Do you glory in it? The rejectors of the cross will die spiritually because there's no other Savior nor any other remedy. Come to the cross today and boast of its power: "But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (1 Corinthians 15:10).