

**GLORYING ONLY IN THE CROSS**

Galatians 6:14-15

**Intro:** Today, on this first Sunday of the new year, it is not only our privilege to be together to worship the Lord, but it is our special privilege to observe the Lord's Supper. It is our custom here at Trinity Bible Church, as most of you know, to observe the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month, and also on the third Sunday night of each month. There is probably no more sacred time for us as the people of God than when we meet for this purpose—to remember our Lord in His death for us, His people. Its importance is beyond question because it was our Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who instituted this Supper. The elements which the Lord used in establishing this Supper are to remind us of His body which was broken in death on the Cross of Calvary, and His blood which was shed for the forgiveness and cleansing of our sins. We do not believe that they become the body and blood of the Lord, but that they represent in a symbolic way our Lord's body and our Lord's blood. When we observe the Lord's Supper we are made to remember the Gospel. It is by Christ's death, and His death alone, that we are saved. It is not only impossible, but absolutely unnecessary for anything to be added to what our Lord Jesus Christ did when He died as our Substitute on the Cross. He was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He did everything that God required in order for us to be forgiven of our sins, and to receive the gift of eternal life.

One main reason the Lord established this Supper was because of man's inclination to corrupt the purity of this message. In fact, the NT was not completed before it was necessary for the Apostles to take a firm stand in defense of the Gospel. And it is one of those defenses by the Apostle Paul that I want to consider with you today in preparation for our time at the Lord's Table. That defense is found in Paul's letter to the Gentile churches of Galatia, that area of the middle east which is occupied today by Turkey. But the problem arose first of all in the early church when the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. There was a determined effort on the part of many Judaizing teachers to make the Gentiles submit to the rite of circumcision.

The problem is stated in Acts 15:1 where we read these words:

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Paul and Barnabas had been on their first missionary journey and had seen

great blessing as they preached the Gospel to Gentiles in many different cities.

So they went down to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles and elders about this question. And this meeting is usually referred to as the first council in Jerusalem. While they were there we are told this in Acts 15:5:

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

And they said this about the Gentiles who had been converted.

There might be those who would say that if people wanted to be circumcised, let them be circumcised. What difference would it make? Well, the apostles and elders were convinced that it made a lot of difference. If circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses were required for salvation, then the work of Christ was not a finished work in itself. It would mean that salvation was not totally a work of God, completely undeserved and unearned, all of grace, but it would be a combination of grace and works, of Christ's work on the Cross plus certain requirements which people would have to meet if they wanted to be saved from the penalty of their sins.

It was after that Council in Jerusalem that Paul wrote his great epistle to the Galatians in which he boldly declared this:

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing (Gal. 5:2)..

They did not make themselves more secure with God by being circumcised. Instead, they were indicating that they were not really trusting in Christ, and in Christ alone, for their salvation, if they submitted to being circumcised. And they would always attach the keeping of the Law of Moses as a further condition of salvation.

Think of how the apostles would react today where baptism is made a condition for salvation. Or where the observance of certain sacraments is required for salvation. Or where membership in some church is a condition of salvation. It can't be Christ plus anything! Salvation is not a reward for good works; salvation is a gift of the grace of God. A Bible teacher I knew when I was young used to say that salvation is "by grace through faith *plus nothing!*" The changes that take place in the life of a person who is saved, are not conditions for salvation, but are the result of being saved. Listen to what the Word of God tells us about salvation. These are familiar verses, but we can't hear them too often.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Ephesus, which was a predominantly Gentile church:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

How could the teaching about salvation be any clearer? We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ Who died for sinners, and Who by His death did everything necessary for the salvation of every sinner who will ever trust in Him.

Or listen to the Apostle Paul's teaching in Titus 3:4-7:

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Augustus Toplady, who was both a theologian and a writer of hymns, is the one who back in 1776 gave us that wonderful hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me..." In the third verse of that hymn he described our condition perfectly, showing why we cannot contribute anything to our salvation. He spoke of all of us as having nothing to bring to God, but as being spiritually "naked," and "helpless," and "foul," that is, totally defiled. And so he gave us these words:

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling;

Naked, come to Thee for dress, helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the Fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.

But why have some men (and women) always wanted to add something that we can do as a condition for our salvation? Paul said this in Gal. 6:12-13:

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the

law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Why do we want to do something to contribute to our salvation? Because we want to be able to boast about what we have done, and so we won't have to admit that our case is so hopeless that there is nothing that we could do to contribute to our salvation.

But how does a true Christian, a real child of God, speak about his or her salvation? Paul said it for us in Gal. 6:14 and 15. Follow in your Bible as I read again these wonderful words. (Read.)

Notice, will you,

### **I. WE ALL HAVE AN OVERWHELMING TENDENCY TO BOAST (Gal. 6:14a).**

Pride is a terrible characteristic of man. It is our chief attribute. We all are afflicted by it. It is the curse of every person who has ever lived with but one exception, our Lord Jesus Christ. He was uncontaminated by pride. But we are so proud that it is hard for us to realize that there are many things that we cannot do, and, most of all, that we are so dead in our sins that we cannot contribute a single work to our salvation. In fact, what we think are our good works are, according to Scripture, nothing but filthy rags in God's sight. And it is only God who can make us realize how sinful our pride is before God.

The first words of Gal. 6:14 indicate that we all have an uncontrollable tendency to brag about something. If we are not bragging about ourselves, we brag about our children, or our friends, or a thousand other things. We Americans are notorious for our bragging.

But the first words of Gal. 6:14 also indicate that God is the only One Who can correct our tendency to brag, even about our salvation.

The words "God forbid" are not actually in the Greek text. This is the expression that Paul used several times in the book of Romans where it has been translated, "God forbid." Actually the words mean, "let it not be." In Gal. 6:14 it is a prayer, and therefore I believe the KJ translators were right in rendering it, "God forbid." God is the only One Who can cure us of this dreadful ailment. All boasting is forbidden—*with one exception!*

### **II. THE ONE PLACE WHERE BOASTING IS NOT ONLY PER-**

**MITTED, BUT COMMENDED (Gal. 6:14m).**

The Apostle Paul said, in so many words, “God, don’t let me glory in anything, but in what my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ did, when He died for me upon the Cross.” This is what we need to boast about, to rejoice in, and to glory.

When you and I look at the communion table where we have the Lord’s Supper, there is nothing there that speaks of what you and I have done, except the reminder that it was because of our sins that our precious Savior had to die. And our sins certainly do not contribute to our salvation. In fact, that is why the Lord’s Supper speaks to us of the grace of God. God hasn’t given you and me what we deserve; He has given us what we could never deserve. We deserve judgment, but our Lord has taken our judgment, and we are forgiven. We deserve to die for our sins, but He died for us, and has given us His life.

As I was preparing this message, my thoughts went to another hymn which speaks of the truth that we have here in Gal. 6:14. It speaks of boasting in the Lord. I couldn’t remember what it was, but Lucille found it for me. It was written over 200 years ago by a man by the name of Joseph Grigg. And this is a part of his hymn:

Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend  
On Whom my hopes of heav’n depend!  
No; when I blush, be that my shame,  
That I no more revere His Name.

Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may  
When I’ve no guilt to wash away,  
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,  
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

This last verse is the one that applies to my text for today:

Till then—nor is my boasting vain—  
Till then I boast a Savior slain;  
And O may this my glory be,  
That Christ is not ashamed of me.

Oh, as we come to the Lord’s Table today, let us pray, too, that the only boasting that will come from our lips and from our hearts EVER, will be

to boast, to glory, in the wonderful fact that Jesus Christ died the death He died because we were helpless and hopeless in our sins, and He died the death that we should have died that we might have life.

But there is one specific truth which is traceable to the Cross of Christ that was especially upon the heart of the Apostle Paul as he was bringing this epistle to a close. And it had to do with one aspect of the work of Christ on the Cross.

Notice in the latter part of verse 14 we have:

### **III. A THREEFOLD CRUCIFIXION (Gal. 6:14b).**

We all know that there were three crosses on Calvary, the one on which our Lord was crucified, and two others upon which two thieves were crucified—one who died in his sins; the other who repented and who died, but who was with the Lord that day in paradise.

But the Apostle Paul here was speaking of the crucifixion of our Lord, and two others: 1) the world was crucified to us, and 2) we were crucified to the world.

In preparing this message I read through the entire epistle to refresh my mind on what Paul had written about the death of our Lord. And I was struck with his words in chapter 1, verses 3-5, which really made up part of his greeting. Notice what he said in those verses. (Read.)

The word for world in Gal. 1:4 would be better translated, *age*. But it speaks of the same world that Paul mentioned in Gal. 6:14. The word *age* looks at the world from the standpoint of time. It reminds us that in the approximately 2,000 years which have gone by since this epistle was written, the world has not changed. It is still the same. It is a wicked world. It is a God-less world. It is a proud, boastful world. It is a world that is under the dominion of the Devil. It is a world that demands conformity to its evil ways. It is a pleasure-mad world. It is a world under divine judgment.

When the Lord Jesus died for His people, He died not only to set them free from sin, but from the world. We still are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are no longer a part of the evil which characterizes this world. Once we loved the world and its ways, but the Lord has changed all of that for those who are truly His people. We don't belong here, and

we know it.. We have been called to live lives of separation from the world. And there is only one way that we can do that, and that is for us to be made new creatures, or, more literally, a new creation. See verse 15. Circumcision can't do that for us. Keeping the Law cannot bring about such a change. The change that is needed in your life and mine could only be brought about through the death of Christ on the Cross. Salvation is God making sinners into a new creation.

Let us never forget what the Apostle John said about a true Christian and the world. His words are recorded in 1 John 2:15-17 where we read,

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

**Concl:** The world would keep us from seeing how completely the death of Christ is for the salvation of sinners. The world would get us sidetracked on religious ceremonies, things that we can do to try to please God instead of realizing that Christ is the Savior, and that it comes to us as a free gift. The world would have us thinking of our self-worth instead of our complete degradation in our sins. The world talks of reformation, a work that they attempt from the outside in. Our Lord died to make us new within so that our lives outwardly could be changed so as to be pleasing to God. As long as we try to find reasons in ourselves as to why God will finally accept us, we will never see our need of Christ, and will go on into eternity without Christ and without salvation. But when we see that all of our boasting is vain, and that we stand helpless and hopeless before God, then and only then will we see that we need Jesus Christ as our Savior.

The Lord's Supper was ordained by our Lord to bring us back to these basic truths of the Gospel. If we listen to the world and its philosophy, we will never be delivered from our sins. But if we by faith, eat His flesh and drink His blood, meaning that we in reality have done what symbolically we will do in just a few moments, then the result will be a deliverance from the world, and the forgiveness of our sins, and life forevermore.

This is the Lord's Table that we come to. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you should not partake. But if you do know Him, and are seeking to live for Him, even though you might be just

visiting with us today, we not only invite you, but urge you, to partake with us in these elements as we remember our precious Savior in His death upon Calvary's Cross for all of us who are trusting in Him alone for our salvation.