

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

Galatians 6:11-15

Intro: In Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia he was defending the doctrine of justification by faith – and when he said, “by faith,” he meant *by faith alone*. Dr. William Pettingill, one of the original editors of the Scofield Bible, wrote a commentary on Galatians year ago to which he gave the title, *By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing*. Since many of the early Christians were Jewish, it was hard for them to let go of the Law. And then there were those Jewish teachers who opposed the teaching of the Gospel of the grace of God by trying to add some kind of works to salvation.

One of the most common additions was circumcision. We find, for example, in Acts 15:1, that “certain men which came down from Judea (the headquarters of Judaism) taught the brethren” that “except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” This led to that well known Council in Jerusalem where the apostles and elders came together to consider this teaching. And it was reaffirmed that salvation was by faith alone without any works on man's part whether he be a Jew or a Gentile.

But that problem did not go away. It is still with us today – those who add baptism or good works of some kind in order to complete the work of salvation. It is certainly true that if a person truly knows Christ, his life is going to be changed, but good works result from salvation and do not lead up to it. Any who try to make our works, whatever they might be, a condition of salvation, have failed to see the absolute sufficiency of the work of Christ on the Cross. Paul in writing to the church at Ephesus declared this truth in one of the many places we find the Gospel clearly set forth in his epistles. I am referring, of course, to Ephesians 2:8-10:

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.

Titus 3:5-8 is another passage where the Apostle Paul spelled out the truth of the Gospel very, very clearly:

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.

But then he went on to say:

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (Titus 3:5-8).

As we come to the text I have chosen for tonight, you will see that the Apostle Paul was coming to the end of this great epistle. In Gal. 6:11 his meaning is slightly different from the way it appears in the KJV. Paul was not telling them that he had written a long letter, but *that he had written with large letters*. I believe, and many others believe also, that Paul's thorn in the flesh was poor eyesight. That is the reason that he usually dictated his letters to someone else, and then signed them. But apparently his concern for the purity of the Gospel in the church of Galatia was so great that in this case he wrote it himself, but in order to see what he had written, he wrote with large letters. This fact alone would have impressed the Galatians believers, who were mainly Gentiles, as to how serious he was about the trouble they were having in their churches.

And then in verses 12 and 13 he mentioned that there were two reasons why those false teachers were teaching the necessity of circumcision as a condition for salvation. The first was, in verse 12, because they wanted to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. The second was, in verse 13, so they could glory in their flesh. If you read the verse you will see that Paul was saying that the false teachers wanted to glory in the flesh of the believers.

Some time after this when Paul met with the elders of Ephesus as he was on his way to Jerusalem, he warned the elders that from among their own number men would arise, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Men like to glory in themselves, and if they can win someone else over to their position, they glory in those who follow them. It is natural for us to want to take glory to ourselves in anything that we do so we can boast about what we have done.

The Apostle Paul knew all about that kind of a life. Judaism in his day had become a system of works for salvation. They did not know the depth of their need, and how it was totally impossible for them to do anything to meet their need for salvation. Paul knew that when the Lord saved him, He saved *the chief of sinners* who would never have been saved if it had not been for the amazing grace of God.

Therefore in verse 14 Paul expressed a prayer to God for himself, and it certainly was that the Galatian believers would sense even more how very important it is to have the truth in salvation.

And so we have, first, in verse 14:

I. PAUL'S PRAYER (Gal. 6:14a).

In Paul's letter to the church at Rome you will probably remember that he used this expression several times, words which the translators have rendered, "God forbid." They did this to show how strong this expression was. But the proper translation is, "Let it not be." And ultimately only God can keep any of us from turning aside from the true Gospel to take some credit for the fact that we are saved. So many of the expositors of the Greek text feel that "God forbid" really expressed the intensity of Paul's feeling on this subject.

When Spurgeon spoke on this text at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on a Sunday morning back in September 13, 1885, he began by saying, "Almost all men have something wherein to glory." Sin has made us proud of ourselves, and we are always inclined to feel that there must be some reason why God has saved us. We are all experts at comparing ourselves with others. But even if we can only feel that there may be something we have done which has inclined God to save us, we will take that and begin to boast about it, even if it is only to ourselves. And there are always those around us, like those false teachers in Galatia, who will try to make us think that it is either because of who we are, or because of what we have done, that God has been merciful to us.

I think that this is one reason people are so inclined to hate the doctrine of election. If you and I who are saved were chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world, as the Scriptures teach, then it really couldn't have been because of ways in which we deserved to be saved. Paul said

that about Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob even though he was younger before either of them had done anything either good or bad.

When we think of our salvation, this is no time for us to glory in ourselves. That is pride. The truth of the Gospel humbles us. The fact that Christ had to come to earth as a Man, and then to suffer and die on the Cross, for our salvation, meant that our case was so hopeless that nothing short of the death of the Son of God could possibly meet our need and cleanse us from our sins before God. It is like James M. Gray expressed it in the words of that Gospel song that goes like this:

Naught have I gotten but what I received;
Grace hath bestowed it and I have believed;
Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner saved by grace.

So Paul said in so many words, "Let me never boast about my salvation except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And please note that the Apostle Paul used the full Name of our Lord indicating that He was both God and Man when He died on the Cross.

But the verb can also be translated, *to rejoice*. When we come to the Lord's Table it obviously is a solemn time. We are remembering the death of our precious Savior. We are to think of the terrible price He had to pay for our sins. And we glory in that! We would still be lost in our sins if it had not been for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who among us would ever say that we deserved what He did, or that we were worth it. It is to our shame that it took His death. Nothing short of His death could possibly satisfy God. Only by His death can we say that we are not on our way to hell tonight.

But, oh, let us rejoice in Him and His death for us. How can we ever thank God properly or enough for the gift of His Son, His unspeakable Gift? And we have good authority for rejoicing because after the Lord instituted this Supper, He and the disciples sang and hymn, and then they went out – the Lord on His way to Calvary. As we are being served tonight, I trust that all of us will bow before the Father to thank Him for the Gift of His Son, and thank the Lord Jesus that He came and died for us, and then thank the Holy Spirit that He awakened us out of our spiritual death and brought us to Christ, the only Savior. Paul certainly had this in mind when he told the Philippians believers, "Rejoice in the

Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

But as I close let me say just a word about the last part of this verse. You know, don't you, that there were many things that the Lord accomplished by His death on the Cross. He not only secured our salvation, but He sealed the doom of the Devil. But here Paul says that by the death of the Lord something happened between us and the world.

Let me call my last heading:

II. THE CROSS, THE WORLD, AND THE BELIEVER (Gal. 6:14b).

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, not only was He crucified, but the world was crucified to us, and we were crucified to the world.

In Gal. 2:20 Paul had already spoken of our crucifixion with Christ. He not only died for us, but we died in Him. And we were raised with Him. And now we are seated with Him in heavenly places. But as Paul said in Gal. 2:20, since we were crucified with Him, now we live in Him. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

We were in the world when the Lord saved us. We thought like the world. We lived like the world. And the world had added to our defilement. No one is ever better because of this evil world in which we live. But thank God we have been crucified to the world, and the world to us. What does this mean?

This is a present effect of the work of Christ. We have been saved from the vain glory of the world. Cf. 1 John 2:15-17. We have been saved from the pleasures of the world. We have been saved from wanting the approval of the world. We have been saved from being conformed to the world – in our speech, in our dress, in the goals that the people of the world set for themselves. We have been saved from the wisdom of the world.

Concl: Oh, there is so much for us to boast about, to rejoice in, to glory about, when we come to the Lord's Table. But we are not here to glory in ourselves, or what we have done. We can be ashamed of that.

We glory in Christ, we glory in His grace, we glory in His power, we glory in His faithfulness, we glory that in sovereign grace He chose us, drew us to Himself, and although we have often failed Him, He has never failed us, but continues to keep us, and someday will take us out of this evil world to the place He has gone to prepare for us.

May Paul's prayer be our prayer. May God forbid that we should ever glory except in the Cross and in the Christ Who died there, Who by Himself did everything necessary for our salvation, and who will without doubt and without a single exception, "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

He and I in that bright glory one deep joy shall share:
Mine, to be forever with Him; His, that I am there.

(Read the last three verses of #425, Trinity Hymnal, "Jesus, and shall it ever be.")