

THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS

Galatians 6:14

Intro: From the beginning of time there have always been those who have intentionally, or unintentionally, corrupted the simple Gospel message. And all corruptions have to do with the intrusion of man, either his character or his works, into the message of salvation. Cain knew as well as Abel what God had done in sparing the lives of his parents — the bringing of an innocent sacrifice to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. And yet in spite of that he "brought of the ground an offering unto the Lord" (Gen. 4:3b). In the preceding verse we are told that "Cain was a tiller of the ground," so this meant that his offering represented his work. But salvation is not by works, and it never has been.

But going to our text for tonight, note that Gal. 6:14 begins with the word, "But." This means that in order to understand the verse properly we need to see what he had been speaking about before. And that is very clear when we read verses 12 and 13. (Read down through verse 15.)

Note especially the statements "to make a fair show in the flesh" in v. 12 and "that they may glory in your flesh."

What were they talking about? They were talking about circumcision. To the false teachers who were among them this was an attempt to keep the Law, and keeping the Law to them was the way of salvation.

Verse 12 gives us the only occasion where the verb translated, to make a fair show, is used in the NT. It means to do some thing that will make you appear in a good light. What they were trying to avoid was the offense of the Cross. The Cross of Christ puts us in a bad light. The Cross of Christ shows us to be condemned sinners. The Cross of Christ declares that there is no other hope for our salvation except in Christ. People are more receptive to a message which does not condemn us as absolutely hopeless, a message which gives us at least something that we can do. Paul had known what it was to trust in the Law. There was a day when he would have taken pride in his circumcision. That is what our works do; they make us more proud than ever. The Cross of Christ humbles us when we realize that there is absolutely no hope that we can be saved by anything that we could do.

And by the way I am sure that you have realized that if salvation is by circumcision, there is no possibility that women could be saved. All attempts to make works a part of salvation eliminate someone. If

salvation is by baptism, then there would be no hope for the thief who died on a cross beside the Lord. The condition for salvation cannot be adjusted to meet special needs. To make exceptions is to destroy the whole doctrine. If there can be one exception, there can be millions of exceptions. That is a part of the offense of the Cross because the Gospel declares that salvation is always and only through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must either come to God through Christ, or we cannot come at all!

But now let us turn our attention to verse 14. This actually is:

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

I probably should have included this when we were looking at Paul's prayers in Colossians. If it is not a prayer, it is certainly a strong statement of conviction on the part of the Apostle Paul. And for Paul to say this, or pray this, means that we should do the same.

Actually the word "God" does not appear in this verse. Instead, we have the Greek expression that is found several times in Romans, and which is translated, "God forbid." Lit. it means, let it not be! And, of course, the only One Who can *let it not be* is God!

Paul used this expression also in Gal. 2:17. (Read.)

John Eadie, in his commentary on Galatians, gives this explanation of the meaning of this Greek expression, *Let it not be*. He was commenting on Gal. 2:17:

"God forbid" that any one, for any reason or to any extent, from any misconception or on any pretext, should either imagine or suspect Christ to be a minister of sin; or should be involved in any course of conduct, the vindication of which might imply such an inference; or be entangled in any premisses which could lead by any possibility to such an awful conclusion. Perish the thought! Let it be flung from us as an abominable thing (Eadie, John, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, p. 178).

Now let us apply this to Gal. 6:14. (Re-read the paragraph above inserting "salvation to be by circumcision" in place of "Christ to be a minister of sin.")

In the Greek text Paul's reference to himself is emphatic! **"For me** let it

not be to glory..." Paul could hardly have found stronger words to express his concern that he would never turn aside from the true Gospel of the grace of God. And that is one of the reasons I believe this was a prayer. Paul was well enough acquainted with his own heart not to boast in his own strength about what he would or would not do.

Coming home from church today Lucille and I pulled up behind a car which had this sticker in the rear window: "REAL MEN LOVE JESUS." That probably came from the Promise Keepers, and it is a perversion of the Gospel. It is glorying in man's flesh. It is trying to make a fair show in the flesh. It is telling other men that if you don't love Jesus you are less than a real man. With John Eadie I would say, "That is an abomination."

But let me make a second point:

II. "THE CHRIST, BY WHOM" (Gal. 6:14m).

Years ago, as a young man, I used to listen to The Haven of Rest broadcast. One day First Mate Bob as the moderator of the program was speaking of this verse and he point out that Paul did not say that he was glorying in the Cross by which, but in "**the Christ, by whom.**" The Cross was the place where He died, but we do not worship the Cross. We worship the Savior Who died on the Cross. We do not glory in the Cross; we glory in the Christ Who died on the Cross. We should not cherish the only rugged Cross; we cherish the divine Savior who died on the Cross, giving His life a ransom for many.

Many churches display crosses today who deny Christ in their message. People wear crosses around their necks or on the lapels of their suits who know nothing about Christ. When Paul said that he gloried in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was not speaking of the wooden cross which held His blessed body; He was speaking of the sacrifice which the Lord made on the cross, the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world honors the wooden cross of Christ; we are here tonight to honor the Lord Who died on that Cross, putting away our sins, making it possible for us to be saved from the terrible judgment that is to come.

Finally, we come to:

III. THE CROSS AND THE WORLD (Gal. 6:14b).

Christ died to save us from our sins. Christ also died to deliver us from the power of the Evil One. But here Paul tells us that by His death on the

Cross the world was crucified to us, and we to the world.

Let me give you another quotation from John Eadie. Speaking of the world, he wrote this:

— The term represents wealth, power, pleasure, indulgence, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life,"--all that draws humanity after it, which so many seem to crave as their only portion, and in which they seem to find their supreme delight... The apostle had long seen all this hostility and hollowness on the part of the world, and so he had done with it. It was crucified to him; it was a thing done to death for him, and he was done to death so far as regarded it... It was the result of neither morbid disappointment, nor of the bitter wail of "vanity of vanities," nor of a sense of failure in worldly pursuits, nor of the persecutions he had undergone--scourging, imprisonment, hunger, thirst, fastings, and nakedness. By none of these did he die to the world. But it was by his union with the Crucified One: death in Him and with Him was his death to the world, and the death of that world to him (Op. cit., pp. 467,468).

— Dr. Eadie described the world as "all that draws humanity after it, and in which so many seem to find their supreme delight."

This is a good test for us to apply to ourselves. If a person claims to be a Christian, and yet seeks his fortune in the world and the things of the world, something is terribly wrong. Paul did not say what he said in this verse as applying just to himself, or only to apostles. He said this as applying to every Christian. This is not a crucifixion which we need to seek; this happened at the time the Lord died. And one of the first things that a new Christian experiences in his soul is that there is a difference between himself, or herself, and the world.

Conc: Let me close with three Scripture passages, and an illustration.

The first Scripture: Romans 12:1, 2:

— 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will

of God.

The second is this: 1 John 2:15-17:

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.

The illustration: Carolyn and the Vagabonds. The Vagabonds could not be first in her life because that is the place that the Lord had.

I didn't tell Carolyn to say that, and neither did her mother; her heart told her that the Lord Jesus Christ was first in her life. Nothing else could be in competition with Him.

The crucifixion of the world for us, and our crucifixion to the world, took place at Calvary when our dear Savior died for us. But let it be our prayer, as it was with the Apostle Paul, his strong conviction, that not even the religious substitutes of the world would ever share a place in our hearts which the Lord alone possesses. That is why we are here tonight, to remember the Lord's death and what it continues to mean to us every day we live in this world.

The final verse is Gal. 2:20 — and I am reading from the NKJV:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

May God Himself deepen our conviction to keep ourselves unspotted from the world as we take the bread and the cup tonight.