

Putting Our Cross by The Cross of Christ

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[0 : 01] Let's turn back then to Galatians 6, and we will read at verse 14.

But God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation. Particularly verse 14 then, these familiar words, but God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Now it may be that the 5th of May 2011 is significant to you for some reason that I don't know about.

But it ought to be significant because you're going to put your cross somewhere on the card when you get to the polling station in connection with the appointing members to the Scottish Parliament.

[1 : 35] And making a commitment as to whether you're for or against reforming the voting system for the UK Parliament.

Our subject is about a cross, but it is putting our cross by the cross of Christ.

It hardly seems like it, but it's four years since I thought there was a great stir of interest regarding elections for the Scottish Parliament.

And at the time I didn't remember anything like it before. You were bombarded with information prior to the election and people had all sorts of snappy ways of trying to get you to vote.

I don't suppose you remember it, but the SNP under the leadership of Alex Salmond had, now is the time. Now is the time. And that was emphasised and emphasised.

[2 : 44] One of the interesting things that emerged was actually in the form of the Scottish Christian Party. And strangely it was led by a Pentecostal minister from England who behaved himself a bit more like a Scottish Presbyterian.

But he had an interesting catchphrase. Put your cross by the cross. And that's why we're entitling this study, this sermon, with those words.

Put your cross by the cross. In other words, it's important for us when we look at a passage like this, to think about our own commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's important to be involved in the political process, that's true. But it's far, far more important to be committed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I want us to look at this verse together, under God's blessing, and think about four things or four reasons why we should commit to the cross of Christ.

[3 : 58] And the first thing I want to address is we should commit to the cross of Christ because of the truth it reveals.

Or if you like, the truth revealed there. Now there has been a lot of discussion in scholarly circles, expositors, on the words of the opening part, God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom or by which the world is crucified to me.

Well, in this study I'm taking it as a reference, a personal reference, by whom, as it is here in this translation. That is, the reference is to the Lord Jesus Christ and not the cross itself.

It is the cross of Christ that is significant. And it's a turn of phrase that comprehends the whole of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's my understanding of it. And that can be summed up, if you think about it, by Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 15, and the opening verses where he says that Christ died for us according to the scriptures and was raised again for us according to the scriptures.

[5 : 34] And of course, you fill out the significance of he died for us. And you fill out he was raised for us. But that turn of phrase in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4, as it were, summarizes and comprehends the whole of Christ's redeeming work.

And Paul, as he is talking, when he talks about the cross of Christ, he's talking like that. He's thinking about the whole redeeming work of Christ. The full and free salvation that was effected on the cross in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which death was approved by the Father? Remember, the apostolic preaching was, we know his death satisfied divine justice because God raised him from the dead on the third day.

It was the Father's seal of approval. Certified that he was content with it, that he had embraced it as salvation accomplished, redemption accomplished.

And so he raised him bodily as a proof of his acceptance of that death. And there is a reminder in that, you see, to us, that the great problem for the sinner is that he is in the hands of an angry God.

[7 : 07] He's in the hands by nature of one who will punish sin, who must punish sin. He hates it. He hates the rebellion of the sinner's heart.

And so as to solve the problem for the sinner, he provides his own son, the crucified. Think about it.

How does God forgive sins? How does he justify the ungodly and make them part of his family? How does he give them peace with himself and everlasting life and inheritance with him?

By dealing with the problem of his own wrath against us. By dealing with our own liability to eternal ruin.

And although there are many truths revealed in the cross of Christ, and more than we can handle in a sermon, that's sure.

[8 : 12] Once we see our need of the benefits secured in the death of Christ for sinners, then we're on track to embrace those benefits.

You see, the truth reveals to us the problem for us as sinners estranged from God. The problem for God in dealing with his wrath against us.

And the solution he has provided and secured in the death of his son. So it's about the cross revealing the truth.

That is the cross of Christ. In the truth it reveals. And when we begin to dwell there, as it were, on what was really going on, then we embrace by faith the Christ who died on that cross.

So we put our cross at the cross. Not simply our cross, but the cross of Christ. We glory in the cross.

[9 : 24] God forbid. May it never be can't that I should boast. Except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the first thing. The second thing is we put our cross by the cross because of its supremacy to all other belief systems.

We find in this context that there were those who had come in to the churches in Galatia with an unorthodox and heretical view of the gospel.

Settle and clever and pandered to human nature. And we read about circumcision here. And you might have thought in the first thing, what is this to do with the cross?

Well, it had everything to do. It was a belief system that was not saving. Because it was adding to the work of Jesus on the cross.

[10 : 53] It was Christ plus. And the moment you begin to go towards Christ plus anything, you've gone astray.

And of course, Galatians is all about exposing these Judaizers as a sham religion, as false pseudo-Christianity.

Paul shows us in Galatians that if you add any religious ceremony or any person or any human merit to Jesus, you've got an equation that equals no salvation.

Christ plus anything equals no salvation. Human merit, out. Religious rituals, out.

Anything that comes in and you seek to add to Christ crucified is a departure from the good news of God in Jesus.

[12 : 03] It's actually bad news. And that's true if one adheres to another religious system. Not just pseudo-Christianity, but any other religious system where Christ is relegated.

If he's given a place at all. The message of the gospel of the good news was that there is only one mediator between God and man.

There is only one name given to us under heaven whereby we must be saved. The name of Jesus. And when we see why that is true at the cross of Christ, then we see the supremacy of Christ to all other belief systems.

The message of God's salvation in Him is supreme. That's true too when you come to not just religious systems, but secular atheistic systems too.

All are utterly short of what God has provided in the crucified. Solomon, when he was searching out all that was available in the then world, said, And I found that all was vanity.

[13 : 35] Vexation of spirit. A chasing of the wind. And so it is at the cross. At the cross, there's where we first see the light.

And there's where the burden of our sin rolls away. The cross of Christ is superior to all religious systems.

All belief systems. And thirdly, we put our cross at the cross because of the moral changes and the spiritual changes it affects.

It affects a radical change. We read in verse 15 how we understand that it is a new creation change.

For in Christ Jesus, you see, neither circumcision or uncircumcision or any other ritual avails anything but a new creation.

[14 : 50] If anyone is in Christ, united to Him by faith, then the spiritual and moral changes are tremendous. This is another reason why we put our cross at the cross of Christ.

Coming to faith in Christ, glorying in the cross of Christ, we come to realize what a radical change has occurred in us.

Our life becomes different. We have a new attitude to God. We have a new attitude to our fellow man. We have a new attitude to spiritual things.

We have a new attitude to moral standards. They matter to us in a way they never mattered before because we realize they matter to the God who saved us in the cross of Christ.

It's not that we want to become holy willies so that others can call us holy willies. No, no. It's because of a radical change that has come about.

[16 : 02] A spiritual and moral transformation which Paul calls a new creation. A new creation.

And we must therefore see this as an additional reason to put our cross firmly at the cross of Christ. One of the marks in our day of pseudo-Christianity is that in the church, in many areas of the church, the standards adopted have nothing to do with God and his word.

They have to do with the in things, the trends. People are adopting moral standards that are worldly and inevitably bad.

They're anti-commandment. This has been going on now for decades, but it's getting worse as a month follows month and year follows year.

Even within the church, in the broad church, leaders are adopting lifestyles that are contrary to the word of God. The apostolic teaching is modified.

[17 : 29] You've got to change with the times, they tell us. They want God to change. They want him to become amoral like themselves.

You can't sing the songs of the Bible and go with the moral flow of today.

Oh, how I love your law. It is my study all the day. In your law's path make me to go, for I delight therein.

My heart and to your testimonies are not to greed and claim. And there's more to greed than just wanting many.

Far more. It's about wanting what we ought not to have. You can't sing these songs, the songs of the Spirit of God.

[18 : 35] If you are going with the moral flow of the day. And the spiritual flow of the day. People modify stealing and they call it something else.

They modify lying and they call it something else. They modify sexual immorality and they call it something else. They modify idolatry and they call it something else.

Something soft and smooth and appealing. the Bible calls these things sin and exceedingly sinful indeed did I mention sin that's old fashioned that's how to do it don't talk about that don't get us all ruffled it's a faithful saying God says and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and one of the marks of us being in Christ one of the marks of us having put our cross at the cross of Christ is that we know that we can say that I am a sinner for whom Christ came and whom Christ in his mercy has saved is saving and will save the New Testament as indeed the old is clear and unambiguous when we put our cross at the cross of Christ so to speak we take on the spiritual and moral yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ take my yoke upon you for I am meek and lowly and you shall find rest into your soul what is he going to say for my yoke is easy and my burden is light and my dear friends it is only easy to us when we have put our cross at the cross of Christ when we have that radical change of view and we see things God's way

I don't suppose you'll remember it now and I wouldn't blame you for it but when we were studying in 1st John in chapter 3 and verse 2 we have a marvelous passage there remember how it begins at the beginning behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us has given in to us that we should be called the children of God and we are and then he says this beloved it doesn't now appear what we shall be but when he shall appear we shall see him as he is we shall be like him we shall see him as he is and then he says this for the here and now and everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure I'm sure I told you this one before but it is so etched in my own mind it will do with telling again there was a year in the life of the church in Northern Ireland 1859 called the Year of Grace and it was a remarkable year of the Lord's favour in Northern Ireland and a great revival broke out yes it touched the southern part too but not at all like the north and one of the marks of the radical change in people particularly the men folk who had been employed in in heavy industry and had instead of calling stealing from the company stealing they called it pilfered sounded better and they had to open units within the businesses to take back the masses of stolen stuff because the men were transformed they had become new creatures in Christ and they saw what their former ways were like that they were thieves let me remind you of a biblical example of the same thing there was a wee chap heard Jesus was coming to Jericho and he he couldn't get a sight of him so he would dip into a big tree and he was looking down and

Jesus stopped and said Zacchaeus may haste come down for today's salvation has come to your house and one of the marks of the change in Zacchaeus was he said he was a tax collector and he fiddled some for himself he said Lord if I have taken anything from anyone I will restore it fourfold there is when we put our cross at the cross of Christ when we have a true understanding by God's grace and spirit we know there is a spiritual and moral change in us a transforming change and we are never the same again in that sense and lastly and just briefly we put our cross there because of a personal commitment to the triumph of the cross

[24 : 45] God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world now without getting into the technicalities of translation I am simply keeping to what I have begun with by whom that is the cross of Christ and the Christ on the cross dying for sinners it is a representative expression as we said at the beginning of the whole of his saving work and what Paul is saying here in effect is when we put our cross personally at the cross of Christ we identify publicly with him that's what we're doing I better not get into the political scene too far but when we'll go

I hope you will go on the 5th of May and you'll do your duty and you put your cross by this name or that name you're identifying with that politician or that party that's what you're doing you're identifying you're putting your cross there and although others don't see it you know it's true and when of course the thing goes your way you're quite bold to say we won you're identifying yourself publicly and what I'm saying to you is if in your heart you really do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you glory in his cross then publicly you should declare on his side it's not about waiting till you're something special if you glory in the cross of Christ now you're special because of the grace of God you're special to him and our business is to declare our interest in him to publicly identify with him to be out in the open when we have surveyed the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died we're saying on which my prince of glory died we're identifying with him we're saying it's for me he died and you see when that comes in our hearts the world in all its systems has been crucified by us we have a whole different view of going with the flow suddenly we're going against the tide but with him by our side the things we once counted gain we count loss for Christ we count them as emptiness and garbage and we see the world in a different light we see the meaning of the words death and decay and all around

I see and that's apostolic don't forget it's apostolic 1st John 2 17 says the world is passing away 1st John 2 17 the world is passing away and all it craves we see it as we said a moment ago we see it ultimately as emptiness and a chasing of the wind but we see in Christ life and joy and peace and we know the meaning of the fullness of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins and this we can say that in Christ the cross of Christ we have an inheritance that is incorruptible and defiled and then fading who was it that said fading are the worldlings pleasures all is boasted pomp and sure the world has been crucified into me and

I to the world the world may disregard me because I follow Jesus don't worry about it the world may think I'm a fool don't worry about it the world may write me off don't worry about it because when at last the shadows and shadow land will flee away my dear friends the cross of Christ will be seen to have triumphed overall so then let's take the opportunity to reaffirm our position of Christ today and if we're hesitating to come out into the open have done with it and come out on his side to quote that politician now is the time now is the time oh that's biblical now is the acceptable time now is the day of salvation put your cross by the cross

I love those words and will finish with them near the cross oh lamb of god bring its scenes before me help me walk from day to day with its shadow for me in the cross in the cross be my glory ever till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river god forbid that I should boast except in the cross of my lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified to me and I and to the world may he bless his own word to us amen