

The Glory of the Cross

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- [0 : 0 0] Now, as the Lord enables us, let us for a short time turn to the epistle to the Galatians on chapter 6, where we read together.
- And particularly focusing on the words of verse 14. 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 first mention we have of the church being established in Galatia, or among the Galatians, is in the book of Acts, chapter 16.
- There's a reference there, and also in chapter 18. And that was during Paul's second missionary journey, and probably around the year AD 53.
- And as time went on, the apostle became aware that things were not going the way they ought to have been going regarding the church in Galatia.
- [1 : 4 2] And as he writes this letter in chapter 1, verses 6 onwards, it says, I marvel, the apostle says, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.
- There were people who had infiltrated and crept into the fellowship of the church of the Galatians, who had another gospel which wasn't at all the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- And he says in chapter 1 again, verse 7, that the gospel that they are preaching is not another gospel, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.
- But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
- As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that he have received, let him be accursed.
- [3 : 1 2] So there was obviously a different angle on things placed by those who were not true believers, true preachers of the gospel.
- And the effect upon the people in the church of the Galatians was this in chapter 3, he opens with these words, In other words, Christ crucified was declared to them as the way of salvation, as the way of having peace with God.
- It was through Jesus Christ and him crucified. But then he says in verse 2, In other words, whatever measure of acceptance they may have had, of the gospel preached to them during Paul's time among them, people had come along and they say, well, you need more than just faith in Jesus.
- And particularly they were emphasizing that you have to observe the law, the ceremonial law, particularly summarized by circumcision.
- In other words, you can believe in Jesus, but that's not enough for salvation. You need also to have your own works, your own law keeping as a basis of your salvation in order that you will be surely saved.
- [5 : 3 2] And the apostle is saying, Are you so foolish? Having believed in Jesus, are you going to be made perfect now by your own efforts, by keeping the law, by being circumcised?

And he says, That is not the way things ought to be. And then coming to chapter 3, sorry, chapter 6, the chapter we read, he says, God, verse 7, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The apostle is saying, what you're doing by observing circumcision and these aspects of the ceremonial law, it is as sowing to the flesh.

It is your own works. And you're glorying in your own works. But those who sow unto the Spirit, in other words, those who believe in Jesus and rest upon him alone by faith as their only saviour, as the only way through which they can be forgiven their sins and received by God, those who trust him by faith, they will reap life everlasting.

[7 : 25] So the contrast is there. The works of the flesh, the works of the Spirit. And no man is able to secure salvation by his own acts, by his own works.

It is God who justifies. It is God who brings to life. It is God who brings about the new birth in the experience of his elect people.

And then the apostle brings us through to verse 14. And he says, 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.

It is as if he's saying, these people who have come in among you and who are preaching another gospel, they are glorying in their own selves, in their own works.

But then he says, I don't want to glory in anything or in anyone, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 54] It is of the nature of fallen man to glory in anything or in anyone except God.

Do you remember the first catechism? It asks this very searching question. What is the chief end of man? man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

But if you look at human nature, fallen human nature, the answer that that question would receive is what is the chief end of man?

It's to glorify himself. To glorify himself. to seek his own way and to do his own thing. And that's what these people were doing among the Galatians.

They were establishing a gospel that was no real gospel at all that they may have glory themselves and they wanted to have converts to their own way of thinking that they might glory in the numbers that they had more than those who live by faith in Jesus.

[10 : 20] Well, just one or two thoughts under two headings. First of all, the wrong glorying. The apostle here is saying, God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. He says that against the background of those who are glorying in something else. That was no new thing.

If you look in the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 9 and at verse 23, you find this written, Thus saith the Lord God, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.

These three areas of life, people are taken up with them, glorying in them, apart from glorifying your glory in God.

People's wisdom, people's power, people's riches, they make up so much of their thinking, and they live according to these things.

[11 : 49] But the Lord says, But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

The people among the Galatians, they were glorying in the wrong thing. They were sowing unto the flesh, and those who sow unto the flesh, in other words, those who do not live by faith in Jesus, they will reap corruption, so long as they go on in that way.

But the apostles say, God forbid, may it not be that I should glory in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, it's amazing, isn't it, when you think of what the cross meant as an instrument of punishment, as an instrument of shame, as an instrument of utter contempt.

People who were crucified, it's as if they were set up there as the epitome of shame and disgust and revulsion.

[13 : 28] And the apostle says, that's what I want to glory in, not just the cross, but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What was the significance of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ? why was the apostle focusing all of his affection and all of his faith and all of his hope and all of his commitment upon Jesus Christ and him crucified?

Why? I mean, people who were living for Christ in that particular time, they were open to all kinds of persecution.

The Roman emperors, they hated Christians and they made public spectacle of them. In the arena, they were fed to the lions, the wild beasts, beasts having been kept starving for days, and Christians ushered into the arena and hundreds of people, maybe thousands of people gathered to see the spectacle of these hungry wild animals descending on them and tearing them to pieces.

that was the reality of living for Christ during that particular time. And there are parts of the world today where there is the same kind of animosity and hatred towards Christians and the Christian church.

[15 : 21] But the apostle wasn't fazed in any way at all by the prospect of being put to death for Christ because he loved him, because Christ first loved him and he gave himself for him.

What's the significance of the cross of Christ? Well, there are a number of theological words I want to highlight. And it's good for us to be able to become familiar with them.

when the apostle here is saying, God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a cross of substitution.

It's as if people looking at the cross who were believers, they would be able to say, well, Jesus is there instead of me.

He's my substitute. The punishment he's suffering, it's me who deserves to suffer it.

[16 : 39] It's the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ who took our place. He was there in our room and in our stead.

Substitution. expiation. Another word, it's an interesting word, it's expiation. In other words, Jesus was on the cross taking away the guilt that we incurred because of our law breaking.

he took it away by paying the penalty due for that breaking of the law. The soul that sinneth, it must die.

Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and in the life that is to come. That's the catechism. And when you look at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is fulfilling a work of expiation that is taking away our guilt through paying the penalty due to it.

How can we plummet the depths of his experience as he paid the penalty due to us for our sins?

[18 : 14] Well, he speaks these words on the cross, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Our sins would not have been paid for or atoned for in any other way except through the divine person who was Jesus Christ, the God man mediator, suffering the full intensity of God's wrath and curse.

God. And the third word that I'd like us to continue being familiar with is Jesus Christ was our propitiation.

The apostle Paul and the apostle John speak speak of the propitiation that is Christ Jesus.

In other words, Jesus Christ, he covered us from the wrath of God by being himself our propitiation.

He came between us and the wrath of God. In the epistle to the Romans, we see in chapter 3 and at verse 25, the same word in the original being used.

[19 : 58] Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. The covering over the ark of the covenant, it was a solid sheet of gold and that covered over the law, the tables of the law that were enclosed inside the ark.

And at the center of Israel was the ark of the covenant and it was speaking against the sins of the people.

The law always speaks against sin. But on the great day of atonement, when the animals were sacrificed, the blood was taken into the holy of holies.

by the high priest and sprinkled upon that place called here the propitiation. It was the gold covering over the top of the ark, covering the law.

And it's as if when the law received that sprinkled blood from the sacrificed animal, the law was satisfied.

[21 : 34] The blood came between the people and their evil deserts. the blood shed in sacrifice, silenced, shall we say, the accusations of the law.

And when the apostle here is talking about God forbid that I should glory, saving the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, I believe is thinking of this particular thing.

That he saw that the only way in which he himself would escape the condemnation of God's law was by coming under the sprinkled blood of atonement.

Just like the Israelites in the land of Egypt, when the Passover lamb was put to death, and the Lord commanded Moses to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts and the lintel.

And he said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And the apostle here is saying, God forbid that I should glory in anything or anyone else, except in the blood of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 04] one more thing, Jesus Christ is our ransom. He paid in full all that God's holy law and God's justice required.

He magnified the law in a perfect life. death. He magnified it and made it honorable. And in his atoning death, he paid in full what God required of us as sinners who broke his law.

he made atonement. It's the place where peace was declared between God and his people.

Christ said, it is finished. What an amazing word it is. In the original language, that word translated, it is finished.

It's one word and it's in the perfect tense. In other words, what Jesus is saying is, I've done the work and its effect continues forever more.

[24 : 35] He finished the work the father gave him to do. And then the apostle here is saying, so if he's contrasting himself with those who are glorying in their own works, in their circumcision, in their law keeping as a basis of salvation, and he says, I don't want to glory in anything that I do.

I want to glory in what my savior has done. save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is what he says, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. He gives us an angle on the work of Christ in that last phrase of the verse.

He says, I see that in the death of Christ the world is crucified there. In other words, the world is not going to dominate me anymore in my affections, in my priorities.

The world has been crucified there. Its power has been dealt with. Its overriding bossiness has been taken away because Jesus Christ has crucified the world unto me.

[26 : 04] and crucified me unto the world. It's as if he's saying the world no longer is going to dominate the people that Jesus died for and they are not in themselves going to be slaves to the world and the flesh and the devil.

The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh and all of these things that are a summary of what the world really means. No, the Lord Jesus by his finished work upon the cross when he said it is finished he crucified the world unto me and I unto the world.

God maybe maybe you still feel that the world is drawing you maybe you still feel an openness to some of the voices that the world speaks towards you calling you this way calling you to do this calling you not to do the other thing that's the way the world is but remember it's a crucified world because in Jesus we have power through grace to resist it and we have power through grace to embrace something far better come unto me he says all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn of me I am meek and lowly in heart you shall find rest under your souls my yoke is easy and my burden is light these people who were dominating things among the

Galatians they were not able to rest because they were always having to do this and do something else in order to work their way as it were into the favour of God but those who believe in Jesus they have the privilege of resting in him and resting in his finished work whatever comes whatever difficulty he is the one who has taken responsibility for them and he is able to be with them in every situation of life call upon me in your day of trouble I will answer you and you shall glorify me God bless these thoughts to us let us pray help us this evening to thank you for your kindness to us in so many different ways and give us to rejoice in the Lord

Jesus with deeper understanding of the glory of his finished work or we feel so often that we are just as it were paddling in the shallows there is so much more to understand and to experience give us Lord more and more to dwell with yourself and give us clearer understanding and eyesight that we might see the glory of Jesus who died for us and rose again bless the congregation we pray lead them and guide them in every detail of their congregational activities bless every family and every circumstance we pray and forgive our sins in Jesus name Amen