

Jesus and I - He is my Boast

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[0 : 00] Well, for a short time this evening, let me direct your minds to Galatians chapter 6 and at verse 14, especially the words of verse 14.

But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

God willing, our theme, if we can put it that way for the communion services, is going to be Jesus and I.

Because we're going to look in Galatians this evening and tomorrow as well at three passages in which Paul is very personal in his references to Christ.

There is a whole lot of very deep theology packed into this letter to the Galatians and into some of these verses as well. But I want to try and see how he brings that out in referring to his own particular relationship to Christ in such a very personal way as you find it here.

[1 : 12] Where this theme of Jesus and I, you could say Paul is saying, he is my boast. He is the one in whom I rejoice. And then tomorrow, God willing, we're going to look also at other passages in Galatians chapter 2 especially, where you find Paul saying there in regard to Christ that Christ in fact is the one with whom he's been crucified.

In verse 20, I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

There is Jesus and I where Paul is saying he is my life. He is my boast. He is my life. And then tomorrow evening, we'll come back to chapter 4, that great passage where he deals with adoption near the beginning of the chapter, verses 6 to 7 especially.

Because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave but a son. And of a son, then an heir through God.

Jesus and I, he is my boast. He is my life. He is my brother. His father is the same father as mine, Paul is saying.

[2 : 38] Let's look at the first of these passages then for a short time. He is my boast, he is saying. Now, in this passage, when he talks about boasting, he's not talking, of course, of boasting in a sinful sense.

We all know the kind of boasting that belongs to the sinful part of life where boasting is very personal and very self-righteous.

The kind of thing that a person has that really shows their own importance or their own importance in relation to someone or something else. Paul's boasting is not, although it's very personal, it's not about himself.

It's not in himself. And the word that he uses here for boasting, it's also translated rejoicing, because it carries in it the idea of really rejoicing in something, but it's something that you trust in and therefore you boast in that.

You can have confidence in that. What he's saying is the cross of Jesus Christ is what I am boasting in, what I am pleased to rejoice in, where all my confidence is for my acceptance with God.

[3 : 54] That is where I boast. He is my boast. He crucified is my boast. And we can look at that under two headings.

First of all, we have to think about the boasting that Paul rejects. We'll call that boasting in the flesh. He uses that word a number of times in Galatians.

And then secondly, the boasting that Paul rejoices in is boasting in the cross. Because we need something of the background to Galatians boasting in the flesh, what we've called it, in order to understand how he's come to this conviction so strongly.

Far be it from me, or as the AV has it, God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of my Lord, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, as you know from Galatians, Paul was facing as the Galatians were facing, though they didn't realize it, and Paul had to write this letter to bring it to their notice.

[4 : 55] They were facing a threat to the gospel. They were facing a threat, indeed, to their own existence, ultimately, because when you have a threat to the gospel, if that threat comes to be a reality and takes over in the way that it threatens, then not only is the gospel affected, but the existence of the church is affected.

Because if you don't have the true gospel, you're not going to have a church for very long. Unless God intervenes. And in chapter 1 and verse 7, we can see how important that was to the apostle. This was not something on the sidelines, not something that he could treat in any way as of relatively little importance. He says, I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. Now, what's behind that? What were these people that were troubling the Galatians really saying?

And why was Paul so vehement about this? Why was it such an important issue for him? Well, what they were saying was, basically, that in order to have acceptance with God, or let's phrase it again, in order to be a true Christian, accepted with God, you needed something more than just faith in Christ.

[6 : 17] You needed something more than Christ himself and believing in him. And they were trying to force on these Galatian Christians circumcision. Something which used to be the case in the Old Testament that applied to the Jewish people, to the covenant people of God.

And now Paul is saying, that type of thing, these Old Testament ceremonies or rituals, such as circumcision, circumcision, and keeping of the law, the law that God gave, the moral law especially, circumcision, the keeping of the law, these are necessary for you.

You cannot be accepted with God, acceptable to God, or made acceptable to God, if you leave these things out. That's what they were saying to these Galatian Christians.

And Paul was horrified. Paul was horrified that they were being led in that direction, that they were listening to this, that they were giving some attention to this, as if it were really true.

And that's why he insists, that our acceptance with God requires nothing in addition to Christ, and Christ crucified.

[7 : 31] That's why he's saying, that his boasting, is in Christ alone. That's why you find here, verses 12 to 13, it's those who want to make a good showing in the flesh, who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted, for the cross of Christ.

We'll come back to that in a minute. For even those who are circumcised, do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. They were saying to these Galatian Christians, look, you need something in addition, to what Paul was teaching you, about faith in Christ, and Christ alone being sufficient, for your acceptance with God.

And Paul is saying, that is another gospel. It's not actually a gospel at all. Because if you need something in addition to Christ, as he looks, as he says earlier in this epistle, why did Christ die? Christ has died to no avail. If you're going to have to add to him, then that's what you end up with. And his assessment of this, is really crucial for our understanding, of this whole letter to the Galatians, and of this verse where he says, far be it from me, to boast except in the cross.

In other words, the first thing in his assessment, as we mentioned is, you're made right with God, you are righteous, you are acceptable to God, by his grace, because of Christ, in Christ alone.

[9 : 04] And that's a great sola of the Reformation. You know the Reformation had, these great points of theology, that they insisted on, against the false teaching, that they were countering in those days.

One of them was, you are justified, as Galatians put it, by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone.

One of the greatest commentaries, ever written, on the epistle to the Galatians, is by Martin Luther. And this was the epistle, that changed Luther's life.

Because up to then, until he came to realize, by God's grace working in his heart, that he did not need anything, in addition to Christ. Luther brought up, in the medieval Roman Catholic Church,

was brought up to realize, or to understand rather, that he needed penances, that he needed a certain amount of prayers, that he needed all sorts, of additional things, in ritualistic form, and everything, that he had been taught, along with Christ.

Christ had kind of been, buried out of sight. And all these other things, had been brought to the fore. That's why, Luther was so vilified, when he stood up, because he was virtually, undoing centuries, of bad teaching.

[10 : 33] That's why he was vilified, and persecuted, because he was coming out, with the truth, after hundreds of years, of darkness. And, this is what he came to realize, by God's spirit, by God's grace, that, the source, of his acceptance, with God, is Jesus, plus, nothing.

Jesus, alone. In other words, what he's also saying, what you can, conclude from that, as he says in, verse 15, neither circumcision, counts for anything, not uncircumcision, but a new creation. We have in Christ, everything we need. Your acceptance with God, you being a true, Christian in God's sight, is not, a matter of your, upbringing. It's not a matter of, what family you belonged to, or belong to.

It's not who your mother, or father, or relatives are. It's not the fact, that your father, may be a minister, that you belong to a pedigree, of that kind, long in the history, of any congregation, or church.

It's not in the clothes, you wear to church. It's not in anything external. It's not in your appearance. It's not in any traditions, in themselves, that you say, you need to trust in this.

[11 : 46] You need to have this, at all costs. It is Christ, alone. And if you lose sight, of Christ, alone, you are in the ways, of the flesh, as he puts it.

You are glorying, in the flesh. You are boasting, in the flesh. You are involved, as Paul is adamant, in Galatians, you are actually involved, in sin.

You are taking up, something that's offensive, to God. Because God, sees, in the death of Christ, everything, in its entirety, that's needed, to deal with your sin.

With its guilt. With its presence. With its power. And that's why he's saying, God forbid, that I should boast, in anything else, except in this.

And in verse 12, very interestingly, he tells us, that one of the basic reasons, why these people, are setting out, the way they are, in teaching Christ, plus this, plus that, plus the other, is that, they are afraid, of one thing.

[12 : 58] They are not prepared, to accept, what Paul himself, was prepared to accept, and is accepting of. What is it? To suffer persecution, for the cross of Christ.

That's what he's saying, in verse 12. Not only do they, want to make a good showing, in the flesh, but it's in order, that they may not, be persecuted, for the cross, of Christ.

That's the crux, of the issue. They are not willing, to accept, what comes, with a full, acceptance, of the cross, on that part. Because Paul knows, if you accept the cross, and Jesus only, if you close out, all these other routes, to God's acceptance, then you're going, to ask for trouble.

You're going to actually, meet opposition. You're going to think, you're going to have people, thinking you're so, narrow minded, and you're not really, in line with modern thinking, that you'll just be excluded, and you'll be ostracized, and you'll be ignored, and you'll be thought of, as a bigot, or someone who's living, in centuries, back.

Why does the cross, antagonize the world? Why does the cross, antagonize the world? Why does, go back to ask the question, why does the cross, antagonize ourselves, as we were, before we came to know Christ?

[14 : 21] Why does the preaching, of the cross, actually, make us feel angry? Well, for one thing, because it brought, right to the forefront, of our minds, our own sinfulness.

It brings, sin right to the front, of our mind, and our attention. And the world, doesn't like that. The world, can't stand that.

The world's not prepared, to accept that. The cross, destroys, the idea, that everybody, is basically good, and just needs, some education, to bring them, into a right relationship, with God.

That's nominal Christianity. We'll come back to that, as well in a minute. The Christianity, really, avoids, emphasizing the cross, and commitment, to Jesus, and faith, in Jesus, alone, for your acceptance, with God.

And Jesus, as the only one, who is the way, the truth, and the life, that brings us, to be accepted, with the Father. You try, and stand for that, in today's world, in today's ecclesiastical world, and

you'll soon find, that you're in a very, distinct minority.

[15:37] Because nominal Christianity, does not want, lives disturbed. They don't want, people actually, feeling bad, about themselves. Nominal Christianity, can't stand it, if people are somehow, or other, brought to face things, like sin, and guilt.

That's bad for you. Leave people alone, to do what seems, best to themselves, and to do their best, and to do lots of good works, because that's a Christian, isn't it?

No, it's not, Paul is saying. That's in the flesh. That's, something that the world, boasts in. That nominal Christianity, boasts in.

When you come, and look up to Jesus, crucified on the cross, what you're really saying is, I caused this. This death, that he died.

Why did he have to die? Why did he have to die? This death? This death of agony. This death, where the wrath of God, was actually inflicted upon him.

[16:40] This death, where he in his soul, himself experienced, the penalty, that God lays upon sin. Why did he, the innocent, in himself, son of God, why did he have to experience this?

Why did he have to endure this? Why him? If it's just a matter of me, being good, and just having to, receive some training, or education.

No, when you look up to the cross, what you're saying there is, my sin caused this. I'm responsible. It's what's in me, that's led to this, as God has provided, something in Christ, to meet my needs as a sinner.

That's the boasting that Paul rejects then. Boasting in things out with Christ. It doesn't matter what it is. Even big things like the law of God, your faith, the extent to which you pray, the congregation you belong to, your knowledge, your experience as a Christian.

No, he says, nothing. For my acceptance with God, nothing but Christ. Christ alone, Christ is sufficient. Christ is my boast.

[18:06] So let's look secondly at that. The boasting that Paul rejoices in, is boasting in the cross. Notice what he's saying, far be it from me, or God forbid, that I should boast, except, and that's such a huge exception.

Don't miss, for a moment, the impact of that word, except. Paul is not boasting in anything, but he is boasting in Christ. He's not boasting in anything out with Christ, but he is absolutely, and assuredly, and 100%, and as much as he can, he's boasting in Christ.

He's rejoicing in Christ. He has his trust located in Christ. He's not going to go away from that rock. He is boasting in him, though he's excluding boasting in anything else.

And why is that important? Well, it's a means of showing that, for Paul, everything he needs, is in this Christ.

He doesn't have to go out with this Christ, to find what God has provided, to meet his needs, nor does he go out with this, to describe how he has come to be accepted with God.

[19:17] If you go back to, or forward to the epistle to the Philippians, we come across this so often in chapter 3, we're back in that chapter so often, he's giving his testimony there, and as you know, what he's saying here in verse 3 is, we are the circumcision.

That's really effectively saying, we are the real Christians. We are the people that God accepts as his people.

And how does he define them? How does he define them compared to those that are again, troubling the church in Philippi with their false teaching? Well, he says, we are those who are the circumcision.

We are the true Christians, the people of God. And there are three things. That show that. That characterize them. We worship God in the spirit, or by the spirit.

Then, we glory in Christ Jesus. That's the same word as used in Galatians chapter 6 for boast. We glory in Christ Jesus. We rejoice in Christ Jesus.

[20:28] And have no confidence in the flesh. And what does he then go on to do? He goes on to describe the life he once lived. A life of absolute commitment to doing his best to keep the law of God as perfectly as he could, thinking that that was the way by which God would accept him.

And now he says, I count this but worthless rubbish. Not that he thinks badly of the law. What he means is, obedience to the law as a means of acceptance with God.

Not at all, he says. It is just nothing to me. Compared to Christ. That's why I consider all things but loss. All things to be put behind me as far as my acceptance with God is concerned.

Accept this. I count all things but loss. For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. And I consider them but dung or worthless refuse that I might know him.

Here it is. How do you come to be accepted by God? How do you come from, or what reason is there for you coming from a condemnation under God's, condemnation and under God's broken law and its sentence?

[22 : 00] How do you come from that to be fully accepted with God? What is the reason that a person can go from being disapproved of by God to being fully approved of?

Something remarkable must happen before that can be the case. Because God cannot jump from condemnation to non-condemnation just like that with nothing in between.

What's in between is Christ and his death. And that's all. And that's everything. Because when you place your trust and faith in Christ, everything that God has done in Christ becomes yours.

His righteousness becomes yours. His resurrection, as we'll see tomorrow, his resurrection becomes your resurrection. His acceptance with God becomes your acceptance with God.

And even his very entrance to glory becomes your entrance to glory too. And Paul is really saying, the cross has paid the full price of sin.

[23 : 14] Has met the demands of God's law that we broke. All demands of God that we should do things before we can be accepted.

Well, Christ has done them for us. And as you trust in him, his doing becomes your doing. It's as if you had kept that law yourself. It's as if you had met all God's demands by your own efforts.

Because his work becomes your acceptance. Now you take that with you. As you go to the Lord's table. As you come to remember the Lord's death.

You come boasting. You come boasting not in a sinful sense. You don't come wondering if this is sufficient for God's acceptance of you.

If this is sufficient for your righteousness before God. You don't come wondering if I need to add to this perfect robe of Christ's righteousness. To clothe me in the presence of God.

[24 : 17] So that he will say I don't see any fault now in you. In the relationship that you have with me formally. You don't come to the Lord's table thinking these thoughts. You come to the Lord's table and you say, Lord, thank you.

That when I have you, I have everything. That when I have your righteousness, I don't need anything added to it. You come boasting in him.

You come realizing that what Jesus has done, you need not add anything to it. Don't look to yourself. Don't look to what you feel like.

Don't look to your experiences, past or present. Don't look to your circumstances. Don't look to your providences. Don't look to the way that your mind is. Whether it's up or down.

Don't look to anything at all externally to Christ himself. Anything out with him. Anything along with him. Close out everything and just boast in him.

[25 : 21] Because that's your right as a Christian. Because that's what makes you acceptable with God. And in addition to that, the boasting that Paul rejoices in, where Christ is everything to him.

He goes on to say, this cross of Christ, it's particularly the death of Christ that he's focused on. Accepting the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which, some think it should be by whom, but it's probably better keeping the reference to the cross.

It's still Jesus, of course, Jesus in his death. By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Now that's interesting. Paul's talking about the crucifixion of Christ, when he mentions the cross.

That's the death of Christ, of course, that's meant by that. Not just the cross, the wooden cross itself, but what happened on the cross. The death that took place on the cross. That's what he means by the cross.

And by that, he's saying, by that death, something remarkable has happened to me in my relationship with the world. What is it?

[26 : 30] The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Not only is Christ crucified for Paul, but Paul's relationship to the world has become crucified in Christ, and the world has become crucified to him in Christ or because of Christ as well.

In other words, to put it in more simple language, Paul and the world have parted company. They're no longer pals.

And they haven't parted company amicably as best friends. They've parted company because Paul now realizes that worldliness is an enemy to him, and an enemy of God, and an enemy of the cross. He's parted company with the world because the thing that's operating in the world is the very opposite of what's working in him by faith in Christ.

Paul cannot think of such a thing as a worldly Christian. They're incompatible terms.

[27 : 41] Because to Paul, if you're a Christian, you're not worldly. You're not of the world. And on the other hand, if you're of the world, if you're worldly, then you're not a Christian. He and the world have parted company.

That doesn't mean he's perfect. It doesn't mean he doesn't know anything at all. Now, of the pull or the tug of the world on his soul, of the flesh in himself, that sinful aspect of his being that still exists, though he's now a Christian, he's not at all saying by this, I'm now perfect.

I don't get bothered by sin. I don't know the tug of the world. I don't know anything of the power of temptation. He's not saying any of that. But what he is saying is that the world does not dominate him the way it used to.

He's not governed by the world. His concerns are not to please the world, to obtain the world's favor, but to please Christ, to continue in his favor, to have Christ as his friend, and to have his approval.

And it's interesting that he also says that the world has gone its way as well.

[29 : 04] You see, that's what happens when you come to accept Christ, when you place your faith in Christ, when that becomes evident in your life, and when you willingly in yourself part company with the world, the world realizes what's happened.

It realizes you don't belong to it. It says cheerio to you as well. It doesn't want your company. The world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

The world doesn't recognize Paul as one of its members anymore. They see that Paul is different, radically different. And therefore, there's a separation between the two.

They've gone their separate ways. Not as friends, but as those who are not interested in each other anymore. You have no business with each other in terms of any fellowship or friendship.

And that explains why nominal Christianity. You find there in the passage here as we've been saying, where you find if you go to chapter 5 there in verse 11, if I, brother, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

[30 : 30] In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed. Why? We've mentioned nominal Christianity. What is nominal Christianity? Well, it's the kind of thing that says you can be a Christian without all that stuff about being really committed to Christ and believing the whole Bible and thinking that Jesus alone is sufficient for your acceptance with God and all of these things that we know of ourselves, Christians need to believe.

Nominal Christianity, the Christianity that avoids the cross, that really doesn't put the cross centrally in its teaching. Why not? Well, because nominal Christianity is afraid of displeasing the world.

Or put it the other way, nominal Christianity wants the favor of the world, wants to keep the friendship of the world, wants to be best pals with the world.

Why do you have all these announcements by churchmen, by ministers, theologians, academics, that are church people or ecclesiastics that say, you know, it's ridiculous.

You people who are trying to convert people from other faiths, or even saying to nice people who say that they are Christians, that they're not unless they believe certain things, unless they live a certain way of life.

[31 : 55] Why do they say that? Because they don't want to lose the friendship of the world. And as James very pointedly put it in his letter, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?

That's why Paul is saying, my boast is Christ, he is my boast. Because through his cross, I no longer want the favour of the world, I want his favour.

I want to know that I'm in God's favour, that I have Christ's approval. And the favour of the world has just gone the way of the world. That shows you the difference in this man compared to what he was.

Let's ask ourselves tonight, how are we coming to the Lord's table? Not as perfect. Not as people who can say before God, everything in my life is in the right place without any deviation from what it should be.

My mind is always perfectly attuned to your word. My prayers are always kept up habitually. I never miss them. My Bible reading is perfectly consistent.

[33 : 16] I do it so diligently. I can't think of any time when I didn't do it properly. None of us can say that, can we? I can't. Can you?

Does that mean you're not a Christian? No, but it means you want to be a better Christian than you are. what you need to say and it's all you need to say.

He is my boast. He is my ground of acceptance with God. He is the reason why I am able to come to the Lord's table confident in Him.

Confident that as I come and complain about my own inadequacy and my own unworthiness and my own failures and thankful that these failures do not exclude me from the Lord's table because if my boast is truly in Him genuinely that's my warrant to come.

That's my warrant to do this in remembrance of Him. I can spend all my life trying to polish up my life trying to be as perfect as I can be without boasting in Christ and I'm in the ways of the flesh and I shouldn't be at the Lord's table at all.

[34 : 47] But when my boast is in Him when He is everything to me when I can say with the song of Solomon this is my beloved I am His and He is mine that's it.

You won't need anything else supposing you live another 50 years you didn't need anything else 50 years ago if you're that age tonight. Your boast was in Him then your boast is in Him now.

You've learned a lot you've gained a lot your experiences have added one to another as life has gone by but you haven't added anything to Christ you've got no more in Him tonight than you had then because you can't add to and you can't take away from Him and He's everything you need and you need nothing else.

Jesus and I He is my boast boasting in the cross come then to the table rejoice in your Savior boast in your Savior don't be nervous of doing so because it's the world that boasts in other things and you have enough in Him for time and eternity this is my beloved and this is my friend let's pray Lord our God we give thanks for your deliverance of us from what we once were from the mind that we once had even as we were brought up under your word Lord we acknowledge that we were still unconscious of the sufficiency of Christ and still concerned to add our own contribution to our merits with

God we thank you for the deliverance that you have effected through the work of your Holy Spirit for the mind you give to your people that are convinced that you are all they require that everything that comes to them even the gift of the Spirit itself is for the sake of Jesus and for his completeness bless us now we pray for Jesus sake Amen Amen