

Paul Boasts Only in the Cross of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to Galatians chapter 6, Galatians chapter 6, reading at verse 14, well-known words of Paul, 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.

There's one thing that the Apostle Paul could never be accused of and that was lacking passion because he was quite simply one of the most passionate of men and he had an amazing love for people. You cannot read his letters without getting a sense of the urgency, without a sense of the passion that was within the man. And his letters are incredibly personal. Now it would appear that as Paul wrote the letters, much of his writing was in keeping with what was often customary at that time in the first century, is where somebody, a scribe would write. It would appear from Paul's letters that certainly some of his letters were written by a scribe, written by somebody that Paul dictated, that Paul spoke and somebody wrote for him.

Paul, because it would appear that at the end of the letter that he himself would come to bring the greetings and he himself would come to write at the end. We have, for example, in the likes of, in Romans chapter 16, verse 22, it tells us there the name of the person who actually penned there. And he says, I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. So that would be the name of the man, the scribe. Paul was dictating. Paul was the one that the Lord was conveying the message through the apostle. The apostle was dictating, as it were, and this man would be writing, this scribe would be writing it. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 17, at the very end, Paul says, I, Paul, write this greeting. This is the greeting at the end of the letter. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is a sign of genuineness in every letter I write. It is the way I write. Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. So it's like

Paul is giving, he says, this is all mine, this is all from me, but now I am giving this sense of authority. I'm now giving this final greeting. It is my hand, my work. And that's what we find here with verse 11. See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It seems to be at this point that the apostle is picking up the pen. He has been dictating the message all the time for somebody to write. And it's like the apostle is now saying, now I've taken the pen now. Here is the final greeting. And you can almost see that, see with what large letters I'm writing to you with my own hand. It's as if the apostle has so much urgency in his heart. He's so passionate about what he is writing because here is a church that he loves. And a church that he sees is going off the rails because they're being drawn back into the old ways, into the old rituals. The Judaizers had got in amongst them. And the Judaizers are telling them, it's not enough to have faith in Jesus Christ. You've got to go back to the law, to the old rituals, to the circumcision, to all these things. It's not enough. And Paul, of course, there's an urgency in Galatians where he's, you can almost feel the apostle is beside himself. He would love to just get hold of them and shake them and say, listen, do you not understand the liberty and the freedom that is in Jesus Christ? Why on earth do you want to go back to the old ways, to the old rituals? And so that's why you get to see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. You can almost see the apostle grabbing the pens on the scribe and say, right, I want to do this myself. So there's this sense of, so a great sense of urgency.

[4 : 5 3] And then Paul gives this great statement in 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. Because as we said, this was a church that had been liberated and now was slipping back into the old traditions, into the old ways, trying to marry the old and the new together. And the apostle is, he's so passionate in this and he's saying, look, there's only one thing that I can boast in.

Because these people were boasting in the old ways. And the apostle, the apostle is somebody that throughout his ministry made it very clear that there was only one thing that he could boast in.

You go through his letters and things that people would normally boast in, Paul didn't. For instance, Paul could easily have boasted in his birth. He had all the correct pedigree. He was a Jew. He was born into the right family. As far as his Jewishness was concerned, he could trace all the way back. He had all the privileges that that Jewishness brought. He belonged to a people who were favored by God, a people who believed that God had set out wonderful things for them. They were the people who had the word. They were the people who had the promises. They were the people who had the promised Messiah down throughout the generations. And so Paul, he could have boasted in his birth. But he tells us, for instance, in Philippians, that he counts those things that people put so much value on. He said, I look on them as worthless. Refuse. Doesn't count. Doesn't mean anything to me.

And we've always got to be careful with regard to the privileges that we have with regard to our birth. Now, don't get me wrong. You and I are very privileged to be where we are because we have many, many blessings. We've been brought up in our gospel community by and large, although things are changing. Many, many of you here were brought up with Christian influence in the home. If not directly, then certainly indirectly. And that is a, you cannot put a price on that. It's a wonderful legacy.

[7 : 44] But you know, the thing is that the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home, being brought up with the Bible, in and of itself does not guarantee salvation.

Because salvation is personal. It is individual. It is between yourself and the Lord. As we said, was it last week, Martin Luther said, there are two things that every person has to do for themselves.

Believing and dying. Nobody else can die for you. You have to die on your own.

Nobody else can believe for you. You have to believe on your own. And that's why it's a wonderful blessing to have the privilege of Christian values, of Christian heritage. But unless we put these things to use, they are not going to be of any good whatever. In fact, the very reverse can be true. Because Jesus teaches us that the more light that we have, and if we turn our back upon the light, then the darkness, that a soul that has had light, and has lived in the privilege of that light, and yet rejects that light, when they then broaden to darkness, that that darkness will be greater than those who never had light in the first place. So it's a very, very, very solemn thing.

To have the opportunities, to have the gospel privileges, to have the background, to have all these things, and yet to turn away from them. Paul had all these privileges, but it wasn't until he had a direct encounter with Jesus, until Jesus met with him, that things changed. And that's, it was this Jesus that he was, that he gloried in, not in his background, not in his birth. But then again, Paul could have gloried in his learning, because he had the best of teaching. He sat with the best tutors. He gathered with those of great learning.

[9 : 58] He had been to the best rabbinical schools. He was a man of great learning, of great education. And he could have boasted of these things, but again, in Philippians, tells us that these things don't count, that he counts all these things that he had, but like refuse, like done stuff to be thrown away.

And Paul, again, had amazing experiences. When he, from the time he became a Christian, his life was so radically transformed, and God blessed him with giving him insight, spiritual insight.

He said, you read some of the things that Paul has written, where the Lord has put upon his heart, laid upon him these things.

And Paul had experiences. Talks of a third heaven. Paul had experiences that we just have to say, whoa, Paul, my word, that was something. But Paul didn't glory in these things.

He told us about, he tells us about them. But he doesn't glory in these things. He glories in Jesus Christ alone. And it's not in our experiences or in any of these things that we are to trust, but in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

[11 : 22] And Paul was, there was only the one thing that he was concerned about boasting in, and that was in the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, Paul is reminding this church when he's saying to them, look, it's Jesus.

Forget what's in the past. Forget the, it's not Jesus plus anything else or anybody else. And you know, there are some people today, and they will tell you that you cannot be a proper Christian unless you have some kind of second blessing, unless you attend a particular church, unless it's a particular form of worship, unless it's...

No, my friend, at the end of the day, it's Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ alone. It is down to a personal union, a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, the apostle could have boasted in his work. Because when you think about his labors, there was nobody who worked like the apostle.

He was somebody who labored and suffered for it. We read, Paul gives a little of his testimony in Corinthians. And he tells us about the beatings and the stonings and the imprisonments and the shipwrecks and all these things.

[12 : 46] He labored and he labored and he labored. But he doesn't boast in them. He only boasts in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the funny thing about the cross is this.

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. What do you tonight think of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ?

There's a lot of people who are very dismissive of the cross. There's a lot of people tonight all over and they won't give the cross a second thought. It's not on their agenda at all.

Jesus Christ and him crucified doesn't enter their thinking. He is somebody, Jesus is somebody confined to history who has no bearing or no relevance on where they are today.

I hope there's nobody like that in here tonight. Because the cross of Jesus Christ is central to everybody's life.

[13 : 52] One day we will be judged by the Jesus of this cross. And what we did with the Jesus of this cross. He is not going to go away.

He is at the very center of our lives. Now, a lot of people find the cross very offensive. And part of the offense of the cross is that it removes from people their own ability to be right with God.

That's part of what the cross highlights for us. That we cannot make ourselves right with God. And that doesn't sit comfortably with people. Because we want to be able to do.

We want ourselves. We always feel that we have within ourselves to achieve. Well, this is one thing, one area we cannot achieve.

Impossible. And so a lot of people find an offense in the cross. And particularly in the kind of day that we're living in, a lot of people will feel that the preaching of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is offensive because they will say it's bigoted.

[15 : 03] How can you in this day of freedom, where people have freedom of choice, can you say that there is only one way of salvation? People will say, you cannot say that today.

Well, we have to say it today. Because God says it. God says that there is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing else. There is no other way. If there was another way, do you honestly think that God the Father would have sent his Son into this world to go through everything that he did if there was another way of salvation?

Of course not. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. These are the words of Jesus. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.

That's what the Word of God says. And let us pray that in our land that we will always be given the freedom to proclaim the truth because some places cannot.

[16 : 25] They cannot publicly do that. Sometimes we feel almost the way that things are going. That you feel that the pressure is on. That you've got to be more inclusive, more expansive.

That you've got to open it out. That, oh, there must be other ways. Well, the Bible tells us there aren't. That there is no other way. So a lot of people find that the cross, the message of the cross, is insulting.

They find that it's offensive. But then there are other people that, again, who find that the cross is insulting and offensive.

And these are the morally upright. The people who live exceptionally decent lives. A lot of people like that who find the cross a real obstacle.

I'm talking about people like the rich young ruler who came to the Lord Jesus. And he was as morally upright a man as you would meet. Everything about his life was good.

[17 : 29] His neighbors round about would have said, Whoa, now that's a good man. The church would have said, Now that's a good man. Everybody, because he actually, when Jesus challenged him, he actually said, and he was able to recite the commandments, and they then added, All these have I kept from my youth up.

This man actually thought that he was everyday, that he was morally perfect. He was exercising diligence to try and keep the law of God all the time.

And certainly as he lived his life, he would have lived an extremely morally upright life, and people would have said, Whoa, that's a good man. The Lord is saying, Oh, you've got one thing wrong. You see, that's not enough. That's a problem. It's not enough. We cannot, supposing we dot every I and stroke every T, it is never enough.

That's why Jesus came into the world. You see, the prince in the palace, and the prisoner in the cell, they both need Jesus just the same.

[18 : 48] The person who has lived the most morally upright life, needs Jesus just as much as the addict tonight who is in a cardboard box.

Just as much. And that's one of the things that people sometimes find it hard to get their head around. But the Bible tells us that we have all sinned, and all come short of the glory of God, and that there is no salvation out with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is why so many people find the cross offensive. Why so many people will turn away. Why people won't come to church. Why people won't open their Bible. Why people hate Christianity. It makes them uncomfortable. They find it insulting. It's insulting their intellect. It's insulting their standing. Their morally upstanding people.

But that is what the Lord Jesus is saying to us. But Paul gloried in it. His boasting was all in the cross of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 54] But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because it is on this cross where Jesus did everything for us.

It's on the cross that Jesus took our sin, took our punishment, took our condemnation, took all the filthiness, and all the guilt, and all the shame, and everything that we are.

He took it. As God dealt with Jesus in our place. And that's the only place of reconciliation in the whole wide world.

So when you look at the cross tonight, you see a Savior. And you see a Savior who says, I've gone there for you. I've gone there because I loved you.

I've gone there because I know you cannot deal with your sin. I know that there's nothing that you can do. Supposing you give your body to be burned, it wouldn't get yourself right with God.

[20 : 59] But it's because you can't do anything that I've gone there for you. And this is a great message of the gospel. There is no other way. And that's why the apostle boasted in the cross.

What does the cross mean to you tonight? When we talk about the cross of Jesus Christ, we don't mean the wood of the cross. We don't mean the crucifix that you can buy. We mean the work of Jesus.

All that he achieved. His sacrifice, his atonement, the propitiation, where he dealt with our sin on the cross, making us the place of reconciliation.

What does the cross mean for you tonight? Because as we said, we're all going to be judged by the Jesus of the cross. This does not go away. Every single person has to give an account before Jesus.

In fact, when you look at the crucifixion, the cross of Christ was central even there on Calvary. There were three crosses.

[22 : 07] Jesus' cross was in the center. On either side, we have a picture of the two reactions to Jesus. One accepting, the other rejecting.

There's no other place. There is no middle ground. either a person accepts Jesus, his claims, his kingship, his authority, or else they reject.

And that picture was clearly shown us on Calvary. Jesus at the center and the reaction of the two others. where do you stand in all this?

Where do you see yourself? Does the cross of Jesus Christ mean anything to you? You know, one day, and we don't know how that will be, but one day you will have to leave this world, so will I.

Maybe for some of us it will be very sudden. Maybe for others it will be lingering. We don't know. But the one thing that is absolutely essential before we close our eyes in death is that we see the Jesus of the cross and that we come to believe and accept the Jesus of the cross.

[23 : 30] Because as I say, this Jesus is not going to go away. He demands an answer from you. And then the apostle says, just in our word, he says at the end of this, be it far 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.

The world is dead to Paul. The world doesn't mean anything. It doesn't hold out anything for him. It's only Jesus. And you know, in tying in with what we're talking about this morning, you know Paul, although he suffered a lot in this world, no wonder he was a content person because he lived a life of fulfillment in Jesus and he was free from anything of this world.

Do you know that the world enslaves people and they don't realize it. The world tonight is enslaving people. The world is a grip on people.

Tonight, ask yourself this, is there anything in this world that I have to have? I have to have it. I'm not asking you are there things in this world that you want? There's always things we want. But is there something in this world that you have to have? Or are you able to say, you know, I can hang loosely to this world.

[25 : 03] The only thing that I really have to have is Jesus. If that's what you're able to say, that there is nothing in this world that you have to have except Jesus, then you have a liberty and a freedom of living in this world because this world is dead to you.

I don't mean that you're not enjoying, that you don't enjoy things. Of course we do. We all enjoy, there's many things we enjoy in life. And rightly so, God has given us many, many blessings to enjoy in this world.

But we always hang loosely to them because they can be taken away from us. You know, for the Christian, the one thing, or the one person we could not bear to be taken away from us is Jesus. Our whole world would collapse if that happened. It cannot happen, thankfully. But our world would collapse if it did. Because our whole future is built on us.

Tonight, your future is built upon Jesus. And if Jesus was taken away from you, it would all collapse. Because tonight, you're grounded in this.

[26 : 22] You're looking ahead. You're thinking of where you're going. You know where you're going. Your hope of glory is found in Jesus in nobody else.

and that's why the apostle was saying, the world is nothing to me. And in fact, he goes on and he adds that by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

The world looked on the apostle Paul. A lot of people thought he was mad. I'm sure a lot of his old friends thought he was mad. Here was a man who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel.

He was obviously a very, very intelligent man. A man with a great prospect within the church back in Jerusalem. Gave it all up to follow Jesus.

A lot of them would have said, you're mad, Paul. You're throwing away a great career. If you had listened to the apostle, if supposing Paul had continued down the way he was going, hadn't met with Jesus, and at coming to the end of his days, Paul might have achieved much in Jerusalem, and he might have been lauded as a great intellect, a great mind.

[27 : 37] He might have had many letters after his name. But you listen to the apostle coming to the end of his days. Ah, he says, I fought a good fight. He says, you know, I've kept the faith.

I've finished the course. There is a deep-rooted satisfaction in the apostle as he comes to lay it all down because he knows that he's run well and he's lived well for Jesus.

The world may not appreciate or understand that, and maybe there are people who cannot understand you, but Jesus does, and that's what's important.

Where is your boasting tonight? Is it in Jesus, or in anybody else, or anything else? Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray that the Jesus of the cross might be our Jesus tonight.

We pray that every single one of us will know that salvation filling our heart. We give thanks, O Lord, that there is nowhere else in the whole universe that we can turn.

[28 : 53] And we give thanks, O Lord, that we've been made aware of that fact. We pray to bless us with every spiritual blessing. Pray to bless the fellowship that follows on after.

Bless our time of fellowship there, and bless particularly Murda Murray, who will share his testimony with us. And we give thanks, O Lord, for your people, for the testimony that they have.

Lord, be with us all, we pray. Do us all good and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude singing to God's praise from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm number 73.

Psalm number 73 from the Scottish Psalter, verses 23 to 26. Psalm 73, verses 23 to 26.

And the tune is Wiltshire, and you'll find that on page 316. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

[30 : 05] Thou dost me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

Whom have I in the heavens high, but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire. Besides thee there is none. Verses 23 to 26, Psalm 73, nevertheless continually.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.