

Sermon: The Cross and Boasting

Text: Galatians 6:14

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Introduction: The cross is a difference maker. It divides the saved from the damned. It separates the new from the old. It provides a path to eternal life for those who are willing to follow Jesus' example. Because of what Jesus has already accomplished we have every reason to boast. The Apostle Paul says:

Galatians 6:14 (NIV) ¹⁴May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Paul literally takes over this word (*kauchaomai*) translated "boast" in our text. It can mean a variety of things. It can also be translated "to glory in, trust in, rejoice in, revel in, live for." - Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 349

What do you live for? What is your ultimate concern in life (Tillich)?

Believers in Jesus and *the world* are separated by the cross:

I. In What They Believe.

Ridderbos in his commentary on Galatians gives us a working definition of the world. "The world as used here is an epitome of everything outside of Christ in which man seeks his glory and puts his trust." - p. 224

A. The world believes in itself.

People who are of the world instead of being "in Christ" do not see the need for any of the help Jesus offers. They believe they are just fine, thanks!

Believing in your own abilities to be saved plays itself out in a number of ways:

It produces self-righteousness.

It leads to self-indulgence.

It is shown in self-promotion

It glories or boasts in itself instead of reveling in the work of the cross.

Man can do a lot of things, many of which are commendable, but none can count toward his ability to save himself.

B. Believers put their trust in Jesus.

Faith precludes boasting about our own accomplishments.

The O.T. patriarchs understood the importance of faith in God and certainly had no ground for boasting, and neither do we.

Romans 4:2-6 (NIV) ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

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II. In Their Purpose for Living.

A. The world craves glory.

This is the same mistake made in the garden.

The world takes pride in itself. It has its own publicists, agents, and other representatives to put it in the best possible light. The world’s acts of kindness are splashed on the front pages of papers and touted on the evening news.

Mankind’s nature is to boast about himself. The Jewish antagonists we encounter in Galatians were boasting of their own converts and seeking more (6:13). Greeks would brag of their wisdom (*sophia*), and Jews were prideful regarding the Law and their heritage with all those advantages.

Many times people in the world will compare themselves to poorer examples of humanity to look good. But when we compare ourselves to the “Incomparable One,” the *Son of Man*, we must throw ourselves at God’s feet for mercy and grace.

I John 2:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Paul had at one time boasted of his lineage and accomplishments, but imprisoned for Jesus toward the end of his life said:

Philippians 3:7-8 (NIV) ⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

B. Believers give glory to God.

II Corinthians 10:17-18 (NIV) ¹⁷But, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”¹⁸For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Followers of Jesus are to do their acts of piety in secret. Everything believers do is to honor God and attract others to Him. This is true of all of our relationships.

Being a Christian is never depicted in Scripture as an uncommitted lifestyle. In fact, “easy Christianity” has no place in the theology of the cross.

“This glorying ‘has (thus) as its object something before which all self-praise disappears.’” - (K. L. Schmidt, *Theol. Stud.* 11/12, 98, quoted in CB, Vol. 1, p. 228)

Not only can we not boast, but we are to blame for our condition (sinful) and for God’s remedy of the cross being necessary. We need to give glory to God for his work and mission on our behalf and for our sake.

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III. In Their Willingness to Sacrifice.

A. The world says everything is mine. - like an immature child

Proverbs 25:14 (NIV) ¹⁴Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.

Proverbs 27:1 (NIV) ¹Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

The fact is, we do not own our next breath. It is a gift from God as is our life.

There is nothing like “death” to help a person reassess what is important and focus on one’s relationship with God and others (if but for a moment).

Man's self-deception of personal ownership of anything material has always presented a problem to a relationship with the "real" owner. Wealth and riches have been a trap for many.

James 1:9-12 (NIV) ⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. ¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

B. Believers know everything is God's.

It is not the people of the world that we crucify "but the values of the world, its godless materialism, vanity and hypocrisy." - Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 350

God created the world, and he has purchased it back because of its sinful condition. For us who have decided to follow Jesus we cannot help but sing his praises for what he has done on the cross. You can hear it in heaven:

Revelation 5:9 (NIV) ⁹And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

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IV. In Their Destination.

"The person who lives for the world will together with it be destroyed." Ridderbos, p. 225

A. The world is condemned without Jesus.

They must accept the act of love on their behalf which is the cross. Without the cross their salvation is impossible. They must walk by faith away from the world and come to God through Christ in baptism so that their sins can be forgiven.

Galatians 6:15 (NIV) makes clear Paul's argument. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."

So nothing we do or avoid doing will provide for our salvation. The only thing that matters is that we find new life and become a new creation. The solution to that dilemma is Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord.

B. Believers are saved eternally because of Jesus.

“Because Paul has been ‘crucified with Christ’ (2:20), the cross is a barrier by which the world is permanently ‘fenced off’ from him and he from the world.” - Bruce, NIGTC, p. 271

The fact that we are saved and others are going to hell ought to motivate us to try and get God’s word to as many people as possible.

There is an artificial distinction made sometimes with the word “missionary.” Do you know how many times the word “missionary is used in the New Testament? Zero times.

John Venn describes what every Christian should be: “With the world under his feet, with heaven in his eye, with the gospel in his hand and Christ in his heart, he pleads as an ambassador for God, knowing nothing but Jesus Christ, enjoying nothing but the conversion of sinners, hoping for nothing but the promotion of the kingdom of Christ, and glorying in nothing but the cross of Christ Jesus, by which he is crucified to the world, and the world to him.” - Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 374

We are all missionaries. What we know about the cross we *must* tell.

“The cross is the ground of our justification. The cross is the means of our sanctification. The cross is the subject of our witness. And the cross is the object of our boasting ... Paul’s whole world was in orbit round the cross. It filled his vision, illumined his life, warmed his spirit. He gloried in it.” - Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, pp. 350-351

Can we do any less?

Conclusion: There are only two destinations for anyone. The cross is the paradigm, the example, for all those who would follow Jesus. It is a dividing point. It separates those who are serious about their faith from those who are not. “If the cross is not central in our experience then we must certainly be ‘enemies of the cross.’” - Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 351

You may be familiar with Garrison Keillor. Recalling his Lake Wobegon days, he wrote about his childhood and Thanksgiving dinners. The family would gather around the table and remember all the blessings of the year past.

“Uncle John usually gave the prayer, which caused everyone to squirm. As Keillor said, ‘Everybody in the family knew that Uncle John couldn’t pray without talking about the cross and crying ... Sure enough, Uncle John prayed, talked about the cross, and cried. Meanwhile, the rest of us shifted nervously from one foot to the other and longed for the prayer to end.’ Then Keillor added this powerful observation: ‘All of us knew that Jesus died on the cross for us, but Uncle John had never gotten over it.’”

- illustration by Garth Hutchinson

Are you willing to die for and with Jesus today? Are you willing to put your life where your mouth is?

“The cross marks the great division, not only between the church and the world, but between those in the church who are prepared to face persecution for the Messiah and those who aren’t.” - N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, p. 81.

In your life, **“Have You Any Room for Jesus?”**