

The Glory of His Cross

Sunday, February 28th, 1988

Galatians 6:12-14

“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 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.”

I want you to open your Bible today to the Book of Galatians. I'm going to be speaking from Galatians Chapter 6. The title of this message is the “THE GLORY OF HIS CROSS.”

I want you to give me a good hearing. I am going to say some things that need to be said. I am going to preach a message from the Word of God on one of the most important subjects that you can possibly entertain or look into. We will be looking into “THE GLORY OF HIS CROSS.”

There never lived a man with more concern and compassion for his fellow man than the Apostle Paul. I am sure of that! He said on one occasion in Romans 9: 2 and 3, *“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, (or separated from Christ), for my brethren.”*

Now, that is concern! That is a deep feeling of compassion and concern for others. *“I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for these brethren of mine”* (who are Jews in the flesh).

On another occasion he said this (Romans 10:1); *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.”* Now, that is compassion and concern.

Paul had this deep concern and compassion for his friends to know God, yet Paul could not tolerate a false gospel. He just could not tolerate men compromising the truth of God and denying the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He could not tolerate it!

He said in Galatians 1, *“Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed; (let him be damned). Let him be under the condemnation of God Almighty. There is no room for another gospel. We cannot give place to another gospel. We cannot suffer another gospel. Paul strongly rebuked those who turned aside from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

He also declared this in our text in Galatians 6. I have had several people say to me in letters, “We follow along in the Bible while you are preaching on television.” I hope you do!

Be like the noble Bereans; *“They search the Scriptures to see if these things be so.”* Even when they heard the great Apostle Paul preach, they went home and searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so.

I want you to look at Galatians 6:12. The apostle Paul strongly rebuked people who turned aside from the Gospel of Christ and declared that they have other motives; they have other reasons; they have other objections than the glory of God and your good.

They are in the ministry for something else besides the glory of God and your good. This causes them to turn from the gospel. This causes them to preach other things. Look at verse 12 of Galatians 6: First, he says; *“They desire to make a fair show in the flesh.”*

They desire to be successful in the flesh. They desire to impress. Why would a man turn from the true Gospel? Why would a man turn from the substitutionary death of Christ? Why would a man turn from the greater glory of God to preach something else?

Paul said, *“I will tell you why; they desire to make a fair show in the flesh.”* They desire to build impressive followings and to impress other people. Our Lord Jesus said this, *“They seek the honor that comes from men and not the honor that comes from God.”*

There is absolutely no reason for a preacher or a church to count people. There is no reason for us to keep records or numbers. There is no reason for us to make reports, is there? *“They desire to make a show in the flesh.”*

If you will look at religion in our day, this is the very charge that Paul is bringing against this group here. *“They desire to make a show.”* They have a desire to impress someone. *“They seek the honor that comes from men and not that honor that comes from God.”*

Again, in verse 12, he says this; *“And they constrain you to be circumcised.”* They constrain you to be circumcised, to be baptized or to come forward, sign up, or to make some kind of physical commitment.

My friends, coming to Christ is not a physical move. Coming to Christ is a heart work. Coming to Christ is not coming to the front of the church. Coming to Christ is a personal, individual, heart committal to Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in Romans 10, *“If thou shall confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”*

Our Lord said, *“My son, give Me your heart. Keep thy heart with all diligence. Out of it are the issues of life.”* The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a broken spirit. *“The Lord is nigh unto them of a broken heart.”* Coming to Christ is not a fleshly move; it is a spiritual commitment to Christ in the heart.

But like Cain of old, the natural man wants something to do. He wants something to do outwardly, he wants an aisle to walk, and he wants a physical altar in which he can come. He wants a day to keep, a church to join, a tithe to pay, a law to observe, a work to do and a righteousness to work out. That is what the natural man wants.

He keeps asking, *“What must I do to be saved, what can I do, what work shall I perform in order to obligate God in meriting His mercy or His grace?”* Like Aaron of old, the preachers helped these people to build their golden calves. When Moses came down off the mountain, they wanted a calf, Aaron said, *“So I built them one.”*

This is what the people wanted. Let the people have what they want. Tell the people what they want to hear. Cry, *“Peace, peace when there is no peace.”* Go along with all of their fleshly music and entertainment. Let the people erect crosses, pictures, and idols of religion. Let them build their altars at the front of the church. Call them forward to fleshly and public displays.

Go along with anything; go along with anyone in the name of religion. Live and let live. I ask why? Why should a prophet of God give in to the desires of the people when they are contrary to the Word of God? I will tell you why, look at the next verse; *“They desire to make a fair show in the flesh”* and they constrain you to act, to be circumcised, be baptized and all of these things.

Here is the reason; *“Lest they suffer persecution for the cross of Jesus Christ”* and lest they suffer persecution for preaching the true way of salvation. I will tell you this, if a preacher does not go along with the trend, if a preacher does not compromise and go along with the tradition of religion, if he does not go along with the customs of his day, he will be branded a fool, a radical and a fanatic.

I will tell you this, the cross of substitution, the Gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ is now and always has been and always will be offensive to the natural man. This is called in Galatians, "*The offense of the cross.*"

What is offensive about the cross? Well, it addresses all men as sinners. That offends man's dignity; "*We be not sinners.*" It declares that salvation is the free gift of God and that offends men's pride. He likes to make some contribution to the salvation of his soul.

It presents a full, complete, and effectual atonement. That is in direct opposition against man's efforts to save himself. This Gospel of substitution of the cross comes by revelation, not by reasoning. This offends man's wisdom.

Look at this next verse: He says this, in verse 13: "*These men who desire to make a fair show in the flesh*" like to make an impact. They like to make an impression. Everything has to be big; the numbers have to be big and growing tremendously every year. There have to be records and reports. There have to be big buildings and impressive statistics.

The men who preach laws, rules, and regulations tell you how to live, what to do, where to go, what to eat, what to drink and what days to keep. They constrain you to be circumcised, to be baptized. They constrain you to give all you have, to keep holy days and sacrifice to keep their programs on the air. They have you sacrifice to build these great monuments to religion.

They want you to keep the law. It says in verse 13: "*These men do not keep the law.*" They do not do these things. What they constrain you to do, they do not do. I will tell you this; some of the worldliest people in the world, are those who preach against worldliness.

They are the richest and the gaudiest. They live by the fashions. They live the highest. They are materialistic and are fleshly in their thinking and in their ways, dress and in their conduct. Some of the worldliest people in this world, are those who preach against worldliness.

Some of the most unsanctified people in this world are those who continually preach sanctification, and sanctification by deeds and works and law. They have the cruelest spirits, the meanest tempers, the sharpest tongues, and the most hateful attitude you have ever run into in your life.

Their churches are confusing places of division. They are the sanctified folks. They don't go to a movie and they wouldn't drink a beer. They wouldn't dare smoke a

cigarette, but they sure are mean to live with. Some of the most unsanctified people on earth are those who claim to be sanctified.

Some of the most ill-tempered, selfish, egotistical and unholy people on earth are the preachers and those who call themselves, "Holiness people." You know what I am saying is so. Have you ever tried to live with one? You will find out.

This is what Paul is saying; *"These people desire to make a show in the flesh."* That is what they are after. They want to impress people and win the honor and praise of men. They constrain you to be circumcised. They constrain you to sacrifice, give, work, go and abstain from this and abstain from that. They don't abstain from anything! They stretch the line as far as they can stretch it.

Here are the two reasons for their inconsistency. One reason is that they don't know the Gospel. That is the first reason. They just do not know the Gospel. They have never been converted in their hearts. They are going to hear Christ say to them, *"Depart from Me; I never knew you."*

Why He said, *"Many are going to say to Me in that day, Lord we preached in Your name. We did many wonderful works and we cast out demons and devils in your name."* He is going to say, *"I never knew you."* You may have made a profession, but *"I never knew you. Depart from Me ye that work iniquity."*

These men have never discovered the Gospel. They don't know the living God or Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. They do not know the glory of God or the character of God. They know nothing about what happened in the Garden.

They know nothing of the extent and the consequences of the fall. They know nothing of how God can be just and justify the ungodly. They may talk about the blood, but never in reference to God. It is always in reference to men.

They know nothing of the atonement. They know nothing of reconciliation. They know nothing of redemption. They know nothing of a new heart, a new life, a new creature, a new birth, a new family and a new direction. They know nothing of those things. It is an outward profession, an outward veneer of religion. It is distasteful to God Almighty.

Here is the second reason why they seek to make a show in the flesh, why they constrain you to be circumcised, and why they shy away from the offense of the cross. The reason

is that they are easy to buy off. They are easy to bribe. They are easy to turn their heads. They are not bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. They sell out and are covetous men.

Here is the other reason, *“That they may glory in your flesh.”* You are just merchandise to them. I will tell you this; everything a man does is for a reason. If what he is doing is not supremely done for the glory of God and the good of those to whom he is ministering, then it is done for his own glory.

If he does it with no thought of his own comforts and no thoughts for his own luxury and no thought for his own fame and popularity, then he does it for the glory of God. If he doesn't it is for his own glory, his own praise and for his own recognition.

I will tell you this, most of the religious organizations with which I have been afflicted and those that I know something about, all of the show and the efforts are for the glory of their leader. You find out who the leader is. Find out in whose name they operate. Find out whose name they promote. Find out whose name is always before you and you will find out what their objective is.

Paul summed up his ministry in this way. In Acts Chapter 20, he was ministering to the elders of the church at Ephesus and said; *“Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”*

He said, *“I leave you now and I commend you to God and to His Word.”* That is a good place to leave a man isn't it? It is good to be commended unto God. Don't commend him unto an earthly counselor, commend him to God. Be commended unto the Word of God *“Which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance in the kingdom of God.”*

Watch this next verse: He has talked about the folks who make a grand, fair show in the flesh. They constrain people to do things. They are constantly seeking the approval of men. They say, *“Be circumcised, be baptized, and do all of these things.”* They are fearful of the offense of the cross.

They don't want to suffer persecution for this hated Gospel of God's grace. The reason they do this is that they want to glory in your flesh. They have to glory in something. Paul said in verse 14, *“God forbid.”*

That is the closest that Paul ever came to cursing. That is an oath that he often used. *“God forbid that I should glory (in myself, in my flesh, in my accomplishments, obtainments or in my ancestry and that I should glory) except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ our Lord.”* That is my glory; that is my chief glory, the cross of Jesus Christ.

What does Paul mean by the cross of Christ, when he says, *“God forbid?”* Everybody is going to glory in something. Everybody is going to have an objective, a motive, something that is important to him, most important. Paul said, *“That which is most important to me is the glory of my Lord, and the glory of His redemptive work.”*

What does he mean by the cross of Christ? Well, he certainly doesn't mean that cross of wood on which Christ died. He said, *“God forbid that I should glory except in the cross.”* He is not talking about that cross of wood.

He's not talking about all of the crosses that are on top of church buildings, or hanging around people's necks, or symbols of religion everywhere. We don't glory in that at all; most of the time that is an embarrassment because it is idolatry.

What Paul said, *“I glory in the cross”*; I preach the cross; he is referring to all that Jesus Christ did in the redemption of His people. The cross on Calvary is but the top stone of God's building. Everything that God did leading to the cross and everything God did leading from the cross has been fulfilled and completed and is heads-up in that cross. That is what Paul is talking about.

Paul is using the word “cross,” the death of Christ on Calvary to sum up all of what God did in preparation for the cross and the death of His Son, and all that resulted from the death of His Son. In other words, when we preach Christ crucified, when we preach the cross of Christ, we are preaching Christ who was foreordained before the foundation of the world as our Lamb slain.

You see, Christ dying on that cross was no sudden impulsive decision on the part of God. *“He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* Before there was a sinner; there was a Saviour. He was our Surety in the Everlasting Covenant. His blood is the blood of an Everlasting Covenant.

All the way through the Old Testament, those pictures and promises and prophecies point to the cross. You see; that Passover Lamb in Egypt is Christ. *“Christ is our Passover.”* That Smitten Rock is *“Christ smitten and afflicted of God.”* Do you see that?

When we preach the cross, we are preaching Christ incarnate. God became a man. In order to die on the cross, He had to have a body. Only a man can die. God can't die. So, Christ had to become a Man.

You have the virgin birth, born without sin, born without a human father. You have God, *"God was made flesh and dwelt among us."* We are preaching the cross because He had to become a man in order to die on the cross.

We are preaching, His redemptive work in dying. We are not only preaching that, but also the High Priest entering the Holiest with His blood that was set forth as the propitiation and a mercy seat. *"Christ is not entered into the Holy Place made with hands but into heaven itself."*

There was Christ's resurrection, *"If He be not risen, we are yet in our sins."* His resurrection is as important as His death. His death without His resurrection means nothing. *"God raised Him from the dead."* God set His approval on all that Christ is and all that Christ has done.

Not only that, but when we preach the cross, the crucified, risen, ascended, exalted Redeemer intercedes for us. He prays for us. Paul says; *"God forbid that I should glory in the cross of Jesus Christ"* is talking about all the glorious person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people.

My friends, this is our glory. It is not in our numbers, it is in our Redeemer. It is not in our strength; it is in His strength. It is not in our accomplishments; it is in His accomplishments. This is our glory; this is our hope; this is our Gospel. This is our salvation and to glory in anything else is to reveal a total ignorance of God's glory.

One day Moses said, *"Lord, show me your glory."* The Lord God said, *"I will cause all My goodness to pass before you. My goodness is My glory. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."*

God's glory is not in our toys. God's glory is in His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, I say this to you; *"I glory in the cross of Jesus Christ."* He is my message. The person and work of God's dear Son is in the full redemption, justification, sanctification, and keeping of all believers.

Without the Christ of the cross your religion is like a heaven without a sun; it is all darkness. It is like a lamp without oil; no light. It is like a stove without fire; no warmth. It is like a profession of religion; without hope.

I will tell you this; God's true preachers are not seeking to make a fair show in the flesh. They are not puppets of men. God's preachers do not constrain you to be circumcised, baptized or to do anything but close with Jesus Christ.

God's true preachers are not seeking their own personal welfare and benefits and glory. They are not slaves of self. They are servants of God Almighty. Their message is "*Christ and Him crucified.*" They delight in that message and glory in that message. They are never weary of preaching that message.

Their methods and means are not carnal and fleshly. Their methods and means are spiritual. They preach the Gospel and wait on God and look to God.

Their one objective is not to make a name for themselves, but that you might have in Christ, a new name. Their one objective is that "*Christ be formed in you*" and that you come to Him and not to them. They know that in coming to them, nothing of eternal value will be accomplished, but coming to Him, you have all things.

Their glory is not in their accomplishments. They know that without Him "*they can do nothing.*" Paul said, "*I am not one wit behind the chief apostle, though I be nothing.*" He said, "*I labored more abundantly than you all: Yet, not I but Christ in me.*" Our glory is in His grace.

Let me give you four things and I will close this message. Are you listening? Oh, how we need somebody to tell the truth to this generation. How we need somebody to call men back to the Word of God. We have played games so long that we are completely enamored with our games.

We have played with the toys and traditions of religion so long that we mistake them for the real thing. Why did Paul glory in the cross? Why did he glory in this glorious person and work of Jesus Christ?

First, Paul gloried the cross because of the person and work of Jesus Christ a the full display of the character of God Almighty. Would you know God?

Don't go to the Law. Some people say, "Well, the Law is the summary of the character of God." It is not! There is no mercy in the Law. "*God is merciful.*" There is no love in the Law; "*God is love.*" There is no grace in the Law.

You won't find any grace in the Law. The Law is hard, cold, and demanding. Only in Christ will you see the full summary of God's character. God is Just; God is Holy; God is Righteous and God is Love. God is Grace and God is plenteous in mercy. You will find that at the cross and nowhere else.

Second, Paul saw in the person and work of Jesus Christ the actual putting away of sin. Sin is hard to put away. The Jewish sacrifices wouldn't do it. Repentance won't do it. Hell won't put sin away. *"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."*

What will put sin away? *"He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."* He bore our sin in His body on the tree and brought us to God.

Third: Paul saw in the cross of Christ, in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the sting of death removed. If you know Christ, you don't have to be afraid to die because you have already died in Him. Death is only sleep.

He called it *"sleep."* It is not death. *"O death, where is your sting?"* It is piercing the heart of my Lord on Calvary's cross and no sting is left for me. The sting of death is sin. If He paid the sin debt and put it away then I don't have to be afraid.

I don't have to be afraid of death or judgment because Christ was judged for me. *"There is no judgment to them who are in Christ."*

Fourth: He saw in the person and work of Christ, the believer's full entrance into the presence of God. *"Because I live, you shall live."* He saw in the person and work of Christ as His own death unto the world. He said, *"The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."* I don't need it and I am crucified to the world. They can't have me.