

The Cross of Christ, My Glory

Sunday, December 6th, 1987

Galatians 6:14

“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.”

If you want to follow the message in your Bible, I want to invite you to turn to Galatians 6:14. My subject today is “THE CROSS OF CHRIST, MY GLORY.”

Many years ago, the hymn writer wrote these words:

In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering over the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers around that cross sublime.

When the woes of life over take me
When hopes deceive and fears annoy,
Never shall the Lord forsake me
He gives me peace and joy.

My friend, the cross is the purpose of God. It is the purpose of God. The Scripture says, *“It pleased God to bruise Him.”* When Peter was speaking at Pentecost to those who had crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, he said; *“You did what God determined before to be done. Yes, you with wicked hands crucified the Lord of Glory.”* They carried out the decrees of God.

So, the cross is the purpose of God and then the cross of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Scriptures. Paul wrote in First Corinthians 15; *“He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”*

So, while the cross is the purpose of God and the cross is the fulfillment of Scriptures, it is also the way of peace, *“For He made peace through the blood of His cross.”* Our peace with God is not secured by something we have done. But, Christ made peace for us. *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”*

The cross is the only hope of forgiveness and the remission of sin. For Paul wrote in Hebrews 9, *“Without the shedding of blood, (there is no forgiveness) there is no remission (without the shedding of the blood of Christ)”* and there is no forgiveness for anyone. We have in Him, forgiveness, and redemption from our sins.

The cross is the preacher's theme. Paul wrote, "*We preach Christ and Him crucified.*" That is what he is saying in my text. I told you to turn to Galatians 6:14. This is what the apostle is saying, the cross is my theme; the cross is my message, the cross is my Gospel.

He says, "*God forbid that I should glory save (or except), in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.*" In other words, this great apostle made a clean sweep of all other grounds of boasting, all other grounds of bragging, all other reasons to glory, and he declares that it is the object of his delight and it is the cross of Jesus Christ.

The only hope of my soul before God is not my works or my deeds, religion or heritage. The only hope of my soul before God is the cross and Jesus Christ. "*God forbid that I should glory, (or boast, brag or take delight in anything) except the cross of Jesus Christ.*"

The one theme of my message as he said to the church at Corinth, "*I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*"

Now then, the apostle Paul might have gloried in his heritage; many people do. They glory in their family tree; they even glory in who their ancestors were. Paul was born high in religion. He could trace his heritage right back to Abraham. He said, "*I was born a Hebrew of Hebrews.*" He could have gloried in his heritage, but he did not. He gloried in Christ.

Paul might have gloried in his education, many do. Paul was a recognized scholar. Once, when he was on trial before the ruler of the land, this ruler from his throne, aware of this man's education, aware of this man's scholarship said to him; "*Paul, much learning hath made thee mad.*" Paul did not glory in his education. He gloried in Christ.

He might have gloried in his religious accomplishments; many people do. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was a man of great morality, a man of great enthusiasm, a man of great religious leadership, and a man of great zeal. This man chose to glory only in Christ.

Paul might have gloried in his apostleship. There were only 12 apostles. Perhaps he was the chief apostle. We do know this; he was the apostle to the Gentiles, the whole Gentile world. The message of the Gospel of the grace of God came to the Gentiles through this man, the apostle Paul. He still chose to glory in Christ.

Paul might have gloried in his writings. We do know that he wrote 13 of the new epistles in the New Testament, probably 14, if you include the book of Hebrews.

He might have gloried in his work of establishing churches. He was the first missionary to travel over the then-known world.

Paul might have gloried in his revelations. He had been to the third heaven. He said, *“Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. He said, “I heard things that are not lawful to utter; I saw things and I heard things. I was witnessed to things that I cannot even tell you about.”*

Paul might have gloried in his sufferings for Christ. I am always reading the account of someone who has suffered in prison, or somewhere else. They say that they have suffered for Christ. This man who knew God, and few do, this man who knew the living God, who received his Gospel directly from Christ himself, said; *“Immediately, when God revealed His Son to me; I conferred not with flesh and blood.”*

This man made a clean sweep of his heritage, of his background, of his education, of his religious accomplishments, of his apostleship, of his writings and works, of his revelations and of his sufferings.

He made a clean sweep as if to push them aside with his hands and say, “I declare unto you; I glory only in Christ.” *“God forbid that I should glory (in anything), except the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord.”* That is my glory! That is my delight and that is my Gospel, the cross of Jesus Christ My Lord. *“We preach Christ and Him crucified.”*

Now then, what is this cross in which Paul gloried? When he says, *“We preach Christ crucified,”* what is he talking about? When he says, *“The preaching of the cross is to them who are perishing, foolishness, and the preaching of the cross to those who are saved; it is the power and wisdom of God.”* What is he talking about? What is this cross?

Listen to me very carefully; he certainly is not talking about the material cross on which Christ died. That is not what he is talking about. He is not talking about Golgotha’s Hill, and he is not talking about that wooden cross that was erected on that hill where He was crucified between two thieves.

There is no saving power for any person in that tree. There is no efficacy or magic in the wooden cross itself. The cross of wood in which Jesus Christ was crucified is long gone, long rotted, long decayed, and long forgotten.

Let me ask you this, if the actual cross of Jesus Christ could be found by the fellows digging around down over there and they would dig down deep, just like they did when they found the ruins of Pompei and other old cities, what would you do with it? What would you do if they could come up with the actual cross on which Jesus Christ died? What would you do with it?

I will tell you what the average person would do with it. I am talking about the average preacher, the average religious person, and the average denomination. They would worship that cross. They would make a symbol of worship out of it.

I will tell you this, if that cross could be found, it would have to be destroyed. It would have to be burned up and totally destroyed, or men would worship it. They would fall down before it like idolaters.

That thing happened in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 18:4. You might say, "Wait a minute preacher." I am telling you the truth. Are you familiar with the story of Moses and the brazen serpent?

Do you remember that the people were bitten with fiery serpents and were dying? Moses went before God and he said; *"Lord, the people have been under this judgment, under this judgment of the fiery serpents and they have been bitten and they are dying. They need mercy and they need help."*

The Lord said to Moses; *"Make a brazen serpent in the likeness of the serpents that have bitten the people. Put it on a pole and lift it up between heaven and earth. Whosoever looketh on that brazen serpent, shall live."*

That brazen serpent was a picture of Christ. For, our Lord reached back and said; *"As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

Do you know what they did with that brazen serpent? They took it down from the pole and saved it. They made a shrine, an altar, and worshipped that thing. When Hezekiah came to power and you can read it yourself in 2 Kings 18:4, Hezekiah tore down the high places. He destroyed the idols and all the religious symbols. He took the serpent of brass that Moses made and ground it to powder, and as it is recorded in the inspired Word of God, called it *"A worthless piece of brass."*

Let me tell you something now and listen to me carefully; if you could find the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified 2,000 years ago and brought it into my presence I would tell you, it is a worthless piece of wood. This piece of wood cannot help you, give you any hope, cannot give you any powers and it cannot save your soul. It is Christ that saves, and not the block of wood.

Paul did not glory in that material cross. He did not glory in that old rugged cross. Paul gloried in the Christ of the cross. We are not worshipping wood; we are worshipping the Lord, the living, sovereign Lord. You need to learn that!

It is so easy, so natural, and so damning to be an idolater. That is Satan's trickery. That is his subtlety and that is his craftiness today. Paul is not talking about these symbolic crosses on church steeples.

You see them everywhere. I was driving down the highway just a few days ago in West Virginia. I saw three crosses on the hill. I looked up there and said, "Who put that there, why did he put it there, and what is it there for?"

Those crosses have no saving or redeeming power. These crosses on church steeples and hillsides and around people's necks are superstition. You might as well wear a rabbit's foot. Here is one preacher that will tell you the truth. You might as well wear a rabbit's foot around your neck as to wear a cross around your neck.

The power to save is not in a symbol, it is in a person. The power is in a living God. We laugh about people who break mirrors, throw salt over their shoulders, put horseshoes on their barns and are always talking about walking under a ladder.

When you wear that religious symbol, you are being superstitious and are as much of an idolater as those who wear a rabbit's foot. You are not worshipping a person; you are worshipping a symbol.

There is a world renowned preacher that I saw on television just moments ago who carries a large cross made out of 4x4 wood. This piece of wood is about 8 feet long and 4 feet wide. He carries this piece of wood all over the world. This is idolatry! People gather around that cross and they hold to that cross and they hold to that man. It is Satan's subtlety and craftiness. It is paganism and it is idolatry!

I wish people could see that. Paul is not giving glory to symbols, signs, and superstition. He gloried in Christ who died on the cross.

One hymn writer wrote these words years ago:

Let others who will praise the cross of the Christ
The Christ of the cross is my theme.
While we must cherish His death on the cross
It is the Christ of the cross that redeems.

The cross has no saving power. It is just like the wine and the bread at the Lord's Table. This is a memorial supper. This is a symbol and this is a picture of Christ. Christ is the one who saves.

In a word or two, Paul said this; *"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ."* Do you know what he is referring to? He is not referring to that block of wood. He is not referring to all of those symbols that we have around everywhere and it is not the superstitious crucifixes. What he is talking about refers to the great atonement that Christ accomplished on that cross.

God said in Leviticus 17:11, *"The life of the flesh is in the blood."* It is not in the wood; it is not in the symbol, but is in the blood. The Scripture says, *"I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement."*

Do you know what the word atonement means? It means to atone for something, or make it right. Atonement is three words, (at one ment). We are at-one-ment with God. Where is that atonement? *"It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."* In Christ, we are one with God. We are one in His person and one in His work.

When Paul says, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ,"* he is referring to reconciliation. Do you know what reconciliation is? It means to be reconciled. We were reconciled to God by Christ's death on the cross. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."*

Did you know that God is at war with sin? God is at war with evil men. Did you know that there is warfare between heaven and earth? Why did God talk about, *"Peace on earth and good will toward men?"* He did not say, "among men," He said, *"toward men."*

There is warfare between the holiness of heaven and the horrible evil of earth. In Christ, God reconciled or made peace with men. *"Therefore, being justified by Christ, we have peace with God."* God was in Christ reconciling enemies to Himself. You do not reconcile friends.

People talk about God being in love with the world, and God is the friend of the world, and the world is a friend of God. Why did Christ die? Why did God have to reconcile the world to Himself if the world is so in love with God, and God is so in love with the world? Why did He have to reconcile it?

You do not reconcile friends. You reconcile enemies. They are people who are separated and people who are apart. People who are at war are the ones who are reconciled. That is what the cross of Christ did; it reconciled God to sinners.

The cross also refers to substitution. Isaiah 53:4 through 6 says this; *“He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.”*

My friends, if you want to know the Gospel, it is the Gospel of substitution. Christ took our place on the tree. He died in our stead. It is over and it is done, the debt is paid.

Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owe
Sin has left a crimson stain
He (by Himself) washed it white as snow.

There is no reason to go back to the place of condemnation. You will not find a prisoner visiting the jail before he serves his term. There is no need for me to go back to the place of condemnation, because there is no condemnation now in Jesus Christ my Lord.

Paul refers also to the sin offering that enabled God to be Just and Justifier. *“God forbid that I should glory save in the cross.”* He is talking about a sin offering. Romans 3:26 says this; *“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”* In the death of Christ, God has declared His holiness. In the death of Christ God has declared His righteousness. In the death of Christ, God has declared His justice.

By the death of our substitute, the holiness, righteousness and justice of God is so honored and so satisfied that almighty God, because Christ died on the cross, can now be both just and Justifier. He said, *“I am a Just God and a Saviour.”*

Paul wrote in Hebrews, *“He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”* Paul did not glory in a material cross. Paul did not glory in a superstitious symbol. Paul gloried in a glorious person, the work of that person and the redemption that He accomplished. He gloried in the One who died on that cross.

The cross is the place of death, yet from it came eternal life. The cross is an emblem of shame, yet from it, God is glorified. The cross condemns, yet by Him, we are pardoned. The cross is over and it is done and it is finished. God let it fall on the ground and decay. Christ lives and He lives forever!

I want you to hear me; you may never hear me again, but you hear me now; we do not worship Mary whose body God used to bear Christ into the world as an infant. We do not worship at the cradle where He laid. We do not worship the land in which He lived nor do we call it a “holy land.” It is no more holy than Huntington, West Virginia.

We do not worship the cross of wood on which He died. We do not worship the tomb in which He laid. This is idolatry; this is paganism and not one step ahead of the idolaters who dance around a fire and worship a golden calf.

We worship the Eternal, Almighty, Living God who came to this earth in the person of His Son and tabernacled among us. *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,”* the exact image of God’s person and the brightness of His glory.

We worship Him. We praise Him. We love Him. We serve Him for His redeeming work on that cross of Calvary. That is what Paul is saying; “God forbid, God deliver me from all glorying or boasting, worshipping or taking delight in anything.”

I do not care what it is; I do not care how religious it is or how pretty or appealing it is. I do not care about anything but *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

You see; the preaching of the cross is the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The preaching of the cross is the preaching of the free and full justification accomplished by Jesus Christ.

This Gospel is not just a Gospel of Christ on a cross; this Gospel is the Gospel of His eternity. If He is not very God of very God, it did not do any good for Him to die on a cross. Do you see what I am saying? His Eternity is as important as His suffering. We are not redeemed just by the suffering, but by Him who suffered. Having an infinite character and an infinite name, He is able to accomplish infinite glory.

You see; the Gospel is the Gospel not only of His eternity, but is the Gospel of His incarnation. He had to become a man to die. God cannot die. The Gospel is the Gospel of His holy life. We needed righteousness as well as a Justifier. The Gospel is the

Gospel of His sacrificial death. The Gospel is the Gospel of His resurrection. *“If Christ be not raised, you are yet in your sins.”*

I see crucifixes on walls and they have Christ still hanging on the cross. Hey, wait a minute! If He is still hanging on that cross, He is not my Saviour. If He is still hanging on the cross, He did not save anyone. He has to be raised by His resurrection. The Father is saying, “I accept what He did. I accept Who He is.”

The Gospel, you see, is not only the Gospel of His death, but it is the Gospel of His resurrection. Not only is it the Gospel of His resurrection, but it is of His exaltation. We have to have a Mediator. That Mediator has to be in a place not made with hands, but in heaven itself, at the right hand of the Majesty in glory.

The Gospel is the Gospel of His return. He is coming back! He said, *“I go away but I will come again and receive you unto Myself.”* If He does not come again, I will never come forth from the tomb.

Not one single part of this Gospel can do without the other. This Gospel is complete. It is not just a Gospel of a block of wood. It is the Gospel of the eternal, incarnate God, of a holy, righteous life, of a sacrificial death, of a glorious resurrection, of a great exaltation, of a complete, sufficient intercession and of a glorious return.

I know the reaction of the world, the religious world. I am talking to this religious world. Just about the whole world is religious today. Do you know what the reaction of the religious world is and what I have been preaching? It is foolishness! *“The preaching of the cross is to them who perish foolishness.”* They think it is sheer nonsense, a pack of foolishness.

What is it to those who believe? What is the reaction of those who believe? *“The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is the power and wisdom of God.”* In that Gospel I see the full revelation of the saving mercies and grace of God, the fulfillment of all the Scriptural sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacles, temples, atonement and all things. I see it!

Paul is saying, “Your shame is my glory.” Paul is saying, “Your foolishness is my wisdom.” Paul is saying, “Your weakness is my power.” Paul is saying, “Your despair is my hope.”

Well, in the death of Christ everything is brought to light. The attitude and spirit of all men is revealed. Everyone speaks of the cross. Man speaks and says; *“We will not have this man rule over us; crucify Him.”*

You say, "We don't hate God." The cross tells another story. You might say, "This world doesn't hate God." Well, stand at the cross. People might say that I do not have the right to judge. I am not judging the cross; He is judging.

The death of Christ draws away the mask of pretended religious and pretended love for God and the pretended holiness.

They cry to God and they gather themselves together. Man got his hands on Almighty God one time in all the history of the universe. They nailed Him to a cross. At the cross, the Law of God speaks and the Justice of God speaks.

Do you think that you know something about the holiness of God's Law? Go to the cross and you will see there the holiness of God. The cross tells us of the mercy and love of God in giving His Son to redeem sinners. God forbid that we should glory, except in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.