

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

by

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SERMON FIVE

“GLORYING IN THE CROSS”

Text: 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.”**

There were many things in which Paul might justly have gloried, looking at it from a human standpoint. *In the first place he was a Jew, and it meant something to be a Jew.* The Jew is a remarkable people with a great and glorious history. They were the chosen people of God, signally blessed of God and given a great mission to the rest of the world. You hear Paul saying, **“What advantage then hath the Jew . . . Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”** Certainly any Jew might have justly gloried in this.

More than that Paul was a Pharisee. **“If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law blameless.”**

We have somewhere gotten the idea that a Pharisee was a despicable sort of person. It is true that they were bitterly denounced by the Lord for their pride, hypocrisy, and for being sticklers for the letter instead of the spirit of the law. They were the religionists of their day. But in many respects they were wonderful people . . . they were highly educated, cultured and refined. Paul was one of the best educated men of his day. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest teachers of all time. Certainly many men would have gloried in this.

Paul might have gloried in the fact that he was one of the outstanding leaders among the Jews, recognized by all the nation for his ability and leadership. *He might have gloried in the fact that he was an apostle.* **“I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.”**

The apostles were the chosen group to whom the Lord made special revelation of the gospel and the great fundamental truths of the Christian religion. Paul said of himself, **“I knew a man (speaking of himself) who was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter.”**

He said of the gospel he preached, **“I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

So great and of such abundance were the revelations given unto him that he says, “**Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.**” How many men today glory in far less than this!

Paul might have gloried in his spiritual power. When he speaks of spiritual gifts and speaking in tongues he reminds the church at Corinth that he spoke in tongues more than they all. He had power to cast out demons, heal the sick and make the lame to walk.

In fact he had such power “**so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.**” Who among us would not glory if we had such power?

Paul might have gloried in the fruits of his ministry. For no man ever preached to the multitudes as Paul did. He founded many of the greatest churches of the Christian era and multiplied thousands were saved under his ministry.

If he had lived in our day he would have been written up in all the denominational papers and extolled to the skies as the world’s great orator, theologian and missionary.

Yet Paul brushed all these things aside and said, “**God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

The cross meant more to Paul than all else in the world. However, it wasn’t the cross itself in which Paul gloried, but it was the cross as the symbol of the crucified Christ who died on that cross. His glorying was in what the Christ of the cross had done for him and meant to him.

He says of himself, “**I was the chief of sinners.**”

But one day on that road to Damascus, with orders from the Sanhedrin to persecute unto the death all Christians, he met Jesus; he came face to face with the Christ of the cross, who so completely changed everything in his life that from that day till his death nothing was ever the same again.

O the transformation in that Pharisee’s heart and life when the power of the cross got hold of him! From that day on the cross was the center of everything to him.

“When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

WHY DID PAUL GLORY IN THE CROSS?

I. Because the Cross is the Only Adequate Revelation of God

Man never knew God till he knew him through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Man never would have known God had it not been for the cross. On the cross there was the revelation of God that man never would have found by human reasoning, by man's wisdom, research or understanding.

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

In creation and in nature there is revealed the power of God, in a measure, the glory of God. But in the cross is revealed the heart of God. **“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”** But the fact still remains that **“no man hath seen God at any time the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him.”**

- I have stood in the presence of some of earth's highest mountain peaks and gazed up at their towering heights and exclaimed, “What a revelation of the power of God.”

- I have stood by that great gorge at Niagara Falls, and heard the deafening roar of its waters as they thundered over that fall, and felt the earth tremble underneath my feet, and said, “Oh, the power of God.”

- I have witnessed an electrical storm at sea. With that display of lightning the heavens were so illuminated and charmed with it that I stood transfixed. Bolts of lightning streamed across the sky in every direction and burst like giant rockets. I stood in awe and said, “Oh, the power of God.”

- My mind has literally been staggered at the power released by the splitting of the atom. Scientists tell us that this is the power that holds matter together. But the Word of God says, **“All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER.”**

Oh, the mighty power of our God and His Christ! But the power of nature is but a child's play demonstration of the power of the One who could take His stand in the beginning on nothing, and said, **“Let there be,”** and the universe springs into being out of nothing.

The universe reveals the power of God. But the cross reveals the heart of God.

I have stood on mountain peaks and viewed scenes of nature about me, when it seemed that all below was one great canvass with God as the painter, and said, “Oh, the glory of God.” I have stood on the deck of an ocean liner and watched the sun go down into the sea and stood in awe in the presence of such glory of God. But only the cross has revealed the heart and nature of God.

1. *The cross is the only adequate revelation of the holiness of God.*

The cross reveals God's hatred of sin and the wrath of a holy God against sin. When we look at the cross and see Jesus dying there and remember that sin caused such a chasm between God and man that only the cross could bridge that chasm, we begin to realize that an awful thing sin is and feel constrained to cry out, "Oh, what holiness is God's to demand such a sacrifice as that to reconcile a holy God and a sinning race." **"For God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."**

If you believe that the cross is God's atonement for sin, then you must confess that sin is a terrible tragedy, an awful fact, a stark black reality, and that the holiness of God is a terrible thing. Surely you must realize that no man can stand in the presence of such holiness without being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and washed from his sins in His blood. This is why Paul said, **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God."**

2. *The inexorable justice of God is revealed in the cross.*

When the Son of God died on the cross, **"He who knew no sin was made to be sin."** The justice of God is so inexorable that, when His own Son is made to be sin, judgment must fall upon Him.

The justice of God cannot pass over sin. It must be punished, even in the person of His own Son. Sin must be judged. So we see God the Father turning His back on His own Son as He hangs upon the cross while the sun goes out in the sky, the moon and stars refuse to shine, and the darkness of hell settles around that cross.

The sword of justice and judgment is falling upon the sin of the race in the person of Jesus Christ, as He is made to be sin and sin is made a curse for us. Everything about the cross speaks of judgment.

- That darkness, so terrible that the howling mob steals away from the cross beating their breasts in horror is the **"outer darkness"** of hell.
- The earthquake speaks of the last final judgment when God says, **"Yet once more I shake, not the earth only, but also heaven."** It is a preview of the **"great day of wrath"** that is to come.
- The Son of God lifted up on the cross is the fulfillment of the type of the brazen serpent on the pole. For throughout the Bible the serpent is a type of sin and brass means sin under judgment.
- The crown of thorns upon His brow is no mere whim of a mob or device to add to His shame. It was all planned by the Father.

Thorns are a symbol of the curse. For when Adam sinned and fell God said, **"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."**

When the Son of God wore the crown of thorns it meant that He had become a curse that we might be free from the curse. **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."**

The cry, **“I thirst,”** *is the same cry as that of the rich man in hell:* **“Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”** It was the thirst of hell. The cry out of that midnight darkness, **“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me,”** is the cry of a soul abandoned of God, and sinking into the depths of hell.

3. *We see the love of God revealed in the cross.*

Because of the deep seated consciousness of sin in the human heart, and because of the sufferings of the human race; men who know not our Christ have always thought of God as being angry with them; as a God whose anger must be appeased some way.

The world today thinks of God in the same way and out of that feeling grows the whole system of salvation by works.

Man feels that he must do something to win the favor of God—that he must atone in some way for his sins. Because of this misconception of God men are taught to do penance, make long pilgrimages to shrines, offer sacrifices and afflict their bodies in order to appease an angry God.

The cross alone speaks of the love of God for lost men. **“For God so loved the world**—a world that had turned its back on Him and trampled His love, His law, His mercy and His grace under its feet—**that He gave His only begotten Son**” to die on the cross for this lost sinning world. The cross of the love of God.

Jesus said, **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”**

That is the limit to which human love can go. **“But God commendeth (proves) His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Unsaved friend, has the devil ever tried to tell you that God is angry with you, or that God does not love you? Just take one look at the cross and see Christ there bearing your sins in His own body, dying for you.

Christian, in the hour of sorrow and suffering, has the devil ever tried to tell you that God doesn't care? that God does not love you? How many times has the devil tried to insinuate that to me!

But every time I look to the cross and shout, “You are a liar! I know God loves me. The cross tells me so!”

II. Paul Gloried In The Cross Because It Gives Absolute Assurance of the Forgiveness Of Sins

Does the devil ever bring your sins up before you in all their ugliness and blackness, and point an accusing finger at you and say, “You are not forgiven of your sins?”—not only the sins you committed before you were saved, but those you have committed since that time? Of course he does.

How many times in the quiet alone, or in the wee hours of the night has the devil dragged my sins before me. And I have found myself wondering if, after all, my sins are really forgiven.

Why should God forgive me when I rebelled against Him and trampled his love under my feet, deliberately turned my back on Him and chose the wrong way. Yes, **“We have all like sheep gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.”**

Then why should God forgive our sins? The answer is in the cross of Jesus Christ.

When the devil brings my sins before me I remember that, when I was a little eleven-year-old boy, I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Saviour and sin-bearer. Since that time I have sinned many times, but have come and confessed them to God, often in bitter tears, and have turned to the Book of God and claimed His promise: **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses from all sin.”** For God has said, **“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

A woman came to me once about an awful sin of her girlhood.

She said, “It has been rising up like a ghost all these years to haunt and torture me.”

I asked her if she had ever confessed it to God. She said, “Yes, ten thousand times.”

I said, “You were forgiven the first time you sincerely repented of it and confessed it to God. But it is one of the favorite tricks of the devil to hold our sins over our heads like a club to discourage us and keep us from being worth anything in the service of the Lord. He will do it all of your life if you let him. Claim God’s promise of forgiveness and go in peace. You know that God will always honor faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.”

She saw it, and then and there claimed His promise and was delivered from the bondage of Satan and ever since has been a happy useful Christian. The cross assures us that our sins are forgiven. Then let the devil try as he may to accuse us before God, we can say with Paul, **“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect; it is God that justifieth.”** Let us take our stand behind the cross; lay all our sins upon Him and remember that the cross says they are all taken away forever.

This is what Paul meant when he said, **“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”**

In this statement he challenges the world, the flesh and the devil to try to bring Him back into condemnation again. In effect he is saying, **“Come on, you accuser of the brethren; come all you ungodly world; come on all youimps of hell; come on, drag out every sin of my life. I take my stand by and place my hope in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the cross says my sins are forgiven.”**

So we can say with Paul, **“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God.”**

Where? Hear it! **“Through our Lord Jesus Christ,”** for He has **“made peace through the blood of His cross.”**

Thank God for the cross.

III. Paul Gloried In the Cross Because By It We Overcame the Devil

Does the devil ever tempt you? Oh, how many times and in how many ways he comes! What do you do when you face temptation, child of God? Do you try to meet the devil in your own strength? No! A thousand times no! Don't ever imagine that anyone is a match for the devil in his own strength. He is still the most subtle of all the beasts that God has made.

Remember that, in our conflict with him, **“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world's darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness.”**

You will go down in this conflict every time you try to meet the devil in your own strength.

The Word of God says, **“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.”**

So, when the devil comes in all of his subtleness and power, take refuge under the cross; turn the eyes of faith to the cross.

Where is there a child of God who hasn't had the experience that Paul tells about in the seventh chapter of Romans?

“For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate that I do . . . Now it is no more I that doeth it, but sin that dwelleth in me . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Then we hear him saying, **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** He found victory in the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in looking to the cross.

Not only is there victory here and now over Satan in the cross, but, thank God, one day the Lord of glory is coming back and will take that cross and drive the devil into the bottomless pit.

John said, **“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand, and he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.”**

I believe that key is the cross of Jesus Christ. With His cross He will one day bar the door on the devil and will take charge of His domain and then **“the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”**

With a hope held out like that no wonder that Paul could say, **“And hope maketh not ashamed,” “for we are saved by hope.”** By that God does not imply any uncertainty about the thing hoped for. It simply means that here and now we do not come into possession of all that God has for us.

Out yonder there is hope of complete victory. **“For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”** Yes, the last enemy is death! But, thank God, in the cross He has destroyed him who has the power of death.

I think that must have been what Christ meant when, as He faced the cross, He said, **“The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.”**

The **“Seed of the Woman”** and the serpent had met in deadly combat at the cross. The hour of the ages had come. Jesus was saying, **“There is not an inch of common ground between us. It is a battle unto death.”** But, thank God, that day on Golgotha’s hill the **“Seed of the woman”** put His heel on the serpent’s head and ground it into the dust.

IV. We Glory In the Cross Because It Will Take Us All to Heaven

One day it will take all to heaven who have trusted in its atoning sacrifice, without the loss of a single one.

O blessed hope! He has said, **“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am there ye may be also.”**

Hear the Word of God!

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

In that home over yonder I shall be like Him.

Hear the Word of God!

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

“When by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place;
Just to be there and to look on his face
Will through the ages be glory for me.”

A preacher friend of mine tells this story.

He said that, while he was in a meeting at Palestine, Texas, he and the pastor went out to the old Pilgrim Baptist Church established in Texas. They visited the little graveyard by the old church. On one side white people were buried and on the other Negroes.

As they walked through there looking at the dates on the gravestones, the pastor stopped and said, “I have just been thinking what is going to happen here on the morning of the resurrection.”

My friend said, “What do you think will happen?”

He replied, “I think, when the trumpet of the Lord sounds, this white crowd over here will come out singing, ‘Amazing Grace,’ and over here this crowd will come out singing ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.’ But bless God, they will all be in the same crowd. There won’t be any separation there!”

No wonder Paul said, **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Praise God for the cross!

But before anyone can glory in the cross, he must first confess Him who died on the cross as Saviour and Lord, and come under the blood. He must let that blood wash away his sins. Sinner, come to that “fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins.” Plunge yourself beneath its crimson flood and be washed whiter than snow.

Child of God, if you would glory in the cross, there is but one way.

Lose your life in Him and for Him.

“Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”

O, redeemed of God, if you would know the glory of the cross, put your all on the altar for Him.

~ end of sermon 5 ~

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