

**"WHAT IS YOUR BOAST?"**

Galatians 6:11-14

A sightseeing bus was making the rounds through Washington, D.C., and the driver was pointing out spots of interest. As they passed the Pentagon building, he mentioned that it cost taxpayers millions of dollars and that it took a year and a half to build. While everyone was looking at it, a little old woman piped up in a boastful kind of way: "In Peoria we could have built the same building for less, and it would have been completed even sooner than that!" The next sight on the tour was the Justice Department building. Once again the bus driver said that it cost so many millions to build and took almost two years to complete. The woman repeated her boast: "In Peoria we would have done it for less money, and it would have been finished much sooner." The tour finally came to the Washington Monument, and the driver just passed slowly by without saying a word. The old woman was curious. "Hey," she shouted to the driver, "what's that tall white building back there?"

The driver looked out the window, waited a minute and then said, "Search me, lady. It wasn't there yesterday." [Source Unknown](#).

Boasting.... Do you know someone or some people who tend to boast more than others? They boast about their accomplishments; they boast about their kids' accomplishments; they boast about, well, you fill in the blank. The Apostle Paul says in verse 14 of our passage, "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you find yourself every boasting about Jesus?

Paul's admonition to himself was to only boast in the cross of Christ and yet it wasn't always like this for Paul. As a matter of fact, his name was Saul before he became known as Paul and he wasn't a follower of Jesus Christ but rather a persecutor of Christians. We read in Acts 8:1 these incriminating words after a follower of Jesus by the name of Stephen is stoned to death, "And Saul approved of their killing him ["him" referring to Stephen]".

We read in Philippians 3:4b-6 these words from Paul in reference to himself and the things he used to boast about. He said, "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrew; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless." This is how Saul, turned Paul, used to be. And so the question I would like us to consider is this: What are we boasting about? Or another way to say it is: What are we proud of?

We have been looking at our passage from Galatians for several weeks and we have said that a Christian is one who focuses, who is moved by, who centers his or her thinking on, who boasts on the cross of Jesus Christ. Bottom line- this is what distinguishes us as a Christian. And yet I think there is a misunderstanding about all of this.

I remember sharing what is called "Roman's Road of Faith"- verses from Romans, chapters 1, 3 and 5 with someone and then asking that person if they had ever asked Jesus Christ into their life and they said they had and I asked them to share with me about their experience and they really couldn't. They just said they believed. And this same person who said they were a believer wasn't involved in the church fellowship in any way- they didn't attend church, they didn't fellowship with other believers, there was no manifestation of what they said they believed being put into action. There was no connection with what they said to what they did. Do you get the picture? Paul even admonishes believers in Hebrews 10:24 to not neglect being a part of the community of faith when he says, "And let us consider how to provoke one another, to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another." I've said it before and I'll say it again just because I go to church doesn't make me a Christian anymore than if I live in a garage it makes me a car.

So the question remains- What is your boast? If you boast in what you do rather than the cross of Christ, then you know where you stand. If you boast more in the things you have than in the cross of Christ, you have a pretty good idea what is your boast.

Let me put it this way: "I counted dollars while God counted crosses. I counted gains while He counted losses! I counted my worth by the things gained in store. But he sized me up by the scars that I bore. I coveted honors and sought for degrees; He wept as He counted the hours on my knees. And I never knew 'til one day at a grave. How vain are these things that we spend life to save!"—Selected

The point is this- when a person sees even a glimpse of the reality of what happened when Jesus died on the cross, then everything else looks pale in comparison and even loses significance.

And so Paul boasts or glories in the cross. But why? All because of what it has done to him, and what the cross has done is crucified the world

to him. But what does this mean? What it means is Jesus Christ and the cross has delivered Paul from the evil world. Paul would be the first to say that this world is not his home or even his final destination. He would say he is but passing through and that heaven is his true home.

The world and all that is of **this world creates two critical tensions- and those who are like Paul and live this "crucified" relationship must try and cope with them.** First, **there is the tension of living In this world with all of its powers that be, principles, and schemes.** For people like Paul who answers to an alien authority- God, they see contrary standards and live counter-culture to the way the world sees it. Those who seek to boast in the cross live lives of freedom from the world and dare to serve neighbors in need, they dare to share about the one who saved them and gave them life- a life eternal, they seek to make a difference in the lives of people who are hurting and broken and in pain and who stand up for the downtrodden. And taking such a stand can bring

Christians into conflict and affliction. Oh, I understand that when you read about Paul it is easy to say that we will never, nor can ever be like this great hero of the faith who lived a pretty adventurous life. And yet even for the “ordinary” Christian, there is no way to avoid the pressures, or even the pointed confrontations with the world, or a subtle tension, or even an opposition that comes up every once in a while. For example, *The News and Observer* that covers the Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill area reported the following on February 15, 2010, “A Wake County middle school teacher has been suspended following complaints about disparaging comments she made about her class, Christianity and Southern culture on her Facebook page. Melissa Hussain, an eighth-grade teacher at West Lake Middle School in Apex, wrote on her Facebook page that it was a “hate crime” that students left a Bible on her desk and how she “was able to shame her kids” over the incident. Her Facebook page included comments from friends saying that the parents of Hussain’s students were “bigoted, stupid and uncaring.”

The interesting thing is that as long as people remain merely religious, well then, Christians can be buddy-buddies with the world. For you see the world puts up with and maybe even accepts a lot of what is represented by religion- its rituals, its forms, its traditions. The people who were in opposition to Paul in Galatia were caught up in pushing for a ritual like circumcision which would help them to side-step persecution. And yet being crucified to the world is not synonymous with being religious. Being crucified to the world holds us to a different authority, that authority being Jesus Christ by whose cross helps us take on a different relationship to the world- a world that we are **in** but not **of**. So when the conflict or challenge comes our way will we meet the conflict and face it honestly, taking a stand for Christ or will we cave in and compromise? So again, what is your boast?

And yet **there is a second tension by living in the world and this is an internal tension.** This tension might rise up as we anticipate a conflict with the world, or during a clash with the world, or maybe following

an incident. And this internal tension rears its ugly head because even though we, as followers of Christ, have participated in Christ's death, we are still vulnerable to temptations, we are not exempt to fears, to times of uncertainty or even questioning our own commitment. I mean haven't you ever had those times when you have prayed, and prayed, and prayed some more and you felt your prayers were not heard or were even useless? Hasn't your faith ever been tested and you felt that God was distant or maybe what you were facing seemed so overwhelming that the despair seemed to challenge you as never before? And so you might even toy with the question, "Can I trust you, God?" Or you wonder if the world's values and systems might be acceptable after all? Or is God's grace really adequate to meet my needs? What I am trying to say is that living a "crucified" relationship to the world in no way makes a person immune, it doesn't stop or even lessen these lingering, human questions. As a matter of fact, a Christian being engaged in the conflicts of life, the tensions of life

might even heighten them. Even the great spiritual giants of the Christian faith have had to work through the inner tensions, the struggles, the despair and the questioning. One of the world's great spiritual writers, Henri Nouwen had to come through the desert experiences, the dark nights, for he wrote these words in his book *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom*, "This book is my secret journal. It was written during the most difficult period of extreme anguish, during which I wondered whether I would be able to hold onto my life. Everything came crashing down—my self-esteem, my energy to live and work, my sense of being loved, my hope for healing, my trust in God... everything. Here I was, a writer about the spiritual life, known as someone who loves God and gives hope to people, flat on the ground and in total darkness." And like Paul when things seemed the worst, when life and circumstances could leave you by the gutter, Nouwen knew that the Christian existence does not end in uncertainty or despair. Nouwen was able to move from anguish to freedom

all because of Christ. And it is with a sense of joy that Paul says in verse 14, "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christ delivered Paul from the world and Christ does the same for us. Jesus died so that, "Whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." For Christ does more, Christ gives us a power that is greater than the world. For we read these words from I John 4:4 and 5:4, "For the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" and "For whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith."

So what is your boast? What are you glorying in? There is really only two answers- either we boast or glory in the world, in one way or another. Or we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified unto us, and by which we have been delivered from so that we can share the everlasting glory with Christ. What is our answer? What is our boast? Amen.

## **"WHAT IS YOUR BOAST?"**

Galatians 6:11-14

Introduction: A sightseeing bus was making the rounds through Washington, D.C., and the driver was pointing out spots of interest...

Boasting... The Apostle Paul says in our passage, "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you find yourself every boasting about Jesus?

It wasn't always like this for Paul...      Acts 8:1

Philippians 3:4b-6

What distinguishes us as a Christian- we focus, are moved by, center our thinking, boast on the cross of Jesus Christ

Why does Paul boast or glory in the cross?

### **This world creates two critical tensions:**

First, **there is the tension of living \_\_\_\_ this world with all of its powers that be, principles, and schemes**

Being crucified to the world holds us to a different authority... we Are **IN** the world but not **OF** the world

A second **tension by living in the world and this is an \_\_\_\_\_ tension**

We are still vulnerable to temptations, not immune to fears and questioning

Conclusion: I John 4:4 & 5:4—"For the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" and "'For whatsoever is born of God conquers the world, and this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith."