

**"SET FREE"**  
Galatians 6:11-14

There is a story told of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, 'Why have you become a Christian?' He answered, 'Well, it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask which way to go?'" [Warren Webster, April, 1980, HIS, p. 13.](#)

Well, it is Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010 and we can go to the city of Medina in western Saudi Arabia, just north of Mecca and find where Muhammad is buried. And then we can travel to Jerusalem and find an empty tomb because the One that we gather here today to worship and praise could not be contained by death but rather 3 days after He hung from a criminal's cross He rose victorious from the grave.

And because of His death and resurrection we, too, are granted fullness of life and a life eternal.

I know, at the beginning of the service we greeted each other with the traditional beginning of an Easter Sunday Service where I said, "He is risen!" And you all replied, "He is risen, indeed." But today we conclude this sermon series entitled, "The Cross" that began the first Sunday of Lent, Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. For six Sundays we have been focusing in on what the Apostle Paul had to say to the church at Galatia and in particular Galatians 6:14 where Paul says, "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." And I know that today we want to focus on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, because that is what makes Easter the day that it is, and I say and preach that we could not have Easter if there were no Good Friday, and I say and preach that we do not linger at the cross because He is risen, but I want to go back to the cross today and stay there for a while.

And maybe you are saying, "But I didn't come to hear about the cross but about Easter and the resurrection." So let me tell you why I don't want to leave the cross just yet because I don't want anyone to leave this sanctuary today and have the cross be a stumbling block or be foolishness to anyone, to anyone!

The man, who wrote Galatians, the Apostle Paul, found the cross a stumbling block at one time. Think about this- the very idea that the Savior of the world should die on a criminal's cross, in a helpless state was ludicrous to Paul. Paul, before he became a follower of Jesus was known as Saul, a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians, this Paul believed, like so many others, that the Savior should be a great leader, a military leader, a charismatic leader who would rally the people Israel. But no, Jesus was born to peasant parents in a stable in Bethlehem and he worked with His Daddy in his carpentry shop, and Jesus wasn't trained to be a religious leader of the Jews as a Pharisee, like Paul was, and to top it off, this Jesus

was put to death on, of all things, a criminal's cross, well, all of this was a stumbling block to Paul. Let's just be honest- at one time all of this was not only ridiculous but blasphemy for Paul, at an earlier time. And because of all this and more, the man, the old Paul, the persecutor of the church of Christ, later on when he was standing before the Roman governor Festus and King Agrippa says in Acts 26:9, "Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." And what he previously despised the most was what? The cross. But now in Galatians 6:14 it is the cross that means everything to him. The cross was, emphasizing the word "was" a stumbling block to Paul and to so many others back in his day for he says in I Corinthians 1:23-24, "but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but [and this is so important what he says next] to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

And I do not want for anyone in this room today to have the cross be a

stumbling block or foolishness to you, because if the cross is a stumbling block or foolishness to you then Christ is a stumbling block or foolishness as well. And what Paul is saying in Galatians 6:14 is that the cross means absolutely everything to him, and I pray it does to you as well. Because the cross is, for Paul, the central point for him, it is the greatest thing in the world, the greatest thing that ever happened. For Paul, everything moves outward from the cross.

It is because of the cross that Paul is now at a new and different place in his life. For the cross put Paul to death, just like it did Jesus. Paul, in a real sense, was crucified with Christ, figuratively Paul was crucified with Christ for when Christ died, Paul died. And friends, this is true for anyone who believes and follows Christ- we die with Christ, we are under grace, and we are to start living a new kind of life, in Christ.

Friends, it is not enough to say, "Yes, I am a Christian." There are those who say they appreciate Jesus and they love His teachings, but that,

in no way, makes one a Christian. One can do and say that and be a Muslim. Why, you can do and say that and be a moralist. So you see, the cross is crucial, the cross is central and all flows from the cross. What Paul is saying is that the cross sets the standard as to how he, Paul, views himself. And because of the cross, Paul has a totally new and exciting view of himself. Because of the cross, I wonder, do we have a different view of ourselves?

If you have read any of what **Paul** has written **in the New Testament** you know that he **makes a distinction between the flesh and the spirit**. And if a person is looking at things in the "flesh" then they are looking at things minus the light of Jesus Christ through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But if a person is looking at things in the "spirit" then they see things in the light of Jesus Christ and are illuminated by the Holy Spirit. The person of the flesh says things like, "I'm a good person who tries to do good to others. I got it all worked out and so I don't need God, I don't

need the church that Jesus established. I can do it alone, I've got it together." But the person who is in the spirit says, like Paul in Romans 3:10, "There is no one who is righteous, not even one." And they agree with Paul in Romans 7:24 when he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" And they confirm what Paul says in Romans 7:15-20 when he writes, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me." You see Paul was seeing himself through the eyes of the cross and he has a new view of himself- he sees himself as a broken, sinful man who is in need of help, who is in need of Jesus because Jesus is the only one who can save Paul.

And Jesus saved him through His death on the cross. And that is why Paul says in Romans 5:6 & 8, "For while we were still weak [or still sinners] Christ died for us." Folks, before Paul accepted Christ he thought he was serving God. He was a leader of the Jewish religious leaders- a Pharisee. But when Paul came to Christ he was set free and he came to see that he wasn't serving or worshipping God. Paul was worshipping and serving himself. And that is why when Christ set Paul free, Paul had a new view of himself and he saw his old self where he was puffing himself up, being proud of his morality and his religion and what he knew. But it was all wrong, for he was his own god, he was spiritually dead and he wasn't serving God but himself. And so Paul saw the cross for what it truly was- a gift of God that could set him free- free from sin, free from death, free from fear, free from being a slave to the world and the ways of this world, free. On his own accord, Paul could not find freedom, as hard as he tried. And yet the amazing thing was he was bought out, he was bought with a price- a death on a cross; Paul was

set free. Paul, who used to be known as Saul was set free from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son of God, Jesus Christ. And because of what Christ did on the cross Paul had a totally different, totally new view of himself. And listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:1-2 about his new life all because of the cross that changed everything him. He says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." Friends, is it any wonder, then, that Paul is able to say in our passage that he is able to boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Folks, what else is there? The cross is everything. No wonder they call it Good Friday because everything comes out of that event and without the cross there is nothing. Without the cross there is no Easter.

Are we boasting in the cross or are we still boasting in ourselves?

Have we really seen the cross and what it stands for? Have we really seen ourselves in light of the cross?

If we really look at the cross we will see ourselves for who and what we really are- broken, sinful people who have been bought with a price and who are desperately in need of the Savior, Jesus Christ. And when we accept Christ we will have a new life, for the old is past, the new has come. And we will be set free. Free. Free; set free. Amen.

**"SET FREE"**

John 20:1-18; Galatians 6:11-14

Introduction: A story told of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa...  
 Medina, in western Saudi Arabia-where Muhammad is buried  
 Jerusalem- an empty tomb

Returning to the cross and staying there for a while because I don't want the cross to be a stumbling block to anyone!

Many believed, including Paul before he came to know Jesus, that the Savior, the Messiah should be...

Acts 26:9

I Corinthians 1:23-24—"...a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"

The cross is, for Paul...

**Paul, in the New Testament, makes a distinction between the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_**

Romans 3:10  
 Romans 7:24  
 Romans 7:15-20

Paul sees himself through the eyes of the cross and he sees...

Before Paul accepted Christ he thought he was serving God

Romans 8:1-2

Conclusion: When we accept Christ we have a new life, for the old is past, the new has come. And we will be SET FREE.