

“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

Galatians 6:14-15

So we're a week out from celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Traditionally we teach on Palm Sunday, but I've felt unction to teach explicitly on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is born out of my own experience. See I noticed something in my own heart the last months. I didn't know how to put words to it for a while, but I've been tired. Like physically tired, but soul level-tired too. So I'm trying to figure out what's wrong. Normally, this has been due to clear immoral living in my life, but by God's grace I've seen some things really dying in me and yet I'm still tired

In Luke 15 Jesus teaches a trilogy of parables. The first is a sheep that gets lost and the shepherd leaves 99 other sheep and goes after that one. The second is a coin that gets lost at home and a woman who sweeps the whole house in order to find the lost item. The he teaches on the famous story of the prodigal sons. The younger brother takes his father's inheritance, spends it on brothels and bars, and winds up feeding pigs, comes to himself, comes back to his father with his rehearsed speech, the father doesn't hear it, receives his son with joy and throws an enormous party. At which point, everyone is enjoying a party except for the elder brother. His father leaves the party and entreats him to come in, yet the brother says -look at how long I've served you, look at how I've never disobeyed your commands -I've never gotten even a goat, but for my brother who hooked up with hookers, you kill a calf

And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

So a sheep gets lost far from home and it's found. Rejoicing.

A coin gets lost in a home and it's found.

A younger brother who's made a mess of his life comes home and is forgiven and received with joy. He was lost and is found.

An older brother has never left home. He's kept all the commands, but refuses to come to the party. His father entreats him to let go of his self-righteousness and enjoy the feast before him. He's lost at home. And the story ends.

So I guess I want to confess before you my own tiredness is my elder brotherliness. I know how to rejoice in the gospel when I've clearly blown it, but what about when my sin's been domesticated for a while?

I want to hold out that this parable, and really the whole of the Christian life is about what we boast in, what we celebrate, what we

Beholding the Cross
The Blessings of the Cross
Boasting in the Cross

Beholding the Cross
Situation of Galatians

-men have come in and said believe in Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross AND be circumcised
-they are telling people you need something in addition to faith in Christ's work on your behalf
-all the right doctrine PLUS your current good works will save you

Modern Translation: Put all your hope in Jesus AND have good church attendance, daily Bible reading, right Bible translation, raise your hands at the right time, be well thought of in this church. If you look at your life and believe in Jesus AND see those things, you are saved.

Up to this point Paul has been dictating his entire letter to an amanuensis (person who writes his letter)

-he's been persuasively arguing and tearing down the false gospel of the Judaizers, but now he says give me the pen, I've got to write this next part myself

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. Galatians 6:11

Church, I need you to hear this.

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. Galatians 6:12-13

-Paul tears through the actions, straight to the motive of anyone who would add to the cross of Christ. They just want to look good in front of others and not suffer the scorn of the cross
-And if you want to keep part of the Law, you have to keep the whole thing

In response to all of this Paul says,

"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Galatians 6:14-15

-I have one hope. I have one claim. I have one boast. And it lays outside of me and anything I've ever done or ever could do. I will only boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we, 2000 years removed in history and coating crosses in 22k gold, miss the shock of what Paul's saying.

"Let your one boast and one joy and one exultation be the lynching rope." -John Piper

Why would Paul say this?

He understands the size of sin.

He knows his good works will never be enough.

-if you want to justify yourself before God by your good works, you've got to keep every command. And the chief command is actually to love God with all your heart.

-The reason we sin is actually because we don't love God. Or we choose to love something more than God. If you've never been born again, given a new heart, you don't actually love God. You're like the older brother who on the surface keeps the commands, but refuses to join in the celebration.

But in the cross of Jesus Christ, we see that "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10

So now get this: God seeing into the heart of every man and every woman sees that we would sin against him. We would love creation instead of our Creator. He would send prophets and we'd kill them, He would send Kings and they'd be corrupt rulers. He would send His Son and we'd crucify Him. He did not look down a corridor and see who would love him one day and die for them. He saw that we had not loved him, were dead in our sins, and would never choose him apart from him making us alive in Christ. A love like that makes creation new.

That is what it means that Christ died for sinners. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us.

Behold the cross. God loving sinners by taking the wrath their sin deserves. God loving you. God loving me. God receiving that younger brother with open arms and God entreating

So Paul says I will only ever boast in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ.

Transition: But this isn't like just a somber boasting. This is truly rejoicing because every blessing of the Christian life is because of the cross.

The Blessings of the Cross

Paul says by means of the cross of Jesus Christ the world has been crucified to him and he to the world.

Notice the past tense verb. The world *has been crucified* to me, and I to the world.

This means all the siren calls of the world have lost their claim over us.

-do this and you'll be happy

-prove yourself and you'll be loved

The world's system is works-righteousness. Earn enough money, marry a beautiful enough person, have an instagram able enough home, and you matter. You can't just tack on "justification by faith" to that. If you're not experiencing the freedom of the cross Monday-Saturday, you're not experiencing the world being crucified to you.

Not only has the world system and its values been crucified to us, but we've been crucified to the world.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

The power I believe in Galatians 2:20 is once again the past tense verbs. Christ *loved* me and *gave* himself for me.

As I look at the cross, I am not left to vague thoughts that God is a loving God, but that the Son of God has *loved* me and I know this because he entered into human history and *gave* his life for me.

This means at the foot of the cross of Christ, we also celebrate our own funeral.

That the old man or woman we were before we believed on Christ died.

As surely as Christ died on the cross, we who trust in him died, and as surely as he rose from the dead, we have risen to new life.

If you are in Christ, you are no longer a slave to your old passions, addictions, and flesh.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Romans 6:6–7

- now this doesn't mean we don't still feel temptation or the pull to sin, but that you are not a slave to sin. It's damning power over you has been broken.
- there is no sin with more power than the cross of Jesus Christ.
- not only do we celebrate our own funeral, but we celebrate our regeneration, our new life

Not only do we have the blessings of the world ceasing to have claim on us and being born again, but it's because of the cross that we actually enjoy every blessing of God.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
Romans 8:32

Look at the spiritual blessings contained in Ephesians 1

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight
Ephesians 1:3-8

We have

- every spiritual blessing.
- adoption as sons
- redemption through his blood
- forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of God's grace (ex. Uncle Ralph)
- fuel for evangelism

Boasting in the Cross

So let me ask you a question, are you boasting only in the cross of Jesus Christ?

Let's understand that word, boast, John Stott writes: "It means," writes John Stott, "to boast in, glory in, trust in, rejoice in, revel in, live for. The object of our boast or 'glory' fills our horizons, engrosses our attention, and absorbs our time and energy. In a word, our 'glory' is our obsession."¹

What are you obsessed with?

I know for myself, I've spent so many years being obsessed with my own sin. I was too busy doubting that God could forgive me for the things that I had done, was struggling with currently, hadn't yet seen victory over, that I obsessed with my own unworthiness. (called to kill sin, not doubt God's power)

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 349.

-ex. with James “Don’t stop until you get to the cross. If you go to Christ and confess your sin and still feel nothing but shame, remorse, and condemnation, then you haven’t truly gotten to the cross.”

I think for a lot of us in the room, we’ve kind of just drifted. We’re not doing the “Big Sins” we used to and somewhere along the way we think the gospel ceased to be Good News for us. So we’re obsessed with what the next thing is or we’re focused on what thing God has or hasn’t given us.

We obsess over numbers: attendance at youth group, how much money we make
We obsess over what people think about us
We obsess over controlling our kids or other people
We obsess over what God has seemed to withhold from us (he got a calf, I never got a goat)

The cross of Christ frees us. You don’t have to wake up in the morning and prove your worth at work. Your worth to God was displayed on the cross.

You don’t need to fear being rejected, because the God of all the universe has accepted you and will never leave you or forsake you.

You don’t need to control others because the God who would give His Son for you is fully worthy of your trust.

You don’t need to make demands of God, because he’s given you himself. He’s coming back for you. What we gain most in the gospel of Jesus Christ is Christ himself. Is that enough for you?

How can we boast in the cross of Jesus Christ?

We’ll have a steadfast joy. We can subtly start trusting in our merits- have we gone to church, killed sins, been nice, etc. We can tell we’re not boasting in the cross when our joy fluctuates up and down with the numbers that matter most to us.

1. Being honest about our sin
2. Stop trusting in your own goodness
3. Stop looking at yourself and look at Christ
4. Pray the good news into your bones

Because of justification, I am completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God. I no longer have to fear failure.

Because of reconciliation, I am totally accepted by God. I no longer have to fear rejection.

Because of propitiation, I am deeply loved by God. I no longer have to fear punishment or punish others.

Because of regeneration, I have been made brand-new, complete in Christ. I no longer need to experience the pain of shame.²

Celebrate. You were made to worship. The way you kill an idol isn’t by mustering up all your own strength, but by getting in the presence of God and worshipping him.

² The Search for Significance