

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS GLORY IN THE CROSS?

"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." Galatians 6:14.

Glorying in something implies having a sincere regard for it, a deep desire in it, and a real joy from it. Glorying is one of the most characteristic propensities of human nature. This characteristic is seen in every class of society and in every portion of the human race. Every person discovers something in which he thinks he can glory.

One may glory in his character, reputation, education, possessions, achievements or talents. If it is said that one glories in his good name, in his possessions or in his friends, it is meant that he sets a great value upon them. As a consequence he thinks and talks much about them, and nothing excites his indignation any quicker than to hear them undervalued or criticised. All glory in somebody or something. The avaricious glory in wealth, the vain in distinction, the ambitious in power, the self-righteous in virtue, the philosophical in wisdom, and the Christians in their Lord.

Once Paul gloried in traditions, rites and ceremonies. Later in his experience there was a diversity of things in which he might have gloried -- the fact that he was a Jew, the fact that he was a Pharisee, his singular and remarkable conversion, his scholarship, his extraordinary call into the ministry, his usefulness as a minister, and his Christian achievements, especially as a writer. Yet in none of these things did he glory.

This giant apostle of grace asked God to keep him from glorying in anything except the cross of Christ. When Christ was here in the flesh the cross was a symbol of crime, shame and degradation. Christ transformed the cross into a symbol of love and purity. Why should Christians glory in the instrument of the suffering and death of Christ?

It is of the utmost importance for Christians to realize and to remember that Christ's death upon the cross purchased for believers all the blessings which they enjoy through faith. To many people the cross is an offense because they consider that they do not need any benefits that they do not merit or cannot earn, but obedient Christians glory in the cross of Christ.

Paul gloried in the cross of Christ on account of three things -- its position, its purpose and its power. As to the position of the cross, it holds the central place in the Word of God, it is the most prominent thing portrayed in the Scriptures, it is the foundation of the gospel, and it is the heart of the Christian message. As to the purpose of the cross, it was to vindicate the divine justice, to reveal the love of God, and to procure the greatest blessings for men -- the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, peace of mind, joy of heart, victory over temptation, eternal life and the glories of heaven. As to the power of the cross, it convicts men of their need of salvation, persuades the convicted ones to receive Christ as Saviour, and enables Christians to live victorious and useful lives.

What are some of the reasons why every Christian should glory in the cross of Christ?

I. It purchased our new life.

As long as our sins remained unatoned for, God could not have justly given us eternal life through His Spirit. God could not regenerate us until He had first removed our guilt. The sacrifice of Christ upon the cross made it possible for God to pardon and regenerate sinners, because Christ atoned for their sin. The regeneration of every believer was purchased by the death of Christ on the cross. Through the death of Christ we have become partakers of the divine nature, and have become new creatures in Christ.

We glory in the cross of Christ because it made it possible for us to have this new life from God.

II. It made possible our new standing.

In the Old Testament era the Israelites boasted that they were members of the nation which God especially favored, but we rejoice because God made us "accepted in the beloved." The "beloved" is Christ, God's Son. We are accepted of God because we are united to Christ by faith. Men may not accept us, but we can always rejoice in the fact that by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ for us, and of our acceptance of Christ, we are accepted in heaven itself. God counts us as righteous because of our faith in Christ. He counts us as deserving of all His favor and blessing because of our union with Christ. He counts us as His children because of our reception of Christ. To be "accepted in the beloved" is infinitely more wonderful than to be accepted in the most exclusive or wealthy circle on earth. Therefore, we should glory in the cross which made our acceptance possible.

III. It made possible our enjoyment of unailing strength.

The Holy Spirit dwells in each believer and supplies unailing strength for each undertaking that is in harmony with the will of God. It is because we are linked to Christ by the Holy Spirit, Who dwelleth in us, that we believers "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" us. Amid opposition, or suffering, we can be assured of the sufficiency of God's grace. The person who is not a Christian does not have any such unailing source of strength. He is dependent upon himself, and the strength of man is not equal to the shocks and stresses of life or to the demands of holiness. Natural man cannot hope to attain to supernatural obedience, but God supplies the grace to make it possible for those who desire to obey.

God's children have demonstrated the sufficiency of His grace times without number. It has sustained them on beds of pain, as well as amid opposition and trying circumstances. It is sufficient to sustain every child of God in every trial. It sustained Paul and enabled him to write his most triumphant letters while in prison. It has sustained multitudes of others also. Those who know the sufficiency of the divine grace glory in the cross of Christ that made its bestowal possible.

IV. It has made it possible for us to render an incomparable service to mankind.

The Old Testament priests were occupied mainly with making sacrifices for sin, but we, who by the sacrifice of Christ have been made "kings and priests unto God," have the glorious privilege of proclaiming to others that a sacrifice has been made once and for all which never needs to be repeated (Hebrews 9:28) and of beseeching men to trust in that sacrifice.

There is no service comparable in importance to proclaiming the glorious fact that Jesus Christ has "offered one sacrifice for sins forever" (Hebrews 10:12). If you are a Christian, your message to the world should be that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

This was Paul's message, for in Acts 13:38-39 he said to the people in Antioch: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

It was John's message, for in I John 2:2 he said: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

It was Peter's message, for in I Peter 3:18 we read: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being

put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

V. It purchased our deliverance from the bondage of the law.

In Old Testament times God told His people: "This do and thou shalt live." In other words, perfect obedience was necessary to salvation. Those who sinned in one point were guilty of all. Life for the earnest, conscientious man became one continuous effort to earn acceptance with God. But how different it is with those of us who have received Christ. Our salvation was purchased once and for all by the Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross. We need not keep the law in order to be saved, for we are saved already through faith in the finished work of Christ. However, we are obligated to obey Christ, but the obligation is one of gratitude, and not of slavish fear. God does not say, "Do this or thou shalt die," but rather He does say, "Since Christ died for you, I beseech you to walk worthily of your calling." He does not threaten us with death if we disobey, but beseeches us, in view of the fact that we possess life, to walk worthily of the gift He has so graciously given us. The cross made all of this possible, and that is why we glory in the cross of Christ.

VI. It has purchased our deliverance from the fear of death and given us a glorious hope.

Those of us who trust the Lord Jesus know that death, the arch terror for most men and women, does not have any power to injure us, because Christ drew the sting of death on the cross. The sting of death is the thing that makes death dreadful. The sting of death is sin (I Corinthians 15:56), and the thing that makes sin dreadful is the law that condemns. But the Lord Jesus satisfied all the demands of the broken law, so that there is not any claim against those of us who trust Christ for salvation. It was by drawing the sting of death that Christ, through death, brought to nought him that hath the power of death, the devil. Satan cannot hurt us now. Therefore, we glory in the cross of Christ that made all of this possible.

VII. It is the guarantee that God will do for us all that He has promised in this life and in the life to come.

In Romans 8:32 we read: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

The answer to this question is that since God was willing to sacrifice His own Son for us, He will not withhold anything else that we need or that He has promised. Christ's death on the cross, therefore, guarantees all God's promised blessings. How do I know that God will provide for me? Because He sacrificed His Son for my sins. How do I know that God will protect me? Because He sacrificed His Son for my sins. Therefore, I glory in the cross of Christ because it guarantees all these things to me.

It is not any wonder that believers who know the Scriptures glory in the cross and commemorate our Lord's sufferings upon it. How base and ungrateful and forgetful we would be if we failed to glory in the fact that Christ Jesus died to purchase our new life, or that His death made possible our new standing in God's sight, or that His death made possible our new standing in God's sight, or that His death made it possible for us to enjoy unfailing strength, or that His death made it possible for us to render an incomparable and glorious service to humanity, or that His death delivered us from bondage to the law, or that His death delivered us from the fear of death, or that it guarantees for us all needful blessings.

Those who glory in the cross of Christ please God and are blessed by Him, and make their calling and election evident by so doing.

Therefore, let us say with Paul, "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."