

THE HIGHEST GLORY

Galatians 6:14

My message today comes from one verse. The apostle Paul writes in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”. The Bible has much to say about pride, and none of it is good. Listen to just a few verses:

Job 40:12 – “Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low;”

Psalm 94:2 – “Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud”.

Proverbs 6:17 – “These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood”

Proverbs 8:13 – “The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride and arrogance...do I hate”.

Proverbs 11:2 – “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom”.

Proverbs 15:25 – “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud; But He will establish the boundary of the widow”.

Proverbs 16:18 – “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”. .

Proverbs 29:23 – “A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit”.

There is a good reason that God hates pride so much. And that is, you and I have absolutely nothing to be proud about. Listen to what God says to any of us who might think highly of ourselves because of our achievements:

In Romans 7:18 Paul says, “For I know that nothing good lives in me.....”

Micah 6:8 – “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

1 Corinthians 4:7– “For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn’t receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn’t received it?” Do you see what God is saying here? He is saying, “What do you have for which you can take the credit for earning on your own?” And the answer is, “Absolutely nothing!”

If you have the mental ability to make money and provide for yourself a comfortable or even extravagant lifestyle, it is because God gave you that ability. If you can run a football like Trent Richardson or hit a baseball like Miguel Cabrera or shoot a basketball like Lebron James, it is only because of the ability that God gave you to do it. And even if you have the inner drive to use your abilities more than most, you can’t take credit for that, either. Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:10, “...but I labored more abundantly than they all...” – In other words, “I worked harder than anybody”. But in the next breath he said, “...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”. Even your motivation to use your gifts from God is

a gift. So whatever you are today is only by God's grace, and whatever you hope to be is only by God's grace, and you have absolutely nothing in yourself for which to be proud. For this reason James wrote in James 4:6, "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

But the Bible does say that there is one thing that we can take pride in, one and only one. Paul writes in Gal. 6:14, "But God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world". The KJV says it like this: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Along with the empty tomb, the cross of Jesus Christ is the most precious, glorious object in history.

But that is certainly not the view of most people. On the contrary, most people despise the cross. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..." He said in Gal. 5:11 that if he still preached keeping the law as a means of righteousness that the cross would not be an offense. The cross is an offense to many, and as we've said before, the word "offense" is the translation of the Greek word *skandolon*, from which we get our English word "scandal". The word *skandolon* means a trap to be avoided, and that's what the cross is to the world, a trap that causes great harm. But even beyond that, Paul writes in Phil. 3:18 that many are enemies of the cross. They would do away with this great trap if they could.

One such enemy would surprise many of us. His name is Leslie Weatherhead, and he was the pastor of the City Temple of London for over 24 years. Here's what this pastor wrote about the cross: "...the modern layman can well do without Paul's obsession about sin and the imagery of being washed in blood. Can there be a more revolting idea than that of William Cowper?" And listen to the words of William Cowper that are so revolting to

Mr. Weatherhead: “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains”. (The Christian Agnostic, p. 112)

But if the cross of Jesus Christ is such a scandal to the world, we must ask the question, “Why? Because of its unspeakable brutality? Well, even though that is an issue with some, that’s not the major reason it is so despised by the world. You see, friends, the world hates the cross because the cross shows the world something that it does not want to see. The cross shows you and me who we really are. And the picture is not good. For all of us like to think of ourselves as decent people, don’t we? Not perfect of course, still a lot of rough edges of course, but certainly not a candidate for being a poster child in every federal building in America.

But the cross tells us otherwise. For on the cross the perfect Son of God is suffering the wrath of God, the fullest measure of the wrath of God. His back is imbedded with deep, jagged, bleeding furrows from a Roman whip; His head is bleeding from a crown of hard, sharp thorns. Parts of His beard are ripped from His face. His hands and feet are nailed to the cross and a spear has pierced His side. He is being spit upon, laughed at, scorned, and cursed. But Jesus is not suffering God’s wrath for His own sins, for He had none. He is suffering for your sins and mine. For the Bible says in 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...” And lest you think that you are not among the unrighteous, David says to us in Psalm 14:3, “There is does good, no, not one”. And Paul follows up by saying, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We all sin and we all fall short of God’s glory every day.

According to one Bible student here’s what the cross says to all of us. “You’ve gone tragically bad. You are a foolhardy rebel

against the most powerful Person in the universe...You are more sinful than you ever imagined....You are an absolute failure in what's most important.....” Let me put it in a nutshell. When Jesus died on the cross for your sins and mine, His suffering there shows us what God thinks of those sins. It places a huge sign around each of our necks that reads, “Guilty. Bound for hell”. And that is not at all palatable to us who are trying to be good enough for God. So the cross is a great offense to many, many people.

But not to Paul. It once was, but not anymore. Paul said, “Let me boast, let me glory in the cross”. So the huge, obvious question here is, if the cross is such an offense to most people, why is it such a glorious thing to Paul? Look with me at Colossians 1: 19-20. That last phrase explains why the cross is so glorious. Because it is by the cross of Jesus Christ that God has made peace with all who will trust in Jesus. For Jesus’ blood was payment in full for all of their sins.

One of Janice and my favorite movies is National Treasure. It is the high drama story of a high stakes race to find a hidden treasure worth millions and millions of dollars. The good guys want to find it and turn it over to the U.S. government, to whom it was intended to go in the first place. And the bad guys want to find it and keep it for themselves. But the movie is about who can be the first to figure out a series of unbelievably tough clues to where the treasure is hidden. And one of the clues is written on the back of the U.S. Constitution, and the only way to get that clue is to steal the Constitution.

So the good guys come up with a fantastic scheme to steal the Constitution, and they pull it off. They actually steal the Constitution and find the clue on the back, which is actually the last clue to the treasure, and then they find the treasure. But alas, before they can turn the treasure over to the government and return the Constitution the hero gets caught by the FBI. And then

he starts explaining to the FBI agent why he stole the Constitution, to find the national treasure and give it to the government. And he told him that he had found the treasure, and if he hadn't found it the bad guys would have and the government would never have seen it. And he begged the agent to let him off the hook and not send him to prison. Well, the agent had known about the missing treasure and sympathized with him. But then he said to the hero, "Ben, the Constitution of the United States has been stolen. Somebody has to go to prison".

Friends, that's a great picture of the reason for the cross of Jesus Christ. You have sinned, I have sinned, and somebody has to go to prison for our sins. And the prison is a real hell with real fire where all who go there will suffer real pain and agony for all eternity. But the glorious message of the cross is that on that old, rugged cross Jesus suffered that pain and agony for you and for me. Why? Not because of anything good in us. We've already seen the condition of our souls – sinful through and through. There was only one reason. Paul writes in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The only reason that Jesus hung on that cross and died was because of God's unfathomable love for you, to provide for you a substitute to bear the penalty that you deserved. And the only substitute that would do was His only perfect Son.

And today God invites some of you to get off the road to hell and on the road to heaven by coming to Jesus.