

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Glorying in the Cross

Scripture: Galatians 6:14-18

Code: 1674

I draw your attention to the sixth chapter of Galatians for our study in the word tonight. What a joy and thrill it is to be able to share in this subject. That's why I say if I don't get done, it'll be because I get excited about it and just don't get finished, and we won't worry about that because there's not a better subject to talk about. Glorying in the cross, glorying the cross. The key verse that we'll look at tonight is verse 14 of Chapter 6, "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified in unto me and I unto the world."

Now as we saw last time in our study of the book of Galatians, there are only two religions in the world. The religion of human achievement and the religion of divine accomplishment. One is the religion of salvation by works, the other is the religion of salvation by faith. One depends upon what man does. The other depends upon what God did. Now of these two religions, most of the world is banking on the religion of human achievement. Most of the world is banking on the possibility that man can reach the highest plane of potential destiny by his own good deeds, by his own activity, on his own merit.

Now you say, well, John how could you say there's only two religions in the world when there are so many. No, there are only two. It's just that one category of them comes under so many different brand names. The religion of human achievement comes in many, many forms, but it is the same religion. You see there's a basic conflict involved in the whole structure of the universe that first became apparent in the fall of Lucifer, and it hasn't changed.

Satan, himself, when he was Lucifer, the highest of the angels, wanted to be higher than God and he determined that by self effort he would become the equal to God. And so the conflict began. He invented at that point the whole religion of self effort. Immediately when God created men on the earth, Satan passed on the religion of self effort, and the first one to be involved in it was Eve. And Eve was induced to want to be like God. And Satan told her a simple effort on her part would make it so. All she had to do was disobey God and eat of the fruit and it would happen and she did and it didn't happen.

And then there was Cain. Cain, instead of coming to God on the basis of God's standards, decided that he would bring to God the sacrifice of that which he had produced. Again, the religion of self effort. Satan did it. Eve did it. Adam did it. Cain did it. And God rejected it every time. He threw Satan out of heaven. Threw Eve and Adam out of the garden. And he spurned and rejected the offering of

Cain. And it is the very same religion going on today. You either accept what God has provided for salvation or you endeavor to provide something on your own. Those are the only two religions in existence.

Now just to verify this to you, I checked the current religious list of those religions which seem to be the most dominate or popular in our culture. And every one of them falls into the same category. Let me list them. And some of them you'll be familiar with and some of them you want. The mighty I am teaches salvation by works. Mormonism, teaches salvation by works. Islam, salvation by works. The Urantia Foundation, which incidentally has a 2,100 page book, teaches salvation by works. The One World Family, teaches there's no need for anybody's salvation. Everybody's already perfect. Jehovah's Witnesses, salvation by works. Spiritualism, salvation by works. The Association for Research and Enlightenment, alias Edgar Casey, salvation by works. Divine Light Mission, salvation by works. You say what's that? That's Guru Maharaji, a little guy who sits on pillows and holds flowers. Oaspi, which is a very strange eastern a cultic religion, salvation by works. Herbert W. Armstrong, Garner Ted Armstrong and the Radio Church of God, salvation by works. The Great White Brotherhood, salvation by works. Astera, salvation by works. The Unification Church of Reverend Moon, salvation by works. Christian Science, salvation by works.

Do you see what I'm saying? Every one of those is the same thing. It is also interesting to note that all of those religions that I've name for you claim to have come originally from spirit beings, from supernatural spirit beings. From revelations, from angels or spirits or extraterrestrial beings. The mighty I am movement was dictated by a Spirit. Mormonism came from Moroni an angel who interpreted some golden plates. Islam dictated by Gabriel the angel. Urantia, 23 extraterrestrial beings by automatic writing dictated the book of Urantia. One World Family, extraterrestrials originated all of it. The Jehovah's Witnesses, angels of different ranks controlled the first witnesses. The Association for Research and Enlightenment all initiated by psychic forces through automatic writing.

The Divine Light Mission, the guru had a spirit voice that told him three times what he was to say. The Great White Brotherhood was dictated by a spirit by the name of Azeriel contacted through a medium. Oaspi is a proliferation of mediums and spirits. Armstrongism which you may not have associated with this, came from angelic revelations to Mrs. Armstrong. Astera, Astera was from spirit sources through telephonic inspiration. The Unification Church came from spirits which dictated and some of those spirits were named Jesus. Christian Science special revelations to Mary Baker Eddy.

Now, I want you to notice something, all of those religions come from spirit beings. I think that's interesting. All of them come from angelic or spirit sources. You say what's so interesting about that? Because it indicates to me that all of them have a demonic source. They aren't even the invention of men people. They are the religion of Satan under all different names.

In 2 Corinthians Chapter 11 in verses 13-15, the apostle Paul says, that you can expect that the Devil will appear as an angel of light and you shouldn't be shocked when his ministers appear also as angels of light. In other words, they are involved in false religion. And do you want to hear something interesting about all of those that I named to you? Listen, none of them accept the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. None of them accept the unique biblical identity of Jesus as deity.

All of those religions believe in salvation by works, deny the uniqueness of the Trinity and deny the biblical construction of the deity of Jesus Christ and all of them come from spirit being sources. They're all Satan's religion under different names and different brands in order to appeal to a cross section of cultures and people, but it's all the same thing. Now, I hope you understand that just by the little insight, no matter what it's name apart from biblical Christianity, which is from God, all other systems are satanic and damning. Satan's in a rut. There's no other option. You either believe in salvation by what God has done or the only other possibility is salvation by what men have done.

And Satan is going on and on with the same old stuff. You're okay on your own, you can do it, you don't need a Savior, etc., etc. God refused Satan's system when he introduced it and kicked him out of heaven. God refused it when Adam and Eve offered it up and kicked them out of the garden. God refused it from Cain, and He's still refusing the system that says you can save yourself or your good deeds will reach God.

Now clearly the New Testament boils down to this, you either accept the finished work of Christ on the cross or you do not accept it. That's the whole issue. In fact, it's crystallized, I think, in Philippians 3:18 as well as any where in Scripture. "For many walk of whom I told you often and now tell you weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Now notice, anybody who is in opposition to the cross, verse 19, "will end in destruction." It's the next verse. You have the friends of the cross and the enemies of the cross and everybody in the world is in one or other of those two groups.

And all of those who are not the friends of the cross are the enemies of the cross. Jesus said "you're either for me or," what, "or against me." And all of those who are the enemies of the cross their end is destruction. There are only two systems in the world. In 2 Thessalonians verse 8 of Chapter 1, Paul says, "That the Lord Jesus will come from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God," now listen, "and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is the gospel? Read it in 1 Corinthians 15. Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins, raised again for our justification. That's the gospel. If you do not accept the cross and the resurrection of Christ, you do not obey the gospel and it says for those who do not obey, they shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

There are only two possibilities. Satan has masked his same old lie of salvation by works, a denial of the Trinity, a denial of the unique deity of Jesus Christ in all different forms, but it's the same thing. One of those forms that Satan uses is Judaism. And I say that not in denial of the Old Testament,

because before the cross, Judaism was the truth. After the cross, Judaism without a Messiah became as pagan as the worship of a totem pole. Now the Judaisers who are the real culprits in the area that we've been studying in reference to the Galatians had come in behind Paul and taught the religion of human achievement. Oh yes, they were very subtle about it and they said, you know, you have to believe in Jesus Christ, that's fine, and in His work, but you must also be circumcised and keep the law. And they had a salvation by works.

Listen, if you add anything to pure grace, anything to faith, it ceases to be what it is and it becomes works. And so Paul in the final appeal of the book of Galatians sets these two religions in contrast. And it's a last kind of appeal to the Galatians. It's saying look, there are only two options. The end of verse 13, "you either glory in the flesh," or verse 14, "you glory in the cross." That's all. That's the only choice. And you can't mix them. And we've seen that again and again through our study of Galatians for a long, long time as we pursued it.

Only two roads, the Judaisers were teaching glory in the flesh, be saved by works, Paul was teaching glory in the cross, be saved by grace through faith. They never mix. You either believe that you're going to meet God and be approved God and enter into God's heaven and receive God's blessing by what you have done or you believe you're going to have all of that by what He has done. And if you believe it's what he has done and what you do together, you've missed it. It's one or the other.

And so the final verses, verse 11-18 divide themselves easily into two parts. Point one is works glorying in the flesh. Point two is faith glorying in the cross. Now last time we considered point one, glorying in the flesh. Verse 11, "You see how large a letter I've written unto you with mine own hand. And as many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised." You see they're still operating and glorying in the flesh. They want to put on a big display in the flesh. They're constraining you to be circumcised.

The reason they do it is they don't want to suffer persecution. "For neither they themselves," verse 13, "who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh." False religion is fleshly. It's motives are to show off spiritually, verse 12. They want to make a fair show in the flesh to avoid persecution, verse 12, and to cover up their sin, verse 13. They don't even keep the law themselves, but they think if they can show everybody how wonderful they are proselyting, nobody will notice how disobedient they are. Religion's a great cover for sin. We went into that in detail last time.

So Paul says, first of all there's that kind of religion. The kind that glories in the flesh. The kind that praises itself. Glory to me in the highest. That's the religion of human achievement. You can do it on your own. You can do good deeds. You can earn God's favor. But as against that, beginning in verse 14, that's where we want to start. We have the other option, faith, glorying in the cross. Now here stands Paul and all true Christians. Here's the religion of grace. Now notice folks, you can't glory in

both. And he says to the Galatians and to us "I desire that you would join me in glorying in the cross. God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Notice the phrase, "God forbid." In the Greek *magenata*, is a strong negative. It doesn't say God forbid in the Greek. That's not a literal translation. It says may it never be. That is a very strong negative. It's as if he said, no, no, no, no. Absolutely, positively, no, never. The same construction is used repeatedly in Romans Chapter 3 when God's character is in question. Paul says, "I will never no, no, no, never in no way under no circumstances at all glory in the flesh, but only in the cross." You say, hah, he was probably such a crumb that he had nothing to glory in.

I wasn't that way. If you knew me, you'd understand why I glory in the flesh. I'm a wonderful person. Well, let me show you something. Philippians 3, Paul had something to glory about. If you're going to glory in the flesh, he says, I'll stand nose to nose with you and match you. I was super religious. I did a lot of little spiritual goodies. Chapter 3, verse 1, "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you to me indeed is not irksome, but for your it's safe. Before of dogs, beware of evildoers, evil workers, beware of the concision." These are the Judaisers. People going around telling you have to be circumcised. "For we are the circumcision. That is the true circumcision to worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence," what, "in the flesh." They're going around saying we're the true children of God, because we have had a physical operation.

Paul says, no, no. We are the true ones. We rejoice in Christ, we worship God in the Spirit. Now he says if you want to talk about confidence in the flesh, verse 4, "I might also have confidence in the flesh." That's right. I can stand up and tell you about my flesh. "Because of what my appearance gave me in terms of Jewish heritage and because of what I myself attain. Why do you realize that if any other man thinks that he hath reasons for which he might trust in the flesh, I have more reasons? Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel. Of the tribe of Benjamin," one of the good tribes, "and Hebrew of the Hebrews. Why as touching the law I was a Pharisee." Super conservative, legalistic. "Concerning zeal I persecuted the church. Touching the righteous which is in the law," what's that next word, "blameless." Man I really...I got down to the nitty gritty of that law and I kept it.

Now if you want to talk about the flesh, I'll match you. If you want to say well I've been so wonderful and I've done all these religious things, won't God accept me, I'll stand on that ground and I've done just as many things as you've done or more. Now you want to know what I think of all that stuff? Verse 7, "But what things were gained to me, those I counted lost for Christ. Ye doubtless," and you're going to hear some strong language. "Ye doubtless and I count all things but loss." You can take all of that stuff and chuck it he says. Every bit of it means nothing. "For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I've suffered the loss of all things and I count them but refuse, dung," is the word.

You can't come up with a worse possible concept than that of the valuelessness of something. Worthless, refuse, excrement, nothing, less than nothing. That's what you can do with all that stuff. It means nothing. "That I may win Christ and be found in Him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. He says, you can take all of that self-righteous legal stuff and chuck it. I only know this, that I want to win Christ and attain His righteousness through faith.

"I just want to know him," verse 10. Now you see he...this is where Paul is. He says, if you're going to talk to me about religion of the flesh, I've been there folks and it doesn't cut it. It has no way to bring a man to God. He says, "God forbid." "God forbid that I would ever glory in the flesh." It's worthless, useless. "I count it but loss that I may appropriate Christ by faith. That I may just believe and receive the free gift of God."

Now notice verse 14 in Galatians 6 again. No, no, no, no, may it never be that I should glory. What does glory mean? What do you mean when you're going to say you're going to glory? It means to praise or honor or worship. I'll never honor anything but the cross. I'll never praise anything but the cross. I'll never praise my own works. I'll never praise my own flesh. And that's what these legalistic Judaisers were doing, praising their own flesh. The only thing I'll ever praise, the only thing I'll ever honor, the only thing I'll ever worship, those are synonyms for glory, is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know something, I know a lot of people here tonight that feel that way. I feel that way. Don't you? I don't look to myself for my own righteousness. I have to look a long time and wouldn't find any. I just glory in the cross. We sang some hymns of the cross. I could just feel my heart being lifted when the choir was singing Halleluiah For The Cross. Because that's it. You say, well I don't understand that. How could a man honor a torture instrument. I don't understand how Christians can get so excited about this cross. Why does the Christian symbol have to be such a horrible thing and what's so important about the death of a man who died 1,900 years ago? And what kind of an effect can such a death, 1,900 years ago, have on anybody alive today? Wasn't it just heroism? Wasn't it just a great example of self-sacrifice? Wasn't Jesus just sort of a misguided religious patriot who got in a little deeper than he wanted to? Why do we glory in the cross? Why is Paul saying oh I praise the cross, I praise the cross? Why do Christians wear a cross around their neck? Why do they have a cross on the wall?

What is all this cross stuff? It's a little morbid, isn't it? Why do Christians honor the cross? We can answer that can't we? Because you see it was the cross that was the act of divine accomplishment that brought to men the salvation that human achievement couldn't bring. What happened on the cross has lasting effects for the salvation of every man and every age who believes. In fact, unless a man puts his faith in Jesus Christ, unless he has been redeemed by what Christ did on the cross, he

has no chance of knowing God and knowing salvation. The cross is the crux of the religion of the divine accomplishment.

When Jesus hung on the cross with His last breath, He said, "It is finished." What was finished? The accomplishment of redemption. He died to bring us salvation we could never obtain ourselves. We couldn't do it. We couldn't do it. Now let me expand on this so you'll understand. Let's first of all start with God. God is God. Now unless you accept that, you're in real trouble. God is God. And you know who God is? God is the one who runs the universe? Watch this one. God makes all the rules. Think about it. All of them. Now one of the things about God is that God is holy. He is without sin. He is without iniquity. He has no flaws. He is perfect. And you know something, the heaven that He occupies is just as perfect as He is. And Revelation says there will be nothing that will ever enter His heaven that would defile His heaven. Okay? And it's His heaven. And He's calling the shots.

Therefore, unless a man is as holy as God is holy, he'll never enter into God's heaven. That's what the Bible says. In fact, in Matthew 5:48, Jesus looked at the people and said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Now you say oh that's quite a standard. That's God's standard. Now God's justice demands that you stick by His laws. God has another law. The law is this. "The soul that sinneth, it shall," what, "die." New Testament version, "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.

So God says heaven is only for absolutely holy individuals and anybody who's unholy is going to die, not just physically, but spiritually and eternally. God will judge sin with death. In Romans 1:18, it says "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness." All of it. Now many people find it hard to understand that God is judge. And so they just chuck that and then they just come up with their own standards. The best way to illustrate this perhaps would be to say it this way. Let's suppose you go to a football game. You know, you've got an afternoon off on a Saturday, so you go down to the coliseum and you want to see a football game. And you come up to the window and the ticket thing on the window says the tickets are \$5.00 for the seat you want. And you say to the man in booth, "do you know something, sir, I know both of these teams very well. Neither one of them can play worth \$5.00. They couldn't give me a game worth \$5.00. I'll pay \$2.00, no more."

Now you may really hold your point of view well, but you know something, you're not going to have any luck with that guy at the gate. He is not interested in your argument. You either pay your \$5.00 and go in and watch the game or you go home. Because it's not your prerogative to fix the prices. You can either take it or leave it. You can't modify it. But somewhere along the line, Satan has caused people to believe that though God has set absolute standards you can dicker around and modify God's standards. You can't do it.

It's God's heaven. It's not yours. He lays down the terms of admittance and you come to the gate and start offer Him \$2.00 and He's not going to be interested in you at all. He does not modify the entrance requirement for heaven. And you're never going to impose your conditions on God, yet

people all over the world do this all the time. This is a fundamental error and it means that you refuse, listen, you refuse to take the character of God seriously. Now, the first fact to consider in the religion of the cross is God's estimate of the situation and His laws are decisive. He says sin is an affront to me, it'll never enter into my heaven. It'll be dealt with with death.

God is displeased with sin. No one will ever defile his heaven with sin. You scratch your head and you say well, we've got a problem. The first thing a man has to do is realize he's a sinner. Second thing he wants to do is if he's a sinner, he wants to realize that he can't get into God's heaven. Well, that's a problem. So Satan comes along and says hey, you can modify that, sure. Maybe the Bible doesn't really mean that. That's a hard line, super fundamentalist view. Why God is a great loving God. And so they write the Bible.

But the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." And God set the standard. And the Bible says, you see that sin can only be put away by death. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." God is a loving, yes. And He wants to forgive sin, but He can't arbitrarily forgive sin. He's got to deal with it. God can't just say well, I know I don't like sin, but I'll just go forgive all of you any old way. Sin must be paid for. God cannot arbitrarily forgive without doing something to take care of the offense of sin. So God looks down on the world and He says I love you. I love you, but I'm going to have to punish your sin. I have two choices. I can just damn you for your own sin. Or I can have a substitute take your place. And so the love of God forgave you, but the justice of God crucified Jesus Christ. Do you see? Because somebody had to pay for your sin.

God's choice was to let every man pay his own penalty and suffer eternal death in hell or to offer a substitute who would die in the place of man. And Jesus came to die and the reason he came to die was because somebody had to die for your sins and mine. And it was the act of God when the Son died on the cross to take care of sin so that He could offer forgiveness to those who would accept it.

Jesus didn't die because He was a sinner. He never committed a sin. 1 Peter 2:24 says "That He in His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He bore our sins in His body. He paid our penalty. 2 Corinthians marvelous verse, Chapter 5, verse 21, listen, "For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ became our substitute. Christ took our place on the cross. Beloved, it was the act of the love of God that sent Jesus to die on the cross. The love toward us that was also the act of the justice of God that made the penalty be realized.

That's why Paul glories in the cross. You see, watch this, because the cross provides for the expiation or the covering for sin or the removal of sin better. The cross provides for the removal of sin, something that no man could ever provide for himself, no matter how good you are, no matter how religious you are, you could never be holy as God is holy until Jesus died on the cross, paid the entire penalty for your sin and God when you believe in Christ imputes to you the very righteousness of

Christ and God looks at you as righteous as He sees His own Son. Marvelous miracle. This is love.

And God's love is meaningless if the cross is meaningless. You know, all these liberals say, well God loves us and it's so wonderful how he loves us and oh when Christ died on the cross that was a nice wonderful display of God's love. But they're not willing to admit that a man needs to be totally redeemed by the cross. They want to allow for a salvation of works. Let me show you how stupid that is. The same liberal who gets up and preaches about the love of God and also preaches that you can save yourself has got a real problem.

Say I'm sitting on a pier one day. And I'm enjoying the sun and I'm getting tan and having a great time reading a book which would be great for me, I enjoy that. Feeling the warm sun and all of a sudden somebody runs down the pier and jumps into the water to prove his love for me and drowns. I don't get the point. That isn't the death of love. That's the death of stupidity. I'm sitting on the pier. If, however, I am caught in a rip tide and my life is in danger and someone dives in and rescues me, that's a revelation of love. Now mark it, the greatness of the risk is the measure of the love. The essence of the redemption is what makes the love meaningful. If God's just sending Jesus Christ as sort of a great pageant, a great meaningless piece of pageantry, then it's stupid. If the cross did not need to be accomplished to redeem me, then God's doing dumb things. But 1 John 4:10 says that "He sent His son to be the covering for our sins."

God loves us and we are in danger, beloved, and God rescues us from hell in the death of Christ. It isn't just a nice little display of meaningless love. That would be stupid. God isn't in the business of putting on meaningless pageants. No, it isn't just the death of Christ. It's the fact that He died for sin. That He took my sin. That He took my place. That He paid my penalty that says God loves me. Paul said in Romans, "God commends His love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And friends, Christ's death on the cross is the only way of man's deliverance from death and to hell. You say why so the only way, because God said so. The words of Peter were these, "neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

John looked at Jesus, John the Baptist, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Jesus was the one sacrifice to take away sin. The writer of Hebrews in Chapter 9, verse 26 "For then He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world. But now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared," this is Christ, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." And verse 28 says, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." To put away sin, that's why he died. Not just a meaningless display of love. He died for sin. He died to bear the penalty of sin. And Hebrews 10:5, Jesus says in a conversation with the Father, "Sacrifice an offering you would not, but a body you prepared me and burnt offering and sacrifice for sin you had no pleasure." There was no fulfillment in that. There was no salvation in those things.

But when Christ came, He came to be offered. Verse 10, "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Verse 12, "This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down at the right hand of God." That's why He died, for sin. Romans 4:25, Paul said, "He was delivered for our trespasses." 1 Corinthians 15:3, "He died for our sins." Galatians 1:4, "He gave Himself for our sins." Romans 6:10, "The death that He died, He died unto sin." Romans 8:4 says "God sent Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin."

Paul summed up the message and he went to the Corinthians and he said, "we preach Christ crucified." He died for sin. He died for your sin and my sin. I'm so glad, people, that I'll never have to stand for my sin. I'll never have to face God with the record of my sin. Do you know why? God already took care of all of it through Jesus Christ. I don't believe that a Christian is ever going to be punished for sin. Do you know why? Jesus already was punished for my sin, right? Yes. Paul in his life with so much glorying in the cross that he reached the determination which he expressed in 1 Corinthians 2:2 . "I determine not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." All his message was, to know nothing but the cross, nothing but the cross. Exalt the cross, exalt the cross. That's everything.

I remember when we had...I told you about this a long time probably. We had high holy day services and we used to let the temple down the street use our church, the little chapel. And this was a...they did this quite frequently. Then we remodeled it and put in that cross. They came down and I'll never forget the terror of all of them when they arrived and saw the cross. Oh it was horrible. They draped sheets all day before the holy days, sheets covering the cross. Paul says, "I glory in the cross." How stupid, how foolish to turn your back on the one thing that takes away sin.

So it was one of Paul's fundamental convictions that apart from Christ, nothing could come out right ever. Man left to himself is doomed. This is a moral universe and God made it so and sinful man reaps the reward of sin. His only hope faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Well, go back to Galatians 6 and let's see some things. Paul gives some reasons for glorying in the cross. I've given you the general reason. Paul gives some specific ones and they're not just theological and...they are theological, but not just, they're very personal to him and to me and to you. He says in effect, you know why I glory in the cross? Three reasons, are you ready for this?

Reason number one, the cross changed my relationship to the world. The cross changed my relationship to the world. Now the one thing that I think people face today is a terrible pain of being locked into the world's system. If you're here tonight and you don't know Jesus Christ and you're sitting and listening to this, think about your life. Have you ever realized that your life is just sort of an endless, meaningless, circle? People today face purposelessness. I always think of the words of Mrs. Malay who said "Life must go on. I forget just why." Meaningless.

And then your life is not only meaningless, but it's guided by passion, which is such a cruel, cruel master as Oscar Wilde said. I had a young person come to me, he was only 18 years old and he unbearably hurt and just poured it out and said, "I'm so sick of the filth in my life and the sin in my life and the ugliness of my life. Can God help me?" About 18 years old. Do you ever get sick of having your mind in the gutter all the time and seemingly unable to get it out of there. That's how the world works. Your thoughts are low thoughts, selfish thoughts. Your life doesn't seem to go anywhere. And then there's another thing that I think haunts people in the world, it's the past. You can't seem to get free from your sin. Do you know something? The Bible says you never have a clear conscience. Guilt just bangs away all the time. You can't forget the past. You have no sense of forgiveness.

And another sad thing that people in the world never realized. Life seems to be just a whole pile of frustrated dreams. And Paul was like everybody else. He got sick of those things. And you know, he said, I'm so excited about the cross, because when I came to the cross in faith and accepted what Jesus did, look, the world was crucified to me and I to the world. He said, I died to that entire system. I and the world parted company. That whole evil system controlled by Satan stopped being the thing that dominated my life.

Do you know the fantastic thing about Christianity and it's not pie in the sky, it's here and now. It's here and now. And you say in what sense? In the sense that right now, standing here, I have a sense of divine consciousness. I know that God is alive that Christ is mine, that the Spirit lives in my heart and I sense the moving of God in my life and that's exciting. I know what I'm here for and I know where I'm going when I'm done doing what I'm here to do.

Paul says "The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." You say what's the world, John? The world is the word kosmos. It's used basically in the Bible to refer to Satan's system. His system of sin and false religion, that sums it up. Paul's saying in effect, man, do you know what's so exciting? To be dead to the whole system of false religion. Man, I'm just tuned out to it and I'm tuned into the truth. And to be dead to that whole world of sin, that whole hassle. What is Satan's world, Satan's system? It's the one that promotes his goals, promotes his aims, promotes his ends and promotes his desires? You say well, is everybody in that world? Yes, 1 John 5:19, "The whole world lies in the arms of the wicked one." The whole bunch of us before we knew Christ. The whole system is cradled in Satan's arms. He lulls the world's system to sleep and everybody's a part of it.

Everybody, read Ephesians 2:1-3, everybody. We all were like that, Paul says. Operating on the premise of the flesh and the lust guided by Satan. You say well, isn't the system smart? No, the system's stupid, because it can't know God. 1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul says, "The world by wisdom knew not God." So no matter what the system knows, what Satan's evil system knows, it can never lead a man to God. 2 Peter 1:4 says, "it corrupts." And 1 Corinthians 11:32, says, "it's going to be judge."

But you know what happened? This is wonderful. The day that you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you have an entirely new consciousness. And all of a sudden you die to the whole evil system. And you are alive to God. It's as if you've been transmitted into a new dimension of life. Paul puts it this way and I'll give you several passages, but one in particular by the statement of Paul that is really exciting. Philippians 3:20, listen. "For our citizenship is in heaven." Paul says, you know what? I actually exist as a heavenly being. You know when you start to thinking about it, that is true. Everything we love is in heaven, right?

Our Father's there. Our Savior's there. Our home is there. Our reward is there. I mean, that's home for us. And we sense the moving of God and we're alive to God. Something that natural man is not. Our citizenship, our manner of life is heaven. The whole book of Ephesians is based on that principle where he talks about the fact that you've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. We're in another dimension of consciousness. We know God. "A person without Jesus Christ is dead," Ephesians 2:1 says. He doesn't know God at all. He's dead. Insensitive to God is what it means. We know God. Oh how exciting.

Jesus prayed, you know, remember that in John 17 just to point a couple of verses. His beautiful prayer, John 17:6, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them to me." Isn't that tremendous. Salvation is taking you out of the world and giving you to God. What a blessed thought. Verse 11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. I come to thee Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me that they may be one as we are one." He says, you took them out of the world in a spiritual sense, in a physical sense they're still having to live there, so take care of them Father.

We still knock around in the system. We're not a part of it. It's one thing to be in the world, it's something else to be of the world, right? It's just like the difference between having your boat in the water and having the water in your boat. Paul says wow, I glory in the cross because you know what the cross cut me off from the world made me alive to God. And you know what the world to Paul was? You could just put it this way, by whom Judaism is crucified to me and I to Judaism, because the system that he was trapped in was Judaism. And for every man the system is different. For some people it's religion. Some people are trapped in Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., etc. Some people are trapped in alcoholism. Some people are trapped in drugs. Some people are trapped in sex. Some people are trapped in an ego trip. Everybody's got a trap in the world, and it's all the system manifesting itself in different ways. But the cross changed all of that.

Paul says, in fact, I am crucified with Christ and after that happened, nevertheless, I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. It's a new life. It's a new I. It's Christ living in me, a new consciousness. And in Romans 6 he said, "when I put my faith in Jesus Christ, it's as if I died with Christ and rose and walked in newness of life." Remember that? The Christian, when he receives Jesus Christ and puts

his faith in Christ's death on the cross, he dies with Christ and he rises in new life. A spiritual miracle. God transcends the ages the moment you believe, He places you back into Christ. You die, you rise again. That's God's marvelous miracle. You die to the law. You die to sin and you die to the world and you rise to live in God's world, God's realm.

Now I think there's two little angles and just to give you the cleanest exposition of the phrases. "By whom the world is crucified unto me." I think he's referring to historical fact. Referring to his union in Christ's death. Positional statement. The world is crucified unto me. I'm dead to the religion of human achievement. The system is a dead issue. Verse 24 of Chapter 5 says, "They that are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." This is the historical fact that when he was united in Christ's death, the whole system became a dead issue.

And you know in 1 John Chapter 5, verse 4, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world." And this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith. The only way you can overcome the system is through faith. "Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." To believe in Christ's person and work on the cross is to overcome the world and Paul says when I was united in Christ, crucified with Christ, the world died.

All my old life died. Sin became a dead issue. The law became a dead issue. The world became a dead issue. And then I think he adds this. And I unto the world. That's the practical side. Not only did a positional miracle take place, but practically folks, I haven't got any interest in the system myself. It's not just a question of the miracle itself, it's the question of his attitude. I've got no interest in the system anymore. I just glory in the cross.

You know, he warned the Colossians. He couldn't believe it, but some of the Colossians, this is amazing is the same as the Galatians. Some of the Colossians that accepted Christ and were still interested in the system, just like the Galatians. They accepted Christ and they were saying oh should we be circumcised. Circumcision was part of the system, part of the world. They were actually playing with the world. Paul says look, when the world was crucified to me friends, I was crucified to the world too.

When the miracle took place, my attitude changed. What's wrong with you people? And to the Colossians he says the same thing in Colossians 2:20, "If you be dead with Christ, then what are you doing with all these little rules, touch not, taste, not, handle not." They had all kinds of little Jewish rules. Forget all that stuff and he says in Chapter 3 of Colossians, "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Drop all of the features of the system. You don't need any of it.

So he was positionally separated from the world by the death of Christ and practically he had lost all of his taste for the world. So Paul says, I glory in the cross because it changed my relation to the

world. You know something, you will either die to the world or you'll die with it. 1 John 2:17, second thing, Paul glories in the cross secondly because the cross did what the flesh couldn't do. Boy he really worked hard with his flesh. He did everything a Jew could do and it didn't him a bit of good. Every possible spiritual activity there was, he did it. No way out.

Verse 15, "For in Christ Jesus," almost hear sigh, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a," what?, "a new creature." Oh boy is that exciting. Worldly systems like circumcision are meaningless inconsequential, accomplish nothing. I always think about the guy, the fighter who used to get in and cross himself before the first round. Some guy says does it do any good? The other guy says, it does if he can punch. Apart from that, not a lot.

Well, that's the same thing with circumcision. It doesn't mean a single thing. Nothing. Zilch. Zero. Nothing helps he says. But oh it's so exciting. I struggle with all that stuff and then finally I realized in Christ Jesus, I could be a new creature. That's exciting folks. You know what the frustration of the self effort system is? The frustration of the self effort system is that it is completely incapacitated by the self that's trying to make the effort. That's bad.

So you know what God does? He makes new creatures. So Jesus said, you must be born again. You've got to start all over. You know Nicodemus came to Jesus. He was a great man. He was a leading teacher in Israel, maybe THE teacher. Marvelous man, knew the word of God and the Old Testament. And you know, he could have come to Jesus and perhaps he could have said, you know I've done this and I've done that and I've done this and I've done the other and I know the word and blah, blah, blah, and all my spiritual things and I'm a very godly man and devout man and pray and what shall I do? And the Lord says well, let's see do three of these and four of those and you're all right.

Christ said, Nicodemus, you know what you've got to do? Be born again, start all over again, chuck the whole life. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't make the slightest bit of difference. Not the slightest. You're going to be in the same hell as the people who did a lot of things that you didn't do. But 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ he's a new creature." I like that. You know, new creatures are made to fit heaven. Old creatures can't go there. God's got to get all the sin out.

Yes, new creatures, oh what a blessed thought. Paul says, you know, all that circumcision, uncircumcision never did anything, but Jesus made me a new creature. That's why the cross is something to glory about. So Paul glories in the cross because it changed his bondage to the world to freedom and his frustrating sinful flesh to a new creation. Thirdly and lastly, he glories in the cross because it brought him salvation and all its benefits. Verse 16. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace on them and mercy and upon the Israel of God." Notice this, you say where do you get salvation, John?

Well, let me show you something. You see those two words peace and mercy? Those two words tie up the idea of salvation. First one is peace. Did you know that every man is born into this in conflict with God? You're a child of disobedience right? So you're rebelling against God. You're a child of Satan. You're of your father the Devil. So you're a part of the warfare against God. You're a sinner, so you're alienated from God. You're a citizen of hell, so you can't occupy God's heaven. You're really in trouble, every man. You're at war with God.

In other words, there's got to be an absolute reversal. The war has to end and you have to become at peace with God. And so Paul says, "As many as walk according to this rule peace with God." That's the positive side of salvation. You know something, it's exciting when you become a Christian and know you're on God's side. You're His child. Look at the second word, mercy. Mercy from God. What is mercy? Mercy is forgiveness. Now this is it folks, watch. Two sides of salvation. Peace is the positive, mercy is the negative. Peace is establishing the right relationship with God. Mercy is God forgiving all the rest. The positive side, the negative side.

What's he really saying? "As many as walk according to this rule, salvation is theirs." A right relationship with God, that's the positive and the doing away of all the sin, that's the negative. You say oh boy who gets in on that? Verse 16, "As many as walk according to this rule." You say what rule? I thought wasn't of law. It isn't of law. What's the rule? What's the principle? Let's translate the word kanon, principle, or standard. What is the principle? Only two principles by which a man can live. You either glory in the flesh or you glory in the cross.

"God forbid that I should glory except in the cross." "And as many as walk according to that principle are saved." That's what he says. There's only one way you'll ever have peace with God and the mercy of God to cover all your sins and that's when you walk according to this principle. "I glory alone in the," what?, "cross." You say John, you mean anybody who walks according to that principle? Anybody. You say you mean it doesn't matter how bad you've been? It doesn't matter how bad you've been. Paul said, "He saved me and I'm chief sinner." It doesn't matter how bad. That's an open invitation to every man to walk by this principle.

And then I love this little note; he says at the end of verse 16, "and upon the Israel of God." You say who's the Israel of God? The true Jews. True converted Jews and this is a little invitation to the Judaisers to get it on. True Jews. True Jews are going to walk according to this principle he says. Now his closing words. Verse 17, "Henceforth, let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

What's he saying? Maybe he's talking to Christian. It's possible. Maybe he's saying Christians, don't add any more trouble to me. You know, the very fact that you listened to those Judaisers grieves me, breaks my heart. I've got enough pain. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Some of them I

got when I was with you Lystra when they stoned me and left me for dead. I mean, I've endured so much in carrying the gospel, you don't trouble me anymore. Let this letter settle the issue, will you please. And don't let me hear any more hassles about your wandering faith. But maybe he's talking to the non-Christians. Maybe he's talking to the Judaisers saying look guys, leave me alone. Don't hassle me. You're big on marks. I've got marks. You're big on physical scars. I've got them, the scars of Jesus Christ, not just circumcision. Don't question my authority. Don't question my loyalty. I have the scars of Jesus to prove my loyalty.

Maybe he meant it for both groups. You say John, in what sense can he say that I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus? What does he mean by that? Is that like St. Francis of Assisi, he's got stigmata in his hands? No, the word is stigmata here, but that isn't what he's saying. What are the marks of the Lord Jesus? I'll tell you what they are. Simply this, every blow that Paul every took as a Christian was really coming against Jesus Christ and he had the joy of taking it. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, he says, "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." In 2 Corinthians 4:10 he says, "I'm always bearing in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus." In Colossians 1:24, he says, "I fill up the afflictions of Christ." What does he mean? He means that when the world wanted to get Jesus, they couldn't get Him, because He was gone, so they got Paul instead.

Listen, anytime the world persecutes a Christian, they're persecuting Jesus. And when you take a blow for his sake, it's really one meant for Him. Remember when Paul was on the Damascus Road, Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecute us thou Christian?" What did he say? "Why persecutist thou me?" Any persecution of a believer is the persecution that comes to Christ. It's meant for Christ. He's not here. The world can't hit Him, so they hit us instead. We take the blows meant for Him. Paul says what a thrill to take the blows meant for Him when He took the blows on the cross meant for me.

Don't hassle me. I'm a true apostle. I've got scars to prove my diligence in bringing you the gospel. I've got scars to prove my loyalty to Jesus Christ. Let this letter end it. "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." I like that ending. That's a sermon. Grace, not law, of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Not external, internal. Man has a choice. Live by the flesh or by the cross.

Lily Douglas in *Christus Phuturous* writes, listen to this, very provocative. "Reason cries if God were good, he could not look upon the sin in misery of man and live. His heart would break. The Christian points to the cross and says God's heart did break. Reason cries born and reared in sin and pain as we are, how could we keep from sin? How can we be blamed? It is the creator who is responsible. It is God who deserves to be punished. The Christian kneels at the foot of the cross and whispers. God took the responsibility and bore the punishment. Reason cries, who is God? What is God? The name stands for the unknown. It is blasphemy that's saying we know it. The Christian kisses the feet of the dying Christ and says we must worship the majesty we see. True reason glories in the cross."

A letter was written to the Melbourne Daily paper this is what it said. "After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on TV, and reading reports and letters concerning him and his mission, I am hardly sick of the type of religion that insists my soul and everyone else's needs saving. Whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost, nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin. Although repetitive preaching insists that I do. Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed that remembers the aged and teaches children of goodness and not sin. If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned." End quote. And he will, because that's every man's choice. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that the cross provides salvation for every man. The only condition is faith. We pray Lord that no one would leave this building tonight without coming to the cross. That no one would glory in human effort. No one think himself good enough to enter Your heaven on his own conditions, but that every man would acknowledge his own sinfulness, fall at the foot of the cross, and find out that everything that reason cries was fulfilled at the cross. Your heart did break. You did bear the responsibility and the punishment. God suffering for human flesh. Speak to hearts tonight Father, by a simple act of faith we just pray that they would invite Jesus Christ into their life to be their Savior. They would turn from the religion of human achievement to the one of divine accomplishment for Your glory in Jesus' name, amen.

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