

Three Crosses

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[0:00] Have you bragged lately? I hope it hasn't been too long.! Paul liked to brag. Galatians 6.14!

The problem is we tend to boast like the world instead of in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. So a young man boasts in his car. A young lady in her grades.

An older man in his investments. A Christian mom in her pottery barn house. A Christian couple boast in how their children, not out loud, but in how their children are all dressed nicely, sitting well, prim and proper, in a row in the pew.

Non-Christians and Christians alike. We all have the strong desire to boast in things besides the cross.

And that's why we need the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds us of what is worth boasting about and what we are dead to. What's worth boasting in and what's not anymore?

[1:32] So please turn in your Bibles to Galatians 6. Galatians 6.11 Paul takes up the pen.

He's been reciting for someone and now he takes up the pen himself and he says in verse 11, See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand.

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. What counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

[2:46] The title of tonight's sermon is Three Crosses. Did you see the three crosses? As I read, they were all in verse 14.

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

There are three crosses. And the first cross that we see is our Lord's cross. Paul says this for me.

May I never boast in anything except the cross.

Imagine that. Those words come off the tongue so easily, but imagine boasting in the brutal death, the humiliating, crushing defeat of Jesus Christ.

He says, that's what I boast in. That's what I glory in. Could you glory in a man, a man's execution in the electric chair?

[3:52] Say, I'm proud of that. Let me tell you about this. Let me tell you about this man who was executed in the electric chair. That sounds strange to us.

And that's how it would sound to anyone who Paul said, I am going to boast and let me boast about this, about the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ. But that kind of boasting is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.

The Galatians are following false teachers in their boasting and what they're exalting themselves in. They're boasting just like the world. What does the world boast in?

First John says, the world boasts in what it has and does. Simple enough. What it has, what it's gained, what it possesses, and what it does, what they do.

And so let me ask you, how does that fit into your paradigm, your pattern of worldliness?

Worldliness is about what you boast in.

[4:59] It's about what you exalt in and what you trust in and what you want to give you status, to give you value, to give you your goodness. It's what you gladly tell others about.

What do you gladly tell others about? That's what you boast in. The world boasts in possessions. Hey, let me tell you about what I just got. Accomplishments.

Let me tell you what I did this weekend. Achievements. Let me tell you what my hard work has gained me. Human development. Human beauty. Human glory. That is the heart of worldliness. To boast about what you have and then what you've done. Worldliness is not drinking or chewing or dating girls that do.

Worldliness is boasting in something human instead of something divine. And worldliness can take on a very religious dress.

[6:05] Did you see that? Do you see that? Do you know that in your own life? What's the issue that Paul is arguing over here?

He's talking about circumcision. He's talking about some matter of Jewish religion. The false teachers want to be able to boast in your flesh, Paul says.

They want to boast in that you've been circumcised, that you've taken on the law, that you've really become religious now. So can worldliness look like religious conservatism where you're very staunchly religious and you do things that the world doesn't even do?

You look different from the world. Can that be worldliness? Yes. People weren't getting circumcised left and right in the ancient world. Only the very religious Jews were doing that.

Can worldliness look like singing out of the Trinity hymnal maybe? Or singing to a piano? Can worldliness look like suits and ties instead of jeans and polo shirts?

[7:15] Yes. Worldliness is taking your joy from what you can do, what humans can do. It's from something human. It's something man can do.

And that's why Paul's answer to worldliness is not another set of rules, another set of things for you to do. He doesn't say, no, those false teachers, they don't understand what worldliness really is or how to avoid it.

He instead takes us to the cross. Takes us to the cross and he says, you want to boast about all that. Let me tell you about something that's worth glorying in.

Here's something that puts all human glory, human achievement, human wisdom to shame. So think about, think about the glory of the cross.

Why is it such something that to revel in, to boast in? Well, at the cross is where we see all of the attributes of God put on display.

[8:20] So do you want to see the glory of God? Then you need to see the cross. You need to understand the cross. Do you want to see the love of God? Do you want to see the justice of God? Do you want to see the might of God?

Do you want to see the wrath, holiness, goodness, power, faithfulness? It's all here. Nothing we do shows the glory of God like what Jesus did on the cross.

Nothing that we can work up, religious or otherwise, can show the glory of God like the cross. We glory in the cross because here is where we see the love of Jesus.

I exalt, I glory in the cross because the cross shouts, Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. Poor, weak, vile, helpless, guilty, me.

He loved me. He set his heart on me. He loved me and gave himself up for me. What has the world ever done for you? What has all your achievements ever done for you?

[9:34] Jesus died to make sinners saints. Jesus died to give you everlasting joy in his presence. The cross is that outburst is an explosion of Jesus' heart and love for you, believer.

Here, here we see sins put away. Why do you glory, why should we glory in the cross? Because here is where you actually see sin dealt with. Finally, I was in the car the other day and I was listening to some talk radio and they had a segment on there where it was called the apologies of the week.

and I was wondering what that was about. But what it was was the guy, the talk show host, basically started reading all the apologies for the week, all the famous people and high-ranking officials and the actors and the people from other countries who were powerful.

They had to apologize. And so he just sat down and read what they said and it was funny in a very tragic sense because none of them actually apologized.

None of them asked for forgiveness. I'm sorry that people took offense at what I said. If you listen to that closely, you hear the fault's theirs.

[10:54] It's not mine. I'm sorry that people took offense at what I said but I didn't mean it the way they took it. And on and on it went. There was always an excuse. No one actually came out and said, please forgive me.

But, we as humans have this profound need for forgiveness, don't we? We've done wrong. We've gone astray. We know what's right and we haven't done it. There's something desperately wicked about us and there's something that we desperately need forgiveness. And who can forgive us? How can we find release from our sins? You search the world and there's no answer out there. There's apologies.

There's excuses. But where's the forgiveness? But at the cross of our Lord, sin is put away. [11:59] As far as the east is from the west, buried in the deepest of ocean depths, the cross brings forgiveness. Final, complete forgiveness.

And that is something to boast in. That is something to glory in. That is something to tell other people about gladly. That I'm forgiven. No more excuses. I don't have to hide it anymore. I'm a sinner and I've been forgiven. Let me tell you how. We glory in the cross because it's the message of the cross that saves sinners. It's the message of the cross that saves religious sinners like Saul of Tarsus.

And irreligious people like John Newton, the slave trader who was a blasphemer. He wasn't looking for God. And yet God called him.

The gospel is the message of a shameful, horrible cross. And that message is the power of God unto salvation.

[13:03] That message actually calls men to God, actually brings men to God and gives them new life. And the hearing of that message by the power of the Spirit that saved me and saved you.

So think about it. Think about where you were when that message finally penetrated your ears and your heart. It was the power of God to salvation.

What can the world say to that? What has the world ever done? The silence is deafening. We glory in the cross because it makes the wisdom and the glory of this world utterly foolish.

The things men boast in, the things men are so proud of and take joy in. Beautiful faces. Beautiful families. Beautiful churches.

Beautiful bodies. Man's hard work. Man overcoming long odds. Man's perseverance. Man's suffering. Man's glory. The world revels in it.

[14:11] They soak it up. So they hear of a story of one nice person who does one nice thing for some other person and they say, well, that restores my faith in humanity.

But the cross is ugly. And the cross is weakness itself. It's shame. It's desperation. We are so far gone that the only remedy was the Son of God had to be crushed in our place.

It was desperation. And so our Lord hung naked and our Lord was mocked and our Lord was shamed and our Lord was in agony and He wasn't rescued.

He didn't rise to the occasion, so to speak. He didn't show His great power. He didn't show great resilience, at least as humans measure it. He died. But if you have spiritual eyes, you see what is really beautiful.

The cross has a beauty that shames Hollywood. And it has wisdom that shames Wall Street and power that shames Washington.

[15:26] Napoleon Bonaparte, the great conqueror of France and Europe, knew that. I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man.

Between Him and every other person in the world, there is no possible term of comparison.

Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded empires.

But what did we rest the creations of our genius upon force? Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love and at this hour, millions of people would die for Him.

You know, the world has glory. They have wisdom. They have happy faces. They have the front page. Men run after them. But here is Christ.

Naked. Beaten. And it's the appalling ugliness and the shame of it that makes all the world's boasting so entirely trivial.

[16:31] We glory in the cross because it humbles men. It puts to shame the wisdom and the glory of an entire world running away from God.

So Paul says, May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus. But then he goes on. He goes to the second cross. And this is the world's cross. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me.

And so here we see Paul's doctrine. It's underneath the text. It's there. It's coming out now. The Paul's doctrine of the believer's union with Jesus Christ.

He moves from Christ's crucifixion to a crucifixion that has to do with me. That affects me. Christ's death has a profound, deep, intimate effect in my life.

It wasn't just out there in history, in time, happening in history. But instead, it changes the world's relationship to me and my relationship to the world.

[17 : 42] Through Christ's cross, the world has been crucified to me. So now, we need to get the picture straight. It's not Jesus on the cross here.

It is the world on the cross through his cross. So now, to me, the world is a dead thing. It's on its way out. A man on a cross was a man running out of time.

And this world is passing. And if you have eyes to see it, you were once blind to it. You thought the world was the end-all and be-all of everything.

But now you see this world has a date with doom. It's passing. It's only a matter of time. But it's also a powerless thing.

A man on a cross is a powerless man. And the world used to hold such sway over our hearts, didn't it, brothers and sisters? It dominated us.

[18 : 46] Paul used to glory in his birth, in his heritage, and what he had done, his works. And those were worldly things, earthly things, even though they were religious things.

And that's the way the world holds power over people. It says, if you want to be someone, then you have to do this. If you want to save yourself, if you want to be safe, if you want to be good, then you have to be this or do that.

And if you're not doing those things, then forget about it. And it holds power over people that way.

But now the world is powerless because who listens to a man on a cross?

Who jumps when he commands? Who shakes in their boots when he threatens? Its threats are empty because we can see it hanging there. It's on its way out.

It's dead to me now. It's as good as dead. And through the cross of Christ, the world has become an ugly thing. A crucified man was an ugly thing.

[19 : 49] You know, Jesus was beaten beyond recognition. That Isaiah said you couldn't even tell if he was human. And the world thinks so much of itself.

But Paul no longer thought very much of it. After all, it did kill the Lord of glory. glory. What does the world do to good things?

Innocent things? Well, look what it did to the Lord of glory. It twists and it destroys them. The world might be full of its own virtue, but Paul didn't think much of it anymore.

It's dead to me. The world thinks we're intolerant and foolish and short sighted and stupid. That's what it thinks of us.

And Paul would say, fine, feelings are mutual. The world is crucified to me. That's the second cross. And then the third cross.

[20 : 54] The third cross is the other side to the same coin. The world is crucified to me and I to the world. I'm crucified to it. Now here's my cross.

Here's your cross, Christian. You have a cross because you're joined to Jesus. When Christ died to this world, I died with him. And now it's not the world on the cross.

I'm there. You're there. I've been crucified to the world. So what power does it have over me? So now I'm dead to it.

What power does it have over me? What power does the world have over a dead man? Well, let's go to a funeral home. And let's go in and let's look into the coffin, the casket.

Now look at that man. Now try to talk to him. Try to frighten him. Try to make him do what you want. Try to get him to dance to your song.

[21 : 54] Try to woo him. Try to win him. That's what I am like to the world. Dead to the world. free.

Dead to the world's threats. You see, the world, in this context, these false teachers, they were afraid. Why were they so pushing circumcision? Well, because they didn't want to be persecuted for the cross.

They were trying to avoid being persecuted. But here Paul is saying, I'm not afraid to be persecuted. Why? Why is he not afraid? Is he Superman?

Does it not bother him? No, because dead men don't scare easy. They don't scare easy. So do you struggle with the fear of man? Maybe you need to have your view of yourself and the view of this world realigned.

Maybe you're still thinking that you're alive to the world when you're actually dead. What is the worst thing the world can do to you, Christian? they can kill you and send you to heaven.

[23 : 05] A dead man is dead to the world's honors. He isn't trying to win their four-inch t-ball trophies anymore when God's holding forth the victor's crown.

He's dead to this world, but he's alive to that one. There's just no appeal to this world's honors. crucified men don't have grand plans of making it big.

Crucified men don't have grand plans of making it to the big leagues, to the penthouse. They don't have grand plans about being millionaires and all that.

They see themselves as dead. The important thing, though, to bring it all back, is to realize that this crucifixion happened through Christ's crucifixion.

And listen to me. This is not making up something. It's not us trying to convince ourselves. If we believe it hard enough, it will make it real.

[24 : 18] We believe it because it is real. We're not playing mind games with ourselves. This isn't a bit of self-talk, self-fulfilling prophecy, or anything like that.

Paul believed the spiritual reality that when Christ died, I died with him. And when Christ died to this world, Paul himself died to this world.

And he rose again to a whole new world. And that's why he says in the next first circumcision, uncircumcision, they mean nothing.

What matters is a new creation. Paul died and then he rose again to a whole new world when he was joined to Jesus. A whole new way of boasting.

A whole new way of exalting and being happy and having something to tell other people about. And it happened through Christ's cross. And Paul, and you brother, and you sister, we are spiritually joined to Jesus.

[25 : 27] And when he went into the waters of death, you went with him. And when he came out, you were there with him. And that changed everything.

So the world goes on. This age goes on. The powers that be, they go on. But we don't go on with it. We're part of now the new heavens and the new earth.

We're now seated with Christ in heavenly places, Paul says, the new creation. We are experiencing what Hebrews says, the powers of the age to come. Those powers of the age to come, the future has invaded our life and has taken over our life.

And so we're dead to this world and this world is dead to us, but we are alive to God through Christ's resurrection. This is why we need communion. We need to remember again the fellowship that we have in Christ's death.

The death he died, he died once for all. In the life he lives, he lives to God. Christ's death means more than forgiveness.

[26 : 36] It does mean that, and we rejoice in it. Christ's death means more than the cleansing from sin, and it certainly means that, and we boast in that. the cross is even more than that for us.

It's the way that Jesus saved us from this world. So he took you down into the waters with him, and he brought you up again.

The waters of death, and he brought you into the life everlasting. We need communion to remember that, to remember where is our life?

It's in Jesus Christ. And this world, it's not our home. We've been crucified to it, and it's been crucified to us. That's freedom. That's life.

The world can't offer anything like that. The world has the same old things to offer. It's an old man and an old suit offering old dead flowers. There's nothing there to boast about.

[27 : 36] There's nothing there that's going to really have any lasting effect on your life. But Jesus died for you. The Lord of glory died for the worst of sinners.

That is something worth boasting about. And so this evening, glory in the Lord, as you remember the pain that he went through, the shame that he went through for you.

He loved you, brothers and sisters. He loved you. And he gave himself up for you to save you from this present evil age.

let's boast in our Lord, even as we remember his death. Thank you for Thank you.