



FREE TO BOAST
Galatians 6:11-18

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open to Galatians 6. I want to share with you what a preacher shared with me based on this text when I was a college student that had a profound impact on my life. It's kind of a long quote, but I really can't improve on these words. The preacher's name was John Piper, and he was preaching on Galatians 6:14, and he started by saying this. He said,

You don't have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know the few great things that matter, and to be willing to live for them and die for them. The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have been mastered by a few great things. If you want your life to count, if you want the ripple effect of the pebbles you drop to become waves that reach the ends of the earth and roll on for centuries into eternity, you don't have to have a high IQ; you don't have to have good looks or riches; you don't have to come from a fine family or a fine school. You have to know a few great, majestic, unchanging, obvious, simple, glorious things, and be set on fire by them.

He continued,

But, I know that not all of you want your life to make a difference. There are many of you, you don't care whether you make a lasting difference for something great. You just want people to like you, or if you could just grow up and have a good job with a good wife or a husband and a couple of good kids and a nice car and long weekends and a few good friends, a fun retirement and a quick and easy death and no hell; if you could have that, you'd be satisfied.

That's when he said, "That is a tragedy in the making." Then, he used two illustrations. He's a pastor, and he said,

Three weeks ago we got word at our church that Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards had both been killed in Cameroon. Ruby was over 80. Single all her life, she poured it out for one great thing: To make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick. Laura was a widow, a medical doctor, pushing 80 years old, and serving at Ruby's side in Cameroon. The brakes failed, the car went over the cliff, and they were both killed instantly. And I asked my people: was that a tragedy? Two lives, driven by one great vision, spent in unheralded service to the perishing poor for the glory of Jesus Christ - two decades after almost all their American counterparts have retired to throw their lives away on trifles in Florida or New Mexico. No, [he said] that is not a tragedy. That is a glory.

I'll tell you what a tragedy is. I'll read to you from *Reader's Digest* what a tragedy is. "Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now, they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30 foot trawler, play softball and collect shells." The American Dream: come to the end of your life - your one and only life - and let the last great work before you give an account to your Creator be, "I collected shells. See my shells, God?" That is a tragedy. And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. And I want to plead with you, don't buy it.

Then, he took Galatians 6:14, and he pleaded with us not to buy it, not to waste our lives in this world. So, tonight, as we come to this text that had a profound impact on me the first time I remember hearing it preached, I want to say to every student in this room and every mom and dad in this room, every grandmom or granddad in this room, every single, every husband, every wife in this room...I want to plead with you to make your life count for one thing, to be consumed by one thing, to be mastered by one thing, to be obsessed with one thing, and that one thing is the cross of Jesus Christ. I want to submit to you that if your life is not mastered by this one thing, it will be wasted in this world.

Galatians 6:11, Paul writes, "*See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*" Pause for a second. Paul likely dictated most of his letters. He spoke, somebody else writing them down. However, often times, he would get to the end, just like anybody who's dictating a letter will at least pick up a pen and sign it at the end, maybe even write a couple of notes and sign it at the end. Most scholars, people debate exactly what's going on here, or most scholars think Paul takes the pen out of the guy's hand and says, "I'm writing this last part," and he starts to write. He says, "I'm writing in bold with underline and all caps. Hear this."

He writes, in verse 12. "*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.*" Here it is, verse 14. If it's not underlined in your Bible, I would encourage you to underline it.

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. Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

The Gospel in Galatians ...

I hope that we have seen the beauty and the grandeur of the gospel just to come to life in the book of Galatians. I want to kind of recap the gospel in Galatians and see if you can remember what goes in these different blanks here. So, justification is by what alone? Okay, we're going to try this like one more time, like...okay. Justification by grace alone. Okay, grace alone; it's the only way we can be saved...by grace alone. God's pleasure in us is not based on our performance for Him; based on Christ's performance in us, for us, through us. It's all grace.

By grace alone, through what? Through faith...through faith alone; not faith, plus works; not faith, plus a little bit of work. Faith alone. Faith period is the only way to be justified before God. It's the only way to live, even to be sanctified before God. We've seen that. We live by faith. Justification by grace alone through faith alone in who? In Christ alone.

Galatians 3 showed us the pinnacle, the supremacy of Christ, of all the Old Testament...Abraham, Moses...pointing us to Christ. Everything flowing from Christ. In Christ alone. He is the object of our faith. Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone means...this is where he brings it in the end here in Galatians 6...means boasting in the cross alone. Boasting in the cross alone.

This is a truly remarkable text, especially verse 14. It's a bold statement that Paul gives us at the end of this book. It's bold on a couple of different levels. First of all, it's bold because he doesn't say the cross is one thing I boast in. There are a lot of things I'm proud of, I boast in. That word "boast", even the word in the original language, the New Testament, really doesn't have a comparable English translation. We think, "Well, boast, you mean brag? Or what does that mean?" Well, basically, it means, if you could put it all into one: your boasting; your glory in; you rejoice in; you are consumed by; you're obsessed with; your life is in. All of that in one word. Boast in the cross, and he says, "This is not just one thing I boast in." He says it's the only thing. "God forbid that I would boast in anything else," he says.

So, that kind of raises it to another level that everything else in the world...there's no ground for boasting in anything, but this one thing: the cross. That leads us to the second way in which this is such a bold statement, to boast in the cross. Now, that doesn't seem extremely bold to us today precisely because we are close to 2,000 years removed from that time, and we have glamorized the cross. The cross, to us, is something we put on a necklace and wear around our neck. The cross is something we hang on the walls of our homes for everyone to come and see. You didn't do that in the first century though. The cross was a horrible, horrible means of execution and torture designed, devised, even refined by the Romans, not just to kill, but to humiliate, to degrade. Let's take a man and strip him naked and put him on a tree and put stakes in his hands and his feet and hold him up for everybody to walk by on the streets and spit on him and curse him and mock him. Even the worst Roman criminal would not be killed this way.

We have laws against things like this happening today. The closest comparison we might have, when it comes to execution, the closest comparison may be...it'd be like Paul saying, "I boast in the electric chair. That's what I rejoice in." Or, "I find glory in the gas chamber", or "I am obsessed with the lynching rope." What kind of statement is that? Who sells electric chair bracelets and necklaces? "Come into my home. Look at the lynching rope I have up on the wall for everyone to see?" No, this is shocking that Paul would say, "I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" and he's built to this.

Go back a couple of chapters, Galatians 2. Just circle how you see crucified and cross building to Galatians 6. Look in Galatians 2:20. You might circle it there. It says, "*I have been crucified with Christ...*" Circle it there. He's given us this language, and it just leaps off the page when you realize the horror and shock that was associated with a word like this: "*crucified with Christ...*" You get to Galatians 3:1, "*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*" This was an embarrassment. It's not good to be crucified. You're not proud of someone who is crucified. You get down to verse 13, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone...'*" and here it is, the imagery, not the exact word "crucified," but "*is hung on a tree.*"

Then, you get to Galatians 5:11, Paul writes, *"Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished."* Circle it there, the cross and the offense of the cross. He knows it's offensive.

You get down to verse 24. He uses this imagery again. *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."* Then, you get to Galatians 6:12, second half of verse 12, and he says, *"The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross..."* Then, the climax in verse 14. *"May I never boast except in the..."* circle it there, *"...the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The book of Galatians is grace-saturated and cross-centered and this is so huge. We're about to look at reasons in Galatians 6 why we boast in the cross; why every teenager in this room, every college student in this room, should boast in the cross; more than in who your boyfriend or girlfriend is, more than in what grades you're getting or what academic standing you're going to have, or what job you're going to have, any of those things. That boasting in the cross is far more important...eternally more important...than all of those things. Why? Why is boasting in the cross more important than whatever job advancement you can get or what salary you can make or what house you could live in or what car you can drive or what football team you...why would you boast in only the cross and none of that other stuff?

Five Reasons Why We Boast In The Cross ... Because the cross confronts us with the reality of our sin.

We're going to see reasons why we boast in the cross, but it's important to realize at this point...it's important for us to realize that much of contemporary Christianity today is cross-less, and I am tempted...I'm not going to do it...but I am tempted to name names, to...in an attempt to encourage you, warn you to watch out for Christian authors, teachers and supposed preachers who have nothing to do with the cross, but, suffice it to say, if you're listening to, reading someone, and you don't hear cross all over the place, not just a little cross here or a little cross there, but cross everywhere, then discard it. Have nothing to do with it. Christianity is cross-centered. It is based around, not the cross plus something else. We boast only in the cross. Why?

First reason: we boast in the cross because the cross confronts us with the reality of our sin. Reason number one: Why the cross is so important, because the cross confronts us with the reality of our sin. I'm just going to pull on the context here for a minute. What we've seen all the way up to this point in Galatians. Remember the Judaizers were saying, "You need to be circumcised in order to be saved. You need to follow these Jewish rules, rituals, regulations." Don't miss this: The Judaizers were not saying that Jesus didn't die on the cross. They said Jesus died on the cross, but what they were doing is they were saying, "Jesus died on the cross. He did His work here, and now, we do our work over here. So, we finish the work that Jesus started because we're circumcised, which we follow these rules and regulations."

It's not just Judaizers. It's the same kind of language that is used in the name of evangelism today. To say, "Jesus started the work. Now, you finish the work by doing this, and now we've got a list of things to do, words to say, boxes to check off." The reason the cross is so important, it's because it confronts us with the reality of our sin and reminds us that we have no work to bring to the table.

We are slaves to sin.

Think about the realities that Paul has built up to this point in Galatians 6. First reality: we are slaves to sin. At the end of Galatians 3, prisoners of sin. Galatians 4, eight different times...slavery, slaves, mentioned over and over and over and over again. You get to Galatians 5, it starts...Galatians 5:1, "We are no longer slaves to sin. We're slaves to sin under the law." You go to Romans 6, 7 and 8, a commentary on the book of Galatians, and you see, "We were slaves to sin" all over the place and our slavery to sin. We're slaves to the sin.

We are dead in our sin.

Second reality that Paul has built is that we are dead in sin. Remember Galatians 3:10-13: "We're cursed before God, condemned before God because of our sin because of our inability to obey the law." In fact, you turn over one page in your Bible, maybe on that page you've got open, Ephesians 2, the very next book after Galatians. Look at Ephesians 2. Look at how verse 1 starts off. Paul's talking about what we were before we came to Christ, and He says, "As for you..." verse 1, "...you were..." what? "...you were dead in your transgressions and sins..." Dead in your sins.

We are unable to save ourselves.

We're slaves to sin, we're dead in sin, and we are unable to save ourselves. That's the whole thing. Paul's been saying it over and over and over and over again up to this point in Galatians, picks up the pen, and he says, "You do your circumcision; you follow your rules and your rituals. You still can't do it." That's the whole point. What slave can pay the price to set himself free? What dead man can bring himself to life? What person who is dead can choose life, can cause life to come in him?

This is what is so offensive about the cross because the cross confronts us with the reality of that; of the fact that we have nothing to bring to the table. This whole picture of grace alone. This is why the cross doesn't mix well with other world religions. This is why the cross doesn't work well on Oprah. This is why the cross doesn't work in many Christian bookstores and markets today, because the cross doesn't say, "Well, you've just got some problems to fix here or there. You put your work forward, and God's going to fix those problems. Here's the steps. Let me walk you through them, and this is how you can be saved. Do these things and it's this easy." Meanwhile, God says, "Go to the cross and look at my Son. Look at the divine wrath, divine weight of sin, poured out on my Son for your sin and do not say...do not walk away from that cross saying, 'Thank you for doing your part, Jesus, now I'm going to do my part, and we'll make this thing work.' No, you come to that cross and you fall on your face without any prayers you're praying or verses you're quoting or church attendance or morality you're bringing to the table, and you say nothing." The words of the hymn writer, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

What we don't need: superficial religion.

What we don't need...ladies and gentleman, we don't need superficial religion. Superficial religion appeals to our self-esteem driven, self-saturated egos. It was circumcisions and rituals and rules in Galatians. Today, it's prayers to pray and cards to sign and churches to attend and morality to follow. You put them all together, since Genesis 4, since Cain and Abel, man has been trying to use religion to cover over his sin. Man has been putting on all kinds of different shows that we create, and we say, "You do these things and perform this act before God and everything will be okay." That's the last thing we need is superficial religion.

What we do need: supernatural regeneration.

What we do need is supernatural regeneration. The cross confronts us with the reality of our sin and offends our pride to the core and says, "You need God to do the work in you that you cannot accomplish on your own. You need Him to set you free. You need Him to give you life.", and He does it, and He does it by the cross. So, we boast...so, we say, "Yes, that's where my glory is. That's where my joy is."

It's weird to find joy in being confronted with the reality of our sin. Isn't that weird? The world would tell us we're better off not being confronted with the reality of our sin. The world would tell us to pretend like everything is okay in our lives. The reality is we bring nothing to the table, and Christ brings everything to the table.

Because the cross comforts us with the provision of our Savior.

This leads us to the second reason why we boast in the cross, not just because the cross confronts us with the reality of our sin, because the cross comforts us with the provision of our Savior. We get specifically now into verse 12. Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. They want to make a good impression outwardly. Judaizers focusing on, "Okay, what can we do outwardly to please both God and man?" The cross undercuts efforts to please God and man outwardly.

Christianity is not about human achievement.

First, the cross undercuts efforts to please God outwardly. "Christianity," Paul says all over this book, and here in Galatians 6:12... "Christianity is not about human achievement. Christianity is not about what we can do to please God." Mark it down. Every single religion in the world, a shelf of world religions...you've got hundreds, thousands of different products, and they come in all types of different shapes and sizes and prices, but when you look at all of them, there's one ingredient that is at the core: "Here's what you do; here's what you do to please God; here's what you do to please God; here's what you do to please this god or that god, or here's what you do to please no god. Put yourself on the throne and here's what you do to please..." At the end of the shelf, there is a gospel that is set apart from every other product that is there, and the gospel says, "You can do nothing to please God."

Christianity is all about divine accomplishment.

Christianity is not about human achievement; instead, Christianity is about divine accomplishment. The gospel says it is all done for you and not just in the past. Not just in the past, not just what happened a couple of thousand years ago. It's all done for you today, at this moment. Christ does everything in us, for us. It is His work in us. We please God, yes. How? By Christ's performance in us and trusting Christ, living by faith, by grace through faith. That's the whole picture. You see why this doesn't work in contemporary culture. Why it doesn't work on Oprah or any other conversations about how to make our way to God? The world is fine; the world's religious system is fine with you having whatever religion you want, but as you soon as you say that, "You can do nothing apart from Christ, that I can do nothing apart from Christ, that I'm actually condemned; you're actually condemned apart from Christ", now, you've crossed a line.

We get this picture, the statement, always coming in the face of biblical Christianity. "It's so narrow-minded. Only one way to God? Wake up and look around! I'm not just going to say there's only one way to God." See the pride at the core of that statement? I'm convinced that if there were a thousand ways, we would want a thousand and one. The issue is not

how many ways there are. The issue is our autonomy. We want to make our own way to God, and the cross is an offense to our pride and says, "You can't do it. God has made a way to you." Divine accomplishment. He has come to you, and what's most concerning is the increasing number of supposed Christians who are saying there are many different ways to God. You're not a Christian if the cross is one of a variety of viable options for you. The cross is everything in Christianity. Everything in Christianity. Not, "Well, I'm going to have this done for me here, but I could do it over here if I wanted to." Absolutely not. The cross has confronted us with the reality of our sin and said, "He has provided everything for us."

We no longer live for the applause of men.

So, we're done with outward impressions before God and before man. Paul says, "We no longer live for the applause of men." Paul says here in verse 12, "They're trying to make a good impression outwardly, trying to compel you to be circumcised." You get down to verse 13, and he says, "*Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised...*" Here's why. Here's the motive: so "*that they may boast about your flesh.*" They want to boast and glory in how many of you guys have been circumcised; how many of you guys have been circumcised; how many of you guys have done what's prescribed, what you've prescribed for them, what they've prescribed for you to do."

Here's the danger...don't miss it...not just in the first century church, but in the 21st century church and see the connection here. As long as Christianity is about human achievement, then Christian ministry is about human achievement, and as long as these are the things we do, in order to be right before God or to be saved, then ministry is about getting people to do the right things, right? The more people do the right things, the more successful we are. That was the picture in Galatians 6 here.

Let's bring it into the 21st century. Do you think there's some parallels here? How many people have walked the aisle? Have people have signed the card? How many people did you have raise your hand? How many people did you have go through this deal, this process over here? All of a sudden, fastest growing. All the things we talked about last week in comparison. We're looking at each other. The reality is, we don't live for the applause of men. Christianity is not about human achievement, and Christian ministry is not about human achievement. It's a work of the Spirit of God that He does in our hearts, that He must do that is impossible without Him, no matter how much we try to devise stuff.

We now live with the pleasure of God.

We no longer live for the applause of man. Why? Because we now live with the pleasure of God. We no longer have...as long as we have to do stuff in order to please God and man, then there will always be more stuff to do. There will be more competition to be had with each other, but if the pleasure of God is based on Christ in us and the performance of Christ in us...don't miss this...then we are free. That's what Paul is saying. We are free to rest in Him. We don't need the applause of men, even religious men. We have the pleasure of God in us, Christ in us.

So, every teenager in this room is free from seeking pleasure, acceptance from this guy or this girl or this group. Every man and woman in this room is free from seeking to advance themselves above the next guy and get the next edge here. We have the pleasure of Almighty God based on the presence of Christ in us. He is good. He is enough for us. We no longer need the applause of man or live for the applause of man because we have the pleasure of God. Christ's provision is good, and the cross confronts us with the reality of our sin and with the provision of Christ as our Savior.

Because the cross reminds us that our safety is not found in this world.

That leads us to the third reason we boast in the cross: Because the cross reminds us that our safety is not found in this world. Now, here's where it gets interesting. We actually saw this, got a preview of this in Galatians 5:11, but we didn't camp out there. I knew this was coming here in Galatians 6. Look in verse 12, the second half of verse 12. He says, about the Judaizers, he says, "*The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*"

Here's the deal: If you're a Jewish person in the first century, and you embrace the cross like Paul's talking about here, and you say, "The cross is everything," and you say, "Circumcision is not necessary and obedience to these laws and rituals is not necessary," then all of a sudden, you find yourself turning your back on Jewish leaders, Jewish teachers, and Jewish teachings, and you find yourself ostracized. That's exactly what Paul had experienced. You find yourself kicked out of the synagogue, likely kicked out of your household. You find yourself a social outcast now. You find yourself possibly facing financial ruin, maybe...maybe worse.

When we think about persecution of Christianity in the early centuries of the church, we often think about Roman persecution. The reality is, New Testament teaches us, that persecution of the church began, not by the Romans, but by who? By the Jewish people. Christ and His crucifixion, you get to Acts 7, and Stephen, first Christian martyr, stoned by the Jewish ruling council, and you have Paul in Acts 8, a Jewish man, leading Jewish people from house to house to house, persecuting Christians. So, there was a cost. If you embrace the cross like this, there's a cost. Paul says, "These guys are wimps. They want a Christ without a price that comes with the cross."

You get down to verse 17, and Paul says...it's a great, really kind of a play on images or words. He says, "*Let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*" It's a great picture here. Paul's talking to a group of people who are saying, "Well, this is what you need to do to your body in order to be saved, in order to be pleasing before God." He said, "I'll show you. I'll show you what happens when you follow God. I'll show you what happens when Christ is your salvation." He says, "Let me show you the bruises on my arms and my legs from when I was stoned at Lystra, one of the cities in Galatia. Let me show you the marks that show my identification with Christ."

In fact, hold your place here. Go back one book to the left, 2 Corinthians 11. Just a few pages back to the left; 2 Corinthians 11. Look at verse 23. Listen to Paul here. He describes what he had been through as a follower of Christ. Listen to what he says. 2 Corinthians 11:23. He says, "*Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more.*" Halfway through verse 23, he says,

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored

and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

"This is what I have gone through as a follower of Christ. These are the marks on my body as a result of following Christ," Paul says.

We do not fear suffering.

What Paul is saying here in Galatians 6 is a sobering truth for everyone who identifies themselves with Christ. He says, "We do not fear suffering." These are false brothers teaching false doctrines in Galatians 6, and you can tell it because of the way they're avoiding persecution with everything in them; the way they're running scared of identification with the cross. Those who are identified with the cross don't fear suffering. When you're identified with a crucified Messiah, you expect suffering.

We are now free to suffer.

We don't fear suffering. We're now free to suffer. Free to suffer. We've seen freedom all over the book of Galatians, brings us imagery in the end, and it says, "Free to experience marks." This is interesting language. Paul talking about boasting in a crucifixion and saying, "You can tell I'm identified with Christ because of what I've been through." It's like what he says in Philippians 1, when he says, "*It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ to suffer.*" That's weird.

"It's been given to you," the language in the New Testament. "It's been given to you as a gift," Philippians 1. "It's been given to you as a gift to suffer." How about that imitation? "Come to Christ every one. The buses will wait. Suffering is here for you. Come to Christ, and you get suffering." Makes sense though, doesn't it? We're not identified with a savior in a five star resort, or a savior who's beckoning us from the cruise ship to follow after Him. We're identified with a Savior who has been mocked and beaten and scourged and spit upon and nailed to a cross.

Think about it. What was God's strategy for showing His love most clearly to the world? The Suffering Servant. In His divine wisdom, He ordained a Suffering Servant, the self-sacrifice of His only Son to be the means by which He would say to this world, "I love and am compassionate and gracious toward you." You...you see the history after the cross. You see the New Testament letters that are written to suffering people.

The book of Acts, persecution, suffering. You see Christian history tells us ten out of eleven of those disciples martyred. Apparently, God's strategy has not changed. How is God showing His love most clearly to the world? Through suffering servants and even that makes sense when you think about it. How will God show the world that He is supreme over all the stuff in this world if His followers have all the stuff in this world? Isn't it when the followers of Christ are stripped of the stuff in this world, and they say in the heart of suffering, "Christ is good. Christ is enough. He is my rock and my joy and my strength." Now, the world says, "There's something there." However, if we have everything else the world has, if we're living in the prosperity the world is living in, then the world looks at us and says, "Well, good thing you tack on Jesus on Sundays, but I don't tack on Jesus, but we still have the same stuff. You're seeking pleasure and joy and satisfaction and the same stuff that I am." The whole "Radical" picture really begins to come to play here.

Paul says, "We don't fear suffering. We're free to suffer." We don't...not that we look for persecution, but the reality is what do we expect? If we're going to follow a crucified Messiah who had no roof over His head, then can we expect to live with all this stuff in the world? Don't miss what they were doing in Galatians 6. They were taking the cross, and

they were minimizing it in order to create a Christianity that allowed them to be safe and comfortable in this world.

Do you think we face the temptation to do the exact same thing today? I'll give you a picture, not just of health and wealth or prosperity, so called "Prosperity gospel", but a picture of much of what we have done in contemporary Christianity. Minimizing the cross in order to maximize our comforts and prosperity in this world. We create Christianity where it's okay, and in the process, we miss the cross, and we say things like, "The safest place to be is at the center of God's will." Doesn't square with 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. The center of God's will may be the most dangerous place for us to be, and the cross reminds us of that. Our safety is not found in this world.

Because the cross keeps us from wasting our lives in this world.

We're free to suffer, and it leads us to the fourth reason that kind of piggybacks on this. Not only does the cross remind us that our safety is not found in this world, but the cross keeps us...don't miss this...the cross keeps us from wasting our lives on this world. When you get to verse 14, and Paul says, *"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."* The last part of this verse just came alive in my study this week. I've read...I've studied this text before, but that last part of verse 14, *"Through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* Did you hear that?

This world has nothing for us.

We have seen up to this point, after this point in Galatians, we've seen Christ crucified. We've seen the Christian crucified with Christ, but now the world crucified. Paul says...don't miss it...Paul says, "I am dead to the world...dead to the world, and the world is dead to me." When he came to Christ, his entire relationship to the world changed. He says, "This world has nothing for us Christians." Church, this world has nothing for us. We don't think like this world thinks. We don't live for what this world lives for. This world is not the source of our life, our satisfaction, or our joy.

Philippians 3, when Paul says...he comes up with this list of things that he had in this world, and he says, "Put them all together, and they're one big pile of dung compared to this one thing: the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ." Paul says, "Take everything, even the best things this world has to offer from me. As long as I have Christ, I have everything I want and everything I need." That is a radical way to talk. That is a radical way to live.

Christ is everything to us.

This world has nothing for us because Christ is everything to us. Bonhoeffer said, "The baptized Christian has ceased to belong to the world and is no longer its slave. He belongs to Christ alone and his relationship with the world is mediated through Christ." The world is nothing to us because Christ is everything to us. We are dead men walking, so to speak.

Now, this...think about how this, just on a practical level, changes the way we live. Teenagers in this room, students in this room, we don't run after all the pursuits and pleasures this world offers us looking for satisfaction and joy and fulfillment. We're free from those. This world has nothing for us because we have found, in Christ...in Christ, not in our parent's religion, not in what we do, programs on Wednesdays or Sundays or even in a weekend like this, but in Christ. In Christ, we have found satisfaction that supersedes all the stuff this world is offering us put together. God, raise up students in high school and college across this faith family and show the world that we don't need to pursue these

things anymore because we have fullness in Christ. This world has nothing for us; Christ is everything to us.

God, raise up parents, men and women, who will show students that this world has nothing for us, and Christ is everything to us. God, raise up parents who do not spend their students lives saying, "Do this, do this, do this. We have got to go to this place and get this skill and get this accomplishment in order to get into this college, in order to have this degree, in order to get this job, in order to have this life, and we spend ourselves trying to make sure they have enough stuff in order to get there; they have enough opportunities in order to get there, and in the process, we're leading them to acquire a whole host of things that, one day, they will stand before God in heaven and every single one of them will burn up in the fire, and they will stand as beggars before God, and it will be because of us; because we forgot to teach them to boast in the cross and not the things of this world. The cross...boast in the cross, because we don't want to waste our lives in this world.

I was preaching in New Orleans a couple of weeks ago at a conference on defending the faith, and I was sharing a story that I know I've shared at Brook Hills before, but God kind of brought it back to my heart and pierced my heart with it, and it's a story...Indonesia, a believer that I met in Indonesia, who was telling me his testimony, his story. He was describing his tribe. His tribe is the Batak tribe of Northern Sumatra Indonesia. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-dominated nation; and he shared how, years ago, a missionary couple came to his tribe, 100 percent Muslim. A missionary couple came to that 100 percent Muslim tribe and began sharing the gospel, and the tribal leaders did not like what they were doing, and as a result, the tribal leaders took this couple and killed them and cannibalized them.

He said, years later, another missionary came to his tribe and began to share the gospel, and he said this time, the tribal leaders began to listen and realize that he was...this missionary was saying what that other couple had been saying. So, they began to listen. Not only did they listen, but they received the gospel. They trusted in Christ. They began to proclaim it throughout their tribe and, within a few months, the entire tribe had come to faith in Christ.

This believer looked at me in Indonesia, and he said with a smile on his face, he said, "David, today there are three million believers in the Batak tribe of Northern Sumatra Indonesia." What pierced my heart as I was sharing that story is God just took that story and in my heart, just asked me the question. He said, "Dave, are you willing to be the first couple in order that the second one might bear fruit?" Are we a church of people that are willing to be the first group in order that the second might bear fruit? Some might think that's a little too extreme, but the reality is we are identified with a crucified Christ, and the cross reminds us that our safety is not here, and the cross keeps us from wasting our lives here. This world has nothing for us because Christ is everything to us.

God, give us hearts. God, raise up teenagers and parents and grandmoms and granddads who are willing to say, "I don't need the success, I don't need the savings accounts, and I don't need the seashells. I want my life to count. Spend it, Lord Jesus. Spend it however you want for your cause to be accomplished in and through me."

Now, here's the deal. "When you say the world has nothing for us, does that mean everything in the world is horrible? My family's bad, my friends are bad, school is bad." Teenagers walking away from studying this text, and they say, "I'm not making good grades. I mean, didn't you hear? I don't need to boast about good grades, so I'm going to get an F. There's nothing to boast in there." Well, okay. All right. Valid. However, not at all

what this text is saying. It's not saying that this world is all bad. This world has nothing for us. Christ is everything to us. Paul said he's crucified of the world, but he's still in the world. So, what does that mean? How does the boasting of the cross relate to everything else in the world?

Because the cross supplies us with every good thing we have.

It leads us to the fifth reason why we boast in the cross: Because...this is where it gets really good...because the cross supplies us with every good thing we have. This cross supplies us with every good thing we have. What about my one year old son, when he starts walking now? Am I allowed to be proud of that? Am I allowed to find joy in that, to boast in that, so to speak? When my two and a half year old son learns something new, and my wife is recognized for her gifts and skills? Here's the beauty, and here's the correlation I want you to see between the cross and a dad's pride in a one year old son beginning to walk.

At the cross, we realize that if the cross is not there, we have nothing but condemnation from God. If the cross is not there, a sinner standing before a holy God receives nothing but judgment and condemnation; and now, I begin to realize that it's only because of the cross that I have the opportunity to enjoy this good thing right over here. We take these good things for granted. We think, somehow, God owes them to us or we deserve them or they're just natural, but they are all evidences of grace. Good things, even the bad things that God uses to turn to good, and every single one of those things is possible because of the cross.

So, now, yes, yes, I am excited. I'm proud when I see this happening in my son, and I realize that this is possible because Christ has paid the price for my son, and I want to lead him in the days to come, not to be proud in this or that accomplishment, but to realize any good thing in him is because of the cross of Christ; to boast in the cross, so that he sees in me rejoicing in the cross at everything he does, and then, he learns to rejoice in the cross in everything that happens in his life. We want...God make us a family...make us a faith family who boasts in the cross in every good thing we have. Even the bad things that God uses to turn to good, let them drive us to say, "Yes, I glory in the cross."

We have been re-created by His Spirit.

Paul breaks this down in just some specific ways, even as it's concluded in this letter. He says, "We have been re-created by His Spirit because of the cross; re-created by His Spirit." Verse 15 is really startling, a Jewish man saying, "*Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*" God has not given us better lives because of the cross. He has not said, "Here's the cross. Now, go to the Christian bookstore and learn how to be a better you." He's not improved our lives or given us better lives; He's given us new lives. We're a new creation, new people, the life of Christ in us because of the cross.

We are now ruled by His gospel.

We've been re-created by His Spirit and are being re-created by His Spirit. We're now ruled by His gospel. Verse 16, "*Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule...*" Some people think that's a reference to this rule to all the Scripture, but I think the picture here is, at the very least, the gospel at the core of Scripture. Christ and the cross at the center of Scripture, when the cross dominates our lives and peace and mercy flow from the cross.

We will always be recipients of His grace.

Finally, we will always be recipients of His grace. Paul closes the same exact way He began. Galatians 1:3, "*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.*" Galatians 6:18, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers.*" Here's the reality, the glorious reality. Ladies and gentlemen, we will always be recipients of His grace. I was brought to my knees in study this week, coming to this verse in Galatians 6:18, struck by the reality that ten billion years from now, we will still be the recipients of the grace of God, and 100 billion years further than that, into the future, still receiving grace and still receiving grace and still receiving grace. The cross will always be the reservoir from which that grace flows to us. So, we will forever boast in nothing except this one thing: the cross. That's why our lives count for this one thing. That's why we're obsessed with this one thing.

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