

# Boasting in the Cross of Christ

Galatians 6:14

## Intro

One of my favorite paintings is Holman Hunt's painting entitled, "The Shadow of the Cross." It depicts the carpenter's shop of Joseph where Jesus in his youth worked. Stripped to the waist, Jesus stands by a wooden trestle and lifts his eyes towards heaven. The look on his face is either that of pain or ecstasy. He also raises his arms and the shadow he casts looks like the form of a cross on the wall behind him. On the back wall the tool rack looks like a horizontal bar on which his hands seem to be crucified. The tools remind us of the fateful hammer and nails. On the left side of the painting we see Mary with her hands resting on the chest in which the rich gifts of the Magi are stored. We cannot see her face but she seems to be startled at Jesus' cross-like shadow on the wall.

Though Holman's idea is historically fictitious, it is nevertheless theologically true. Since Jesus' youth, indeed even from his birth, the cross cast its shadow ahead of him. His death was very central to his mission.

We cannot deny that the cross of Christ is the most powerful message of God's love to all humanity. The cross of Christ is central to his mission and work. The Apostle Paul said, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

I want us to focus on Galatians 6:14 this morning and unpack the truth of this powerful verse.

**Galatians 6:14**, *"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."*

**"May I never"** (Greek: *me genoito*) It is a strong negative that carries the idea of virtual impossibility. It was inconceivable for the Apostle Paul even to think of boasting in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The word **"Boast"** (Greek: *kauchaomai*) means to glory in, trust in, rejoice in, revel in, to live for. The object of our boast or 'glory' engrosses our attention, and it absorbs our time and energy. Some people boast about themselves, their money, fame, power and accomplishments; but Paul's boast was about Christ and His cross.

The religious people, especially the Pharisees in New Testament times, boasted in their works and good conduct.

But Paul's boast and praise on the other hand was in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherever Paul went he *"determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:2).

We cannot boast in our works, self efforts or personal merits for obtaining salvation. Salvation is a total work of Christ. Apart from making our decision to follow Christ we contribute nothing to our salvation except our sins.

Eph. 2:8-9 *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God - not by works so that no one can boast."*

Paul's boast was in the cross of Christ.

The cross to the average Roman citizen was regarded as an object of shame, disgrace and even disgust. The Roman poet Cicero wrote: "Let the very mention of the cross be far removed not only from a

Roman citizen's body, but from his mind, his eyes and ears."

To the Jewish mind it was synonymous with being cursed by God. In the Scriptures we read:  
*"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."* (Gal. 3:13).

But for Paul the cross of Christ was his pride, his boasting and glory. Why did he boast? Consider the following reasons of his boast:

### **Boasting in the Power and Blessings of the Cross of Christ**

1/ Through the cross Christ suffered pain and death for us

To die by crucifixion was to die a most horrible, degrading, slow death a human being could ever face. Christ succumbed himself to physical suffering and pain.

Dr. John Stott (theologian) confessed, "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?"

A God who allowed himself to bleed. A God who was a true human being and who connects so much with human suffering.

2/ Through the cross Christ became a victim. He identifies with our weakness, our violation, our abuse, mistreatment and injustices. He identifies with the marginalized, the discriminated, the abandoned, the lonely, and the rejected.

3/ Through the cross Christ bore our sins and condemnation - we are free from sins bondage and consequence.

4/ Through the cross Christ appeased God's anger - propitiation, to turn away God's wrath from us.

5/ Through the cross Christ showed God's love toward us - Christ took our place of death.

6/ Through the cross Christ reconciled us to God – we were enemies who become friends.

7/ Through the cross Christ justified us – he declares us innocent and accepted by God. Christ made us righteous. No matter how relatively good a person manages to be in their own power, they fall far short of the absolute moral and spiritual perfection that God requires. It is only through the cross that divine perfection is graciously made available to those who believe.

8/ Through the cross Christ brought us salvation - delivered us from the disease of sin and hell.

Rev. Charles Spurgeon said "Morality may keep you out of jail, but it takes the blood of Jesus Christ to keep you out of hell."

9/ Through the cross Christ gives us pardon and forgiveness. The person without Christ is often haunted by the past. They cannot free themselves from the guilt of things they have done and failed to do. The person who belongs to Christ, however, is freed from their despair. One's past, present and future sins are forgiven through Christ. The cross brings us to repentance and forgiveness.

10/ Through the cross Christ values and loves us deeply. We live in an increasingly depersonalized society. It seems to me that more and more we are just a number on a long list with other numbers. Are we unique and special? From the cross God cries out: "Yes!" How easy it is for people to depreciate themselves, to forget their dignity and self-worth as human beings. The cross of Christ demonstrates our great worth and value before our Creator.

We are of infinite worth to God, we are the only creatures created in His image and we a very precious to God. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Christ died for us in order to bring us closer to the heart of a loving God.

We are important. Our souls are priceless in God's eyes. We are of infinite worth to God. That is why Christ went to the cross. Though it may be hard to understand, much less to believe, it is nonetheless true. If you were the only one in the entire world that stood in need of help and saving, Jesus Christ would have come for you alone. That's how precious we are to him.

Folks, **THIS IS WHY PAUL BOASTED IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST!!**

### **Conclusion**

Nikolai Berdyaev, who abandoned Marxism for Christianity, insists that neither history nor theology, nor the church brought him to the Christian faith but a simple Christian woman called Maria. He was at a concentration camp when the Nazis were killing Jews in the gas chambers. One distraught mother in the camp refused to part with her baby. When Maria saw the officer was only interested in numbers, without a word she pushed the mother aside and quickly took her place. This action revealed to Nikolai the heart of Christianity and what the cross of Christ meant.

Christ took our death, our punishment. Christ took the wrath and judgment of God that we deserved on the cross. That's why Paul boasted in the cross

**Story:** "The Cross on the Wall" (published in *The Listening Post*)

An expert swimmer taught college men how to swim and dive. One night he couldn't sleep. He decided to go to the swimming pool and have a swim, hoping that the exercise would induce sleep. He said, "I didn't put the lights on. I knew every inch of the place, and the roof was made of glass. The moon shone through, throwing the shadow of my body on the wall at the other end of the pool. I was at the edge of the diving board. My body and arms made a perfect sign of the cross! I cannot explain why I did not dive at the moment. I had no premonition of danger of any kind.

As I stood looking at the shadow of the cross, I began to think of the cross of Christ and its meaning. I was not a Christian. I found myself repeating the words of a hymn I had heard as a boy: '*He died that I might be forgiven.*' I cannot tell you how long I stood poised on the diving board, or why I did not dive. I came down from the diving board and walked along the pool to the steps that I knew led to the bottom of the pool and began to descend. I reached the bottom and my feet touched the cold, smooth bottom of the pool! The night before the caretaker had drained the pool dry and I knew nothing about it. I realized then that had I dived, I would have dived to my death! The cross on the wall saved me that night. I was so thankful to God for His mercy in sparing my life and I knelt on the cold bricks and asked the Christ of the cross to save my soul. I experienced a twofold deliverance that night!"

Anyone may come to the cross. Jesus invites everyone to come to Him, to have sins forgiven, and to receive His eternal love. Jesus died on the cross. He paid the price. All our sins were laid on him. So here's the good news. If you want to go to heaven, Jesus has already paid the price. All you need to do is to take hold of the cross of Christ by faith.

There is only one thing in the entire universe worth boasting about. The Bible allows for a single exception: "*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"