

## 14. Boasting in the Cross (4Q 2011—Galatians)

**Biblical material:** Gal. 6:11–18, Rom. 6:1–6, 12:1–8, 2 Cor. 4:10, 5:17, 11:23–29.

### Quotes

- The cross of Christ is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men. *A. W. Tozer*
- Calvary shows how far men will go in sin, and how far God will go for man's salvation. *H. C. Trumbull*
- The one event of the cross of Christ is a final revelation both of the character and consequence of human sin and of the wonder and sacrifice of divine love. *Alan Stibbs*
- Christianity is a religion about a cross. *Leon Morris*
- Atonement doctrines turn God into a heavenly judge, an offended lord, or a temperamental spirit. The notion of "paying" God to undo a penalty is materialistic. *Stephen Finlan*
- God has twisted together his glory and our good. *Thomas Watson*

### Questions

What does "boasting in the Cross" mean exactly? Is this not ironic? How do we reveal the truth about God through our own commitment to the Cross? What was Paul's major concern for the Galatians? How can we misrepresent the Cross? What is the best way of demonstrating the truths revealed at the Cross as part of the cosmic conflict?

### Bible summary

Paul now writes in his own hands his closing remarks to the Galatians. (Gal. 6:11–18). He remains concerned for them, wanting them not to be led astray but to continue to live their lives in Christ. Those who say circumcision and other Jewish requirements are essential are wrong, Paul writes. What counts, he says, is whether you have become a new creation in Christ. The only boasting is in the Cross, not in obedience to the Mosaic law, or being part of any special group. Rom. 6:1–6 emphasizes that we were crucified with Christ, and that we should not take this as a license to sin! As a consequence we are to be a living sacrifice, in serving others, in teaching and leading (Rom. 12:1–8). We share in the death of Jesus so we can also share in his life (2 Cor. 4:10). We are made completely new—the old has gone, new life has begun (2 Cor. 5:17)

Paul gives the evidence of this from his own life, detailing all he has suffered for the Cross of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23–29). As he says, "I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus." (Gal. 6:17 NLT)

### Comment

What are *we* boasting in? Sometimes it can be in ourselves—boasting in the church, perhaps. But "we do not preach ourselves" (2 Cor. 4:5 NIV).

The real question is how to remedy the situation. For in the end, God and his salvation is the only cure, not in us taking it upon ourselves to "keep the standards" or "reform the godless."

As always the basic problem is in the concept of God. For if he is viewed as being full of revenge, if he is harsh and foreboding, ready to punish, if he demands exact and unquestioning obedience to his every whim—then no wonder his followers act in a similar manner.

Jesus said he came to show us what God is truly like. Above all to the scribes and Pharisees who thought they knew him so well. Sadly they refused such a God who wanted their loving, thoughtful, accepting obedience, preferring to stay with their own picture of a legalistic and punitive God. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” (John 1:11). They accused Jesus of misrepresenting God, destroying His law. Consequently they used the same methods as their punitive God and punished him in the most agonizing way they knew. Torture on the cruel Cross. *Because their God was like that.*

Yet that’s the very Cross we boast in, like Paul. Not preaching ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. And like Paul as the servants of others. As Paul also wrote: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 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. 1:17, 18 NIV).

On the Cross, Jesus revealed the truth about God, the Devil, and the great controversy in the starkest terms. How ironic that we boast in this instrument of demeaning torture. Yet on the Cross we gained the clearest picture of God as he truly is, willing staying there to show his love and to answer the questions in the cosmic conflict.

For knowing God means being like him. Only God can make us like himself. Only then shall we be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Only this is true salvation.

### **Ellen White Comments**

All things are assured to us in Christ, and only in him. Rom. 8:32. There is nothing in this world or in the world to come that we can have except through his cross. So the so-called hope for anything that is not to be found in him is sure to meet with disappointment; and the hope for everything that is in him, and that can be had with him, is as sure of fulfillment as that he lives. {RH, June 24, 1902}

In the atonement the character of God stands revealed. The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates to the whole universe that God was in no wise responsible for the course of sin that Lucifer had chosen; that it was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, which inspired in him the spirit of rebellion. {4SP 320}

The efficiency of the cross guards the redeemed race from the danger of a second fall. The life and death of Christ effectually unveils the deceptions of Satan, and refutes his claims. The sacrifice of Christ for a fallen world draws not only men, but angels unto Him [in] bonds of indissoluble union. Through the plan of salvation the justice and mercy of God are fully vindicated, and to all eternity rebellion will never again arise, affliction never again touch the universe of God. {TA 296}

Not only man but angels will ascribe honor and glory to the Redeemer, for even they are secure only through the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the inhabitants of unfallen worlds have been guarded from apostasy. {BTS, December 1, 1907 }

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