

"THE GLORY OF THE CROSS"

Gal. 6:14

We could begin with V. 11, ye see how large a letter I had written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcized. Only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross, of Christ. For neither, they themselves who are circumcized, keep the law - but desire to have you circumcized that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

In the text, Paul makes a contrast between the (Galatians) who glory in the (flesh) - now the Greek word for glory here is boast. Therefore, he contrasts between his own humble commitment which forbids him such glory - save in the cross.

Some of the Galatians had turned away and were glorying in the (flesh). They had turned aside from the salvation provided by the love and the mercy of God. In Chapter 2:6 - Dr. Jess Moody says, these crackpots had turned to glorying (in themselves).

Chapter 3:1 - Paul addresses them as foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you. I think if we were to take the letter and the appeal of the Apostle, he would say, oh, foolish, Christian. Who hath beseeched you that you should glory in the flesh in human effort, in human speculation. But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a case in which Paul's heart is running over. He adds his own signature to this letter. He has probably been giving it by dictation. But the last part, he said, I want you to see how large the letters I am writing. There may have been three things. First the importance of the letter. Maybe that is why he printed these large words and letters in heavy type. It may have been Paul was unused to writing with a pen and he was doing the best he could. And third, it may have been that Paul's eyesight was weak, from blinding headaches which troubled him. And he was trying to show them God's message to them. Some had been drawn away and now they think that Paul is their enemy. They had once counted Paul their best friend. And so he has written at the close of this letter, in his own hand - telling them how they had mistaken him. How they had injured themselves by listening to the people who slandered him. So the end of the letter which they should read, those who had spoken ill of Paul, were blind and had been persuaded that they must be like Jews. That they must have the sign of the Covenant.

Paul was a Jew, a Hebrew. And had once despised all nations. But had cast away that pride and had found that not in himself, would he be made better. He could not.

He would not glory them on any other grounds. He was trying to make the Galatians understand - they were trying to find any excuse for glorying. They would not be able to keep God's law any better than the other Jews. Nor, would they love one another any better. Nor would the glory they were undertaking make them superior.

What could Paul glory in, then. In that which did not separate him from his neighbor. But in that which did not separate him from those who quarrelled with him. But was as great a blessing to them as to him. In that which did not belong to one people, or to one time. But to all people and to all time.

God forbid he said, that I glory saving the cross. Now think what that means. The Romans had many ways of putting men to death. One of the most shameful was kept for the slaves who committed a crime - and it was crucifixion - hanging on a cross.

Now Paul was preaching Jesus as the son of God - people listened to him. They said a great ruler has come. And then Paul talked about Jesus being the carpenter's son. And finally when he talked about Pilate - having him crucified. They cried out, how foolish. Do you expect us to believe that. And Paul said, I proclaim no other.

A crucified Lord is for all. For everyone.

Paul would say since I do not glory in my own descent and myself, the cross is the thing I will be proud of. And nothing can take that right from me.

Paul said, if you show that I am good for nothing - I confess it. Therefore, I glory in the cross.

If you show that death and the grave have their mark upon me - I confess it. Therefore, I glory in the cross.

If you show that I cannot make out any reason why God should care for me, than for the bum on the street - I confess it. Therefore, I glory in this cross.

If you say that this cross is humiliating and degrading - I confess it. Therefore, I glory in the cross.

The nails of this cross go through the ruler's opinions and my own, Paul said. I know very well how one man glories against another man, how one nation glories against another nation. Or a religious group glories against another group. And Paul said, I have gloried against my fellowmen. I cannot do that anymore.

For the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world. Why should St. Paul glory in the cross of Christ. God hath highly exalted him - given him a name above every name.

We glory in the cross - not because we are strong but because we are weak. Not because we are great but because we are little. Not because we have deserved anything of God--but because we have erred and sinned against him. If we do glory in the cross, we may be sure that we are doing what the angels in Heaven and the spirits of just men and perfect men are doing. For worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive glory and dominion, praise, and honor.

It is well known that Paul could have gloried in his conversion. And he could say, Halleluia - I am saved. It is true, he could have said - I glory in my position. I am an Apostle to the Gentiles. He could have said, I glory in my success as a minister, of the Gospel. But it is very strange, that Paul did not glory in any of these things. But Christ, and the cross with all of its love, mercy, and forgiveness, is what Paul preached.

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o're the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story,
Gathered 'round its head sublime.

I. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IS AN EMBLEM OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The cross is a sign, an emblem. The whole course of history was turned in AD-300 when Constantine was converted in the midst of a battle for the throne of the Caesars. Constantine said at midday I saw a sign in the sky. A cross. And underneath these words - in this sign - conquer. And upon this occasion as well as upon countless others, the sign of the Gospel of the Son of God is found in the cross.

The Christian faith is not two tables of stone, containing the Commandments of God, it is not a sword, it is not a star, it is not a galaxy, but the Christian faith is not seven branches, on a lampstand. Or a halo above somebody's head. It is rather a stark, rude, crude, rugged cross.

If we could all go to the Roman Colliseum and look we would see the best example of the cross. Unlike what we think, as a decoration, upon the top of the church steeple, or an ornament which we wear about our necks, are made of gold and silver and precious stone. The cross in the Colliseum is as rugged a cross beam as could be devised. I am told that it was placed there many years ago in honor and in memory of the early Christians. In that terrible arena.

The cross speaks a universal language. All men everywhere understand it. You

remember every few years the great crowd gathers in the mountains of Bavaria listening to the passion play. In Oberammergau - thousands of people in attendance are from every nationality, tongue, family and language under the sun. The play was in German. There are many people who could not follow it in that tongue. But as people sit, they had a deep persuasion that as they walked and watched the drama of the suffering and the crucifixion - every man in his own language, and every man in his own tongue, the cross spoke to human hearts everywhere. To every nation, in every family, plan, tribe under Heaven.

The cross of Christ is not mythical - just a romantic symbol or story. It is a historical and factual event.

We can read the references to Christ - they are found to refer to the awful cross. The history gives reference to the burning of Rome. When the people began to point their fingers at Nero, in order to take away the suspicion - he said the Christians did it. Now that necessitated the early Roman historian to describe who the Christians were. For it was a strange, unusual, unknown set of people. So both of these records of history say that the Christians were followed, of a criminal who was crucified in Judea under Pilate.

The cross is the cruelest instrument of execution. That the human mind has ever provided. No Roman citizen could be crucified. Yet by crucifixion, it was reserved for felons, criminals, murderers, and destructionists in the government. It was especially obnoxious to the Jews. Paul, Gal. 3, quoted Deut. 21 - saying, Moses as saying cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. In the story of the crucifixion of Christ, we are told that when the even was come, the day the Lord was crucified, the

Jews went to Pilate and asked that the crosses be taken down. That the Pilgrims were coming into the city. For the sacred Passover and the gassy sight would be offensive to them.

But as horrible as it was to the Romans and as unthinkable as it was to the minds of the Jews, think of the shame that it bore to the pure, holy, unfiled, sinless Son of God. In crucifixion, our blessed Lord was humiliated in two ways.

One, they crucified him naked. He was exposed before the whole world. The artists have been kind in drawing pictures of the Lord. Always they clothed him. He died naked. They gambled for his garments at the foot of the cross.

Second, he was crucified between two male factors. Between insurrectionists and murderers. In his life, he was known as a friend of Publicans and sinners. And in his death, he was crucified with one on either side. In our Saviour's history and prophecy, for the 43rd chapter of Isaiah said, he would be numbered with transgressors. He became sin itself.

This was no ordinary crucifixion. Thousands of Jews had been crucified under Roman Emperors. The historians suggest that in the 47 years between Pilate and Titus there were more than 30,000 Jews who were crucified. When the Lord was 18 years of age in the village near Nazareth, the Romans came to burn the town and to crucify everyone in it. Because the citizens had been accused of harboring insurrectionists. Jesus, being nearby, must have seen those crosses raised against the sky. It was a common sight in Palestine to see a Roman crucifixion. But the crucifixion of Jesus was not the same. The Roman Centurion, and the execution was carried out, this man

surely was the son of God.

Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in
When Christ the mighty maker died
For man, the creatures sin.

The cross is a sign of the Christian faith.

II. THE CROSS SPEAKS OF MAN'S UNIVERSAL DEPRAVITY

I think this is the second emblem which speaks about the human heart. If one would see what humanity is really like - look at the cross. Cruel, merciless, dark, and sinful.

The Lord was born in Bethlehem, a gift of God, and love to the world came. In that little town of David. When the gift was made and the stars were lowered like golden lamps. The Shepherds worshipped and the wise men brought their gifts. Just five miles away is Jerusalem. Thirty-three years later, the human family, human kind - gave back the gift of God's love in Christ Jesus, and the point of a Roman sphere. Who did that - who crucified the Lord. Who was responsible for his shameful death. Who did that.

Well, there are many answers. Some say that it was God's fault. And God did it.

The wife of Job said to her husband, curse God and commit suicide. There are others who say it was his own fault. He should have been a better manager and a better planner.

There are those that say that the Jews did it.

There are those that say that the rulers did it. And some say Judas did it - he sold him.

There are those who say that Pilate did it. He looked upon the miscarriage of Roman justice. There are those that say that the soldiers did it - they platted the crown of thorns and nailed him to the tree.

Who did it - Pilate washed his hands and said - I did not do this. I am innocent of the blood of this just man.

The Roman soldiers say, we did not do it. Who did it? Who slew the son of Glory. Who nailed him to the cross. We all had a part - we all did it. Our sins nailed him to the tree. Sins pressed upon his brow the crown of thorns. We all did it.

A man once said in a dream I saw the Saviour. His back was bare and there was a soldier lifting up his hand, and bringing down on his back that awful scorpion of nine tails with its leather thongs of pieces of iron woven into the leather. In the dream, I rose and grasp his arm to hold it back. When I did, the soldier turned around in

astonishment. And when I looked at him, I recognized myself. Who slew the son of Glory. We all did it. Our sins crucified the prince of Heaven. The cross is universally assigned of human depravity and human sin.

III. THE CROSS IS A SIGN OF OUR HOPE OF HEAVEN

I think here is the emblem of atonement, for our salvation. Our hope of glory, Christ died. How did he die. Why did he die. Did he die like Socrates drinking the hemlock as a martyr. Did he die like Julius Caesar - with the cruel diggers. Did he die like the tragedy of King Lear. Or like Abraham Lincoln under a bullet. How did he die.

There is a divine meaning in the death of Christ. This is God's plan for our salvation. There is no pardon and there is no peace, apart from atonement. There is no remission of sin, apart from the shedding of blood. There is no reconciliation without the payment of debt. There is no atonement without his sacrifice for our sins. This is our means of reconciliation to God.

The cross that Paul says to us is the same thing as the brazen serpent raised in the wilderness, was to Moses and the children of Israel. Was a sign of universal love and mercy, of forgiveness and healing from the hands of God.

Look and live my brother, live

Look to Jesus now and live

Tis recorded in his word, Halleluia

It is only that you look and live.

The cross is a sign of our atonement. It is a sign of our forgiveness.

It is a sign of God's inviting love. His invitation to pardon and forgiveness. It is an invitation to life. As an up raised beam - raised toward the sky. It points toward God in Heaven. It has a lower part that touches the earth. God reaching out his loving hand. Extends it down even to us.

It has a cross-arm that goes in every direction. It faces every street of this city. It goes from East and West. It goes from North and South. It extends to limits and is an open invitation to all men everywhere to find light, to find the atonement, the sobs, the tears, the suffering death of the Son of God. We are all there.

The arms of the cross extend to all men. To the Greek, Barbarian, Roman, Jew, the free. The unlettered, the unlearned, the rich, the poor, the wise, the educated, the unwise, to the old, to the young, to the near and those who are far. And to those who are good. And to those who are not so good. This invitation of God is extended to you - the world could never be the same again because the Lord died and spilled sacred blood.

This cross is a sign of our hope of glory. If there is to be any tomorrow, and if there is to be any Heaven, and if there is to be any God in your life - it must come from the sign of the cross.

I am sure you have read - If in Flanders Fields the poppys grow,
It will be between the crosses row by row.

I don't know whether you have ever looked at some of these cemeteries on the face of our world. In Arlington, Va., way across on the Philippines, or the Hawaiian Islands. In many places in the state of Virginia. Everywhere, above that American boy who has fallen in battle - our people have erected a cross. Because it is a hope. It is a prayer. It is a vision. It is a dream. It is an expectation. A promise. It is an assurance that God has prepared something better for us. Than what we know in the sorrow and the tears of this life.

If we have any hope, if we are going to find any forgiveness, if we are going to find any blessing of mind, it lies in the atoning death of the son of God.

There is an old story and yet is as fresh today as when it was related. And it is a true story. In London, a beloved wife, of the King died. And the King as tenderly and as lovingly as he knew how - brought her body back to the great city. And wherever her body rested in the long journey, the King built a little chapel. And he always called it some kind of a cross. As the King's Cross. Another chapel was called Charing Cross. A traveler from America was standing one day in Charing Cross, London. And the man told him the story. Let me tell you a story that happened right here on this spot. There was a little girl from the city who lost her way. Who just wandered around the streets of London crying, heart-broken. And an English Bobby, a Policeman, tried to stop her to see why she was sobbing. The child answered that she was lost. She did not know how to find the way home. Well, the Bobby said to her, do not cry. Sit down here by my side, on the curb, and we will talk about how we can find your home. And where it is. So he sat on the curb with the little heart-broken girl and he began to

talk with her. Now he says, I am going to ask you some questions. There are some places that you know about. And that you recognize. Could one of them be Picadilly Circus - no, said the little girl, I don't know where that is. He asked her, well what about Westminster. And the little girl's reply was the same - no. His third question was do you know about Charing Cross. And the little girl's face began to brighten. And in the tears she said, yes, yes. Take me down to the Cross - and I can find my way home from there.

How true of all humanity. For all mankind. That our hopes and our hearts, and our lives - just take me to the cross and I can find my way home from there.

I must need go home by the way of the cross

There is no other way but this.

I shall nare get sights of the gates of light

If the way of the cross I miss.

I must need go on in the blood sprinkled way

That our Saviour trod

If I ever climb to the heights sublime

Where my soul is at rest with God.

This is God's invitation to you.

What more can he say, than to you he hath said. To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.

This is God's love and mercy poured out on the earth. God forbid that I should glory - save anything. What are we glorying in today - in our self-righteousness. In our own goodness. This is God's sweet invitation to each of us today - and the need to come. And I hope that many will accept it.