



Glorying in the Cross of Christ

A sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday evening, March 14th, 1897.

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. Gal. vi., 14.

This verse was written by the Apostle Paul in contradistinction to the false teachers, who gloried, made their boast, and rejoiced in outward observances, outward forms and ceremonies, and in all the Mosaic appointments which were intended only for a time, until there came the Saviour of sinners, our Lord Jesus. Now in contradistinction to these false teachers the Apostle writes, "But God forbid;" that means, "Far be it." That is always the meaning when we find this phrase, either in the Old or the New Testament. "But 'far be it' that I should glory" – that I, the Apostle Paul, should glory, make my boast, rejoice in this, as those false teachers did – " 'far be it' that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ he would glory, make his boast, rejoice!

Now the first thing that we have to ask is, "What is meant by the CROSS of Christ?" Not the ceremonies of the Papists, in crossing themselves, that is not the meaning of it; nor to wear, as an ornament, a cross; nor to carry about a large construction representing the cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ hung and was put to death; nor does it mean that cross on which He expired, was hanged, and His hands and feet pierced with large nails – for if it were possible that we could have that very identical cross, it would not be worth a farthing; it could do no good whatever. Relics were sold in Popish times, and alleged relics of this very identical cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ hung have been sold for very large sums of money. But all of no use. If the whole of the identical cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ was put to death could be obtained, it would profit nothing – as to the salvation of the soul; it would profit nothing even as to one particle of spiritual benefit to be derived from it; it would be worth not one single farthing so far as the actual value was concerned in reference to spiritual benefit.

Now, then, what have we to understand by the cross of Christ? Even this. The blessing obtained through the instrumentality of what our precious Lord Jesus Christ accomplished while he was hanging on the cross, shedding His blood for the salvation of our souls! This is what we have to understand by the cross of Christ! Now nothing in which these false teachers glory, in which they make their boast, is of the least particle of spiritual profit and avail; but that which our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished while He hung on the cross, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins, making an atonement for us, delivering us from the curse of the law, this is of the deepest value! O how precious! Now this we have particularly to keep before us! When the Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross, it was that He might make an atonement for our sins! It was that He might bear the punishment due to all who put their trust in Him! It was that He might deliver us from the curse of the law, because He became thus a curse for us, for it is written in the Books of Moses that "He who hangs on tree," ie, is put to death as a malefactor by being hung on a tree, "is accursed of God." And it was the Lord Jesus Christ thus worthily allowing Himself to be put to death by wicked men on the tree and on the cross, that he delivered us from the curse of the law.

Every sinner in his natural state is a transgressor before God! Everyone, so long as he or she is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is under the curse of God, by day and by night, whether at home, or travelling, whether on the land or on the sea, whether eating or fasting, whether at work or at rest – all the time that he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ he is under the curse of God! Every morsel he puts into his mouth, he puts there as one who is accursed of God; every drop of water he takes, he takes as one who is under the curse of

God. And wherever he is, in whatever state of body, in whatever occupation he is engaged, he is under the curse, so long as he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

O remember this! And in this state we must remain until we are believers in the Lord Jesus, for we have no righteousness of our own by which we can commend ourselves to God! There is no righteousness of our own that will deliver us from this curse under which we are by nature! A fearful condition in which every unconverted person is, and it is simply because they do not see it that they have a particle of quietness of mind; that they are not raving mad is simply because they are ignorant of the condition in which they are! O the solemnity of the thought! Can it be too much weighed, too much considered, too much pondered, in order to get rid of it?

Then, again, through the cross of the Lord Jesus we are not simply delivered from the curse; through what the Lord Jesus Christ worthily took on Himself to deliver us from, the state in which we are by nature, we are not merely delivered, but from the state of thralldom and slavery of sin in which all of us are as unconverted. Spiritual freedom we only receive, and can only receive, by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus, by apprehending the power of the Blood of Christ, shed by Him when He made an atonement for our sins, hanging on the accursed tree! O the solemnity of this! We try to make ourselves better in our natural condition, we try to put aside this thing and another thing, which we see to be contrary to the mind of God. We may have in our natural condition light enough to see that we cannot remain in the condition in which we are; and try then, on this account, to make ourselves better, but we are unable to deliver ourselves from the slavery and bondage of sin till we are brought to believe in Christ.

O, I remember sometimes as a young man, being from my earliest days educated to become a clergyman, and yet careless, reckless, unconcerned about the things of God, never reading the Scriptures, going on in all the folly and frivolity of this present evil world, caring only about eating and drinking, new clothes, and going about to the theatre, the ball-room, to the card-table, and the billiard-room. All these things I only cared about, not about God and His precious Word. Under these circumstances, nevertheless twice a year, the Lord's supper was taken, as a formal thing, a customary thing; and twice at such times I swore with the bread of the ordinance in my mouth that I would become a different man, for I had light enough to see that it would not do to go on in this careless way, habitually frequenting the theatre, and the ball-room, and the card-table, and the billiard-room – it would not do to become a clergyman under such circumstances. Therefore, I swore solemnly twice on these occasions I would become different. The next day was just as before.

How came this? Not because there was not a measure of sincerity. I saw the folly in a certain sense of going on in this way, but I was dead in trespasses and in sins. I had no spiritual life in myself. I was not regenerated. Therefore, I was a ready victim to the devil; he could lead me about, and induce me just as he pleased, and bid me do this, that, or another thing, and I was ready enough to do it by reason of the natural, carnal mind. But the moment I apprehended the power of the Blood of Christ, I became completely different. One evening, at a little prayer meeting, I saw, all at once, by the grace of God, that I was a sinner, and that Christ was a Saviour for sinners, and having entered the house where the little meeting was held as one who was as far from God as he possibly could be, I left a happy Christian.

That night I found myself lying on my bed peacefully, a forgiven sinner, and without a single human being having conversed with me on the subject. I said at once to my Heavenly Father, "My Heavenly Father, I no longer go to the theatre, I no longer go to the ball-room, I no longer shall be found at the card-table, and in the billiard-room; I know something far better than these; Thou hast made me to be a happy child of Thine; I seek now to live to Thee, to glorify Thee." This without having conversed with a single individual under heaven. I was at once instructed by the Holy Ghost to say this to my Heavenly Father. I became now a spiritually free man. Before, I was a slave to sin for 20 years and five weeks. Now, being a believer in Christ, regenerated, born again,

a child of God, all was at an end, and ever since that time, on the 1st of November 1825, now 71 years ago, my whole life has been a different one.

Now, you see the oath that I had sworn to God came to nothing, simply because I was not born again; I was not a believer in Christ. I had depended in my own strength to make myself different, and all came to nothing; but when I came to Christ, was made a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I became a spiritually free man, and I obtained thus, through faith in Christ, power over sin, because I had now spiritual life, and I was constrained by love and gratitude to the precious Lord Jesus Christ to live a completely different life from what before had been the case. Now, then, this brings before us that we should glory in the cross of Christ, that we should make our boast in the cross of Christ, that we should rejoice in what the Lord Jesus Christ did for sinners while He hung on the cross, because He made an atonement for their sins, and thus obtained for them that they should become spiritually free men. Through faith in Him they are regenerated, obtain spiritual life, and thus become free from sin.

Now let us particularly seek to enter into this, that we should glory in the cross of Christ, make our boast in it. We have no goodness of our own, no merit of our own, no righteousness of our own; our good acts and deeds are compared to filthy rags in the Scriptures – there is sin connected with them all; therefore in our own goodness, merit, worthiness, and righteousness we cannot make our boast. But in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for poor sinners, and is doing for poor sinners, we can glory and make our boast, because it becomes ours through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Firstly, all the glory belongs to God, not the least particle of glory belongs to us; what we are, and what we have, we have all in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; we have nothing in ourselves. The Lord Jesus Christ, through what He has accomplished, has given us spiritual life! We, who were dead in trespasses and in sins, have obtained through faith in Him spiritual life. And let me affectionately tell all those who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are dead in trespasses and sins. “You have no spiritual life in yourselves, you can have no spiritual life in yourselves, till you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, being dead in trespasses and sins, you cannot make yourselves better, because you are dead, and just as a dead man cannot make himself better, so you cannot make yourselves better as long as you are not believers in Christ.” Therefore ask God to show you that you are sinners, that you may own it before God in prayer; and then when you have owned it before God, ask Him to help you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, for so you will obtain spiritual life, being born again.

Through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we obtain forgiveness of our sins – every one of our numberless transgressions is forgiven, immediately forgiven, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot work in any way so as to obtain this forgiveness by our own doings, by our own work. It is through Jesus having made an atonement for our sins that we obtain forgiveness; it is through Jesus having in our room and stead fulfilled the law of God, the commandments of God, that we, putting our trust in Him, are reckoned righteous. For naturally we are unrighteous, we are sinners, and great sinners in the sight of God. But the believer in Christ is pardoned, and every one of his numberless transgressions forgiven; not a single sin remains to be punished, but every one forgiven! Now, is not this unspeakably blessed? O seek to enter into it! It is this which makes me such a happy man!

I know that though I have been guilty of thousands and tens of thousands of sins, in action, in word, in thought, in feeling, in desire, in purpose, in inclination, yet every one of these thousands and tens of thousands of sins is forgiven, and not one single sin stands against me. So I am able to look my Heavenly Father in the face without dread and without fear; I would follow Him up to the end of my earthly pilgrimage, either by death or the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I look at all this without a particle of dread or fear, because, as a believer in Christ,

all my numberless transgressions are forgiven. I am regenerated through faith in Christ, and thus have I become a child of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ my Elder Brother. I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ! O how precious are all these things.

And hereafter, as regards the world to me, my prospect is I shall have a glorified body and I shall be perfectly like what the Lord Jesus Christ was while here on earth! O how precious these prospects are! In body like the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, in spirit, in soul, like Him, when I see Him as He is. Perfectly holy! O how precious this; and thus it will go on throughout eternity, one thousand years after the other. Unspeakably happy in the presence of God! One thousand years after the other, partaking of the “rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God!” Not a few draughts of pleasure! Notice the figure. The “rivers of pleasure.” The rivers of pleasure, in order to bring before the poor sinner who trusts in Christ what awaits him! How unspeakably blessed the prospect of eternity is!

O if we entered into it, every one would at once come to the Lord Jesus; but because these things are considered simply as religious frenzies and not as realities, they are treated with indifference and carelessness, and put off for a while; and persons say to themselves, “Hereafter I may think a little more about it, but at present I will enjoy the world.” And thus, day after day, and week after week, these blessed, glorious realities are put aside, until suddenly one day the end comes and the sinner is found in an unprepared state! O if this were only entered into! One thousand years after the other, one million years after the other, one hundred millions of years after the other, and all these enjoyments in the presence of the Lord, the partaking of the “rivers of pleasure,” of never-ending delights! O if this were taken seriously, persons would indeed care about their souls!

Now the last sentence of our passage. “Far be it from me that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We see the results of this in what follows, “By whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” By entering into what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, the result is this. First, the heart is filled with love and gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus, and to the precious Jesus for giving Himself in our room and stead. Next, we are regenerated, become children of God, obtain spiritual life, heavenly life, become one with Christ, and are thus filled with love and gratitude to the precious Jesus for what he accomplished in our room and stead. And the result of this is, in this life, that we in spirit are separated from the world, we can no longer go on in their ways, in their habits, in their maxims, just as I stated was the result in my own case. The very first evening I was brought to Christ, the theatre was given up, the ballroom was given up, the card-table was given up, the billiard-table put aside, and all the worldly habits in which I had been going on year after year; and my heart longed to live a completely different life. Thus, in spirit, separated from the world, completely separated; and what was the result of this? The world separated also from me.

I remember so well my fellow-students. I was at the University at the time, where there were 1,200 young men, and they knew what a thorough comrade I had been in all their ways, their habits and maxims, and they laughed at me, they pointed their fingers at me, “There goes the fool!” “There goes the madman!” “There goes the enthusiast!” This is what they said. I, in heart and spirit, separated from the world; and they, because of my godly ways, separated themselves from me. Thus it is everywhere with true children of God. They can no longer go on as they used to go on, and the world will no longer reckon them as being one with themselves. They separate from the world, and the world separates from them. They no longer caring about the things of the world, the world no longer cares about them, any more than they would care about a crucified malefactor hanging on the cross. This is the result on both sides where it is really Christ in the heart. Separation from the world comes where it is really Christ in the heart, in the life, and deportment. The world does not care about such; the world turns its back upon them. He is a fool, an enthusiast, a madman, a fanatic, and the world will have nothing to do with him.

Now, one word more. How is it with us who are professed disciples of the Lord Jesus? Have we really come out from among the world? Are we really walking in separation from the world? Is the world crucified to us – that is, no more valued by us than a malefactor hanging on the cross? And on the other hand, is our life and deportment of that character that the world has turned its back on us just we have turned our backs on the world? Does the world care no more about us than it would care about a malefactor hanging on the cross? That is the meaning, “The world is crucified unto us and we are crucified unto the world.”

Now let us seek to know more and more in secret meditation how unspeakably precious it is to be a believer in Christ. Let us seek to be found more and more in secret, meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in our room and stead, in order that our hearts increasingly may be filled with gratitude and love to the Precious One; and particularly let our inmost soul be assured that we cannot save ourselves, that no goodness of ours can bring us to heaven. Our own goodness can only bring us to hell, not to heaven. For we have to own that all our goodness is, in the sight of God, as filthy rags – that is, our own righteousness. But if we are putting our trust in Christ, we are delivered from the curse. We are born again, we are spiritually free men, we have power with God; and power over sin through faith in Christ. God grant us this blessing.



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