

GLORYING IN THE CROSS (Gal. 6:14)

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.

During this past week there has been tense discussion within the Synod of the Anglican Communion concerning the issue of same-sex marriage. One of its pro-change advocates commented how the church is for the people and therefore, the church should unreservedly accept same-sex 'marriage'. ... Setting aside for the briefest of moments the fact God's Word condemns such a union as an abomination, is it correct the church is there for the people ... and should the church keep moving with the tide of popular opinion? Does that fit with what the Bible teaches? ... Actually, the Bible teaches the Church's primary purpose is *not* for the people, the way the apostates prescribe. ... The true Church of the Lord Jesus is the most precious possession of Almighty God for the Church is the beloved Bride He has gifted to His Son. For her, His Son paid the ultimate price by giving His life on the cross of Calvary to make her His own. Through His redeeming love, He set her apart for Himself in preparation for the day when He will present her before His Father spotless, without wrinkle, or blemish, perfectly holy (Eph. 5:25-27) for by His grace, he hath made us accepted in the beloved ... according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:6,7).

In the previous century, George Campbell-Morgan was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, he wrote, "The Church of God apart from the Person of Christ is a useless structure. However ornate it may be in its organization, however perfect in all its arrangements, however rich and increased with goods, if the Church is not revealing the Person [*of Christ*], lifting Him to the height where all men can see Him, then the Church becomes an impertinence and a sham, a blasphemy and a fraud, and the sooner the world is rid of it, the better." ... It's true! ... The Church is for God's glory alone!

And consequently, the Church of the Lord Jesus is not a dead, miscreant religious organisation, with its members pulling in different directions. Instead, it is a living organism of Redeemed sinners for whom Christ died on the cross, rose from the tomb, and ascended into Heaven. ... He, our Saviour, is no longer on the cross for He is alive, and the cross is empty. The ungodly languishes under the spell of pseudo-Christianity which keeps Jesus on a cross in their symbolisms and denies the power of the Gospel. ... Any of God's true people who associate with such error are commanded, **Rev. 18:4** Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.

Our Gospel which remains the same as was first preached at Pentecost is that the cross upon which our Saviour died is no more. There is nothing of it left. ...

Then, why speak about the cross? Why is it at the centre of our Good News? Why is it so crucial to concentrate on what happened there? What did Paul mean when writing to the believers in Galatia, *Gal. 6:14* God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely to *glory* in the death of anyone is not something in which to *glory*? The full force of the Greek word (*καυχάομαι*) is this, ... God forbid that I should *boast*, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... I am not boasting as someone who is glad it happened. The Jewish leaders were glad it happened, that Jesus was put to death on the cross. The enemies of Jesus were glad it happened. ... But instead of making me *glad* it happened, I'm *sad* it happened for it happened because on the cross Jesus bore the penalty of God's wrath which was due unto me for all my sins. It makes me sad that was what He came to do, and I say with Isaac Watts, "Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God". At the cross Jesus died for me, and by His death He saved me from God's wrath, and I boast in what He has done for me, for *Eph. 2:8* by *[His] grace [I'm] saved* through faith; and that not of *myself*: it is the gift of God: *9* Not of works, lest *I* should boast (*Eph. 2:8,9*). ... "For nothing good have I whereby Thy grace to claim ... Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe". It was *He* on the cross Who won the victory over the penalty of my sin.

No religion the world pursues can save a single soul because there is only one means to procure the gift of salvation and that is at the price of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving Him as Saviour, recognising the blood He shed on Calvary has the only cleansing power to wash away our sins.

So, that is how we must see the significance of the cross of Christ. It is not one about which we can agree to differ, - it is too important and fundamental. Nowadays people are making their judgments as to whether God is a 'he', or a 'she', or a 'they', or a 'them'. Beyond any discussion, Jesus was a man. Regarding His Father, the truth is God is beyond human description for He is a Spirit (*Jn. 4:24*), neither male nor female. In truth, His Person is indescribable, *Num. 23:19* God is not a man, that he should lie ... *Job 9:32* he is not a man, as I am ... *Ezek. 24:14* I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it ... *Is. 42:8* I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Paul could have so easily boasted in his Jewish upbringing for he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews (*Phil. 3:5*). As a Jew, he had the highest of criteria. ... But he never boasted about it. ... Neither did he boast about how hard he worked for the Lord. No man ever preached as Paul preached. No man ever travelled as he travelled or endured so much for the Gospel. ... But he never boasted about it.

He never boasted about his knowledge either. He was a clever man, and very gifted. And when the Lord saved him, the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts. He was a mighty preacher, and speaker, and writer. It didn't matter who he was speaking to, - whether they were Jew or Gentile, - he knew how to address their need. ... But he never boasted about it.

He was a man full of God's grace, and abounding in his love for God, the things of God and the people of God. No task was beneath him as he reached out to sinners with the message of the Gospel ... but he never boasted in that either.

And, as a 'churchman', he was an apostle supremely chosen and commissioned to advance the Kingdom of God. He founded churches, established and ordained preachers and pastors of the Word. He baptised and thrilled the churches he ministered in. Imagine hearing a sermon from Paul! ... But did he ever boast in his prowess as a church leader? No! Not once! ... In fact, he confessed, *Rom. 7:18* I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. ... J.C. Ryle wrote, "Oh, let us beware of self-righteousness! Open sin kills its thousands of souls. Self-righteousness kills its tens of thousands! Go and study humility with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Go and sit with Paul at the foot of the cross. ... Be thankful if you have grace—but never boast in it for a moment. Work for God and Christ, with heart and soul and mind and strength, but never dream for a second of placing confidence in any work of your own."

So then, how did Paul boast in the cross of Christ? He boasted in the cross of Christ simply by telling everyone who would listen, Christ died for sinners, *Rom. 5:6* For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The cross was the altar where our Saviour satisfied the righteous judgment of His Father ... where *He* was condemned, that we would not be ... where He suffered so that we would not have to suffer. At Calvary He took my sins upon Himself and He bore the punishment which was rightly mine. He died as my Substitute, in my place. He was the Sacrifice His Father sent to be offered up for me to be saved. The perfect and only atonement, to which I contributed nothing except to exercise the faith He gave me to believe in His Son. Therefore, with Paul we say, God forbid that I should boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is no wonder Satan hates the Gospel and he has polluted the minds of those who define God out of the cesspit of their theories and philosophies. They know nothing of His holy nature, and presently they pollute the measure of truth He has graciously revealed to them. However, persisting in their stubborn unbelief, He hands them over to their vile affections and wicked ways (*Rom. 1:18ff.*) ... It cripples their ability to understand His love and His grace and why the Gospel is so precious to us.

To the ungodly, there is nothing appealing about the story of the cross. How can a dead Man become a Saviour? But, that is the point ... our Saviour is not dead, for He is risen and seated in Heaven at the right hand of His Father. ... It pleased His Father, - it was His Father's will, - to bruise His Son and put Him to shame for us to become the means by which He would save us from our sins. And this was Paul's message, in the words of the hymn, "Nothing can for sin atone, Nothing but the blood of Jesus". ... And this was the subject he preached in the marketplaces, the synagogues, the town-squares ...anywhere he had the opportunity! It was the only message he preached, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... The Puritan Stephen Charnock (1684), "Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips".

Recently a study showed how less than 50% of the UK population attend church, and it is no wonder because of what is presented in many churches today. ... A religion without the cross is no comfort for eternity ... B.B. Warfield wrote, "A Christless cross no refuge is for me; A crossless Christ my Saviour may not be; But, O Christ crucified! I rest in Thee!"

Where this Gospel is not preached, a false gospel steals its place ... Where it is exchanged for another, it is not the Gospel Paul heralded and he warned, [Gal. 1:9](#) If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ... This is the only Gospel which removes the eternal wrath of God. It is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which saves the sinner from their sin.

And this is the Gospel Paul boasted in, and it is the same Gospel we must continue to preach and present to a needy and lost world. We have no remit or command to boast in anything other. These are dangerous times, not only as we look out at nations gathering for war, but they are dangerous times for God's people because the spirit of the church of Laodicea abounds. They were the professing believers who were not listening to the Holy Spirit speaking to them, or heeding the messages God was sending them. They were neither spiritually hot nor cold, but lukewarm ... and only good for spewing out. They thought they were rich and had so much they no longer needed God ... but how wrong they were for He described them as being wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). Despite having all their acquisitions, they had lost their way, *but they did not know it*. He counselled them to return to Him, even standing at the entrance to their church and knocking their door, but they were so self-indulgent they kept Him out. Outside the door their Bibles had been abandoned, the Gospel had been discarded, and the prayer meetings had been exchanged for much lesser activities, God's name had become dishonoured by their lack of witness, hymns of praise to Him had been turned into frivolous expressions of entertainment. ... They foolishly ignored how fearful a thing it

is to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31) ... and especially when the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God (I Peter 4:17).

As in every age, the Gospel is the standard by which God judges His people. **Mk. 16:15** Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature was the Saviour's final instruction to His disciples. ... The Gospel, the Good News of God's saving grace, is the message the unbeliever needs to hear and receive to be prepared for Heaven. ... The Gospel is the responsibility of the people of God to proclaim until the Saviour returns. ... Over these next few weeks, we shall be studying this theme in relation to the seven sayings of Christ on the cross.