

# Boasting In The Cross of Jesus

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] A. Wynn Arbor, Jesse here. Man, I am so bummed that I don't get to be there with you in person this Sunday. We can blame it on COVID. I had a flight that moved and it forced me to miss, but the other bummer about that is I had to miss all those baptism, which I hate not being there to celebrate with you all. But the good news is, is that through technology, I still get to preach this last sermon on Galatians. And so let's get right to it. And Galatians chapter 6, verse 11 is where we're going to start. It says this, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. This is God's word. So what we see here is we see the closing argument of Paul's letter to the Galatian church. And what he does here, he makes an interesting insight. He says that you and I are naturally boastful. Why? Because we were made to worship. See, boasting is simply a form of praise. That's what boasting is. You know, when Asher was 10 years old, he played rec basketball and it was really cute and fun to go and watch him and a bunch of 10-year-olds run around trying to play, constantly traveling, double dribbling, shooting air balls. But you know what? They were also having a ton of fun doing it. Now, there was one kid on Asher's team that was better than the rest of them, and he knew it, which means he only broke the rules half the time and dribbled way too much and never passed and took all the shots. And he probably made about one shot out of every 20 he threw up there, right? But man, when he made a shot, it was like, look out. That dude was taking a victory lap. He was running by the stands where we were and trying to pump us up and get us hyped up and get us back into the game and excited. And it was like, in his mind, the scenario was probably something like he was

LeBron James, you know, shooting and making a three-pointer right at the end of game seven of the NBA Finals. But what was he doing? What was he doing in that moment? Why was he, you know, coming by and trying to get us to like, man, just applaud? Well, he was boasting and he was praising himself in that moment. And he didn't act that way in practice. I would go to the practices a lot, and he was only doing that in the game. And he was doing it in the game because he had an audience. See, he was after something. And you know what? He was after something all of us are after. And Paul calls that out in verse 12. It says, those who want to make a good showing, the NIV says, it renders it this way, those who want to make a good impression on people in the flesh would force you to be circumcised. And so Paul's bringing up this idea that, man, boasting is a way that we seek the praise of men. Now, think about this. How much do you and I do things so that others will see it and give us praise? Can you think of things even that maybe you used to do but stopped doing because it wasn't praiseworthy to anybody?

Nobody gave you praise for it. See, you and I, we are motivated to get people's affirmation, and it's hard when we don't get it. See, our hearts have these built-in little radars that detect what people give praise to, right? And when it finds it, man, it goes after it. And this happens from the time that we are children. We instinctively direct ourselves to achieve whatever that is so that we can get praise.

We are like lemmings following the Pied Piper. Whatever is elevated and whatever is celebrated, that is what we try to become. Why do we do that? It's because we're people pleasers. But that kind of praise, that praise of man that we're looking for, man, that has to be earned. And you know what?

[ 4 : 38 ] We all pay something for the praise we want from men because all praise comes with a price tag. Galatians 6.12, it puts it this way. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised. Man, think about what it costs the Galatian believers to get a slice of the praise of the communion group, pun intended. See, there was no splitting the baby in that scenario. You weren't like, well, maybe I could just do a kind of a half a circumcision. No, man, you had to go the whole way to please those guys. And in the same way, we have to accept the fact that getting man's praise, getting man's praise costs us something. And the Bible makes that black and white. Look at what it says in James 4.4, chapter 4, verse 4. You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. See, when we seek man's praise or the world's praise, we are trying to befriend the world. But man, what is the cost? When we try to befriend the world, what is the cost that comes with? Well, man, it comes at the cost of friendship with God.

And again, God says, man, you don't get to split the baby here. You have to be all in one way or the other. That's what God is telling us. So we have to reckon, man, what is the cost for the praise of men that I'm seeking? Do I want friendship with the world? Do I want the praise of man? Or do I want, and if I get that, God is my enemy? Or do I want God as my friend and the world hating me?

So often our decision comes down to what will cost us less? What's the easiest way forward for me? That's what often most of us are thinking about. And that's because fear is often our primary motivator. And that is what this circumcision group in the Galatian churches was motivated by, right? The second half of that verse 12, it says, only in order. Why were they wanting people to get circumcised? Only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. See, not only are we wanting the praise of man and we go seek it out, we don't want the cost of persecution, of being mistreated. See, the circumcision group was being railroaded by that very fear. They wanted all the benefits of the cross, but man, they didn't want the cost associated with it. They didn't want the persecution associated with it. But that is not what it means to follow Jesus. As disciples, we don't get that choice. There is a cost to following him. Jesus himself tells us to count the cost of following him. The Bible gives us some incredible accounts of what disciples endured for their faith. Look at Hebrews 11 verse 35. It says, women, this is talking about believers, women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others, and they suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. Crazy. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wondering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth.

Doesn't sound like a very rosy picture for these guys that follow Jesus and were all in for him, right? There was a real cost there that we see. But man, what makes a person, what makes a Christian want to endure that kind of hardship? Well, plain and simple. They found something greater to boast in, right? Something that's countercultural, something that's counterintuitive, right? And that's what the gospel does. The gospel changes what we boast in. In verse 14 of Galatians 6, it says, Paul says, but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. And this is Paul's main point of his closing argument. There is only one thing, only one thing to boast about. If you're a Christian, there's one thing we boast about.

We don't boast to earn people's favor or avoid being mistreated. We boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And man, that is a loaded statement. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a loaded statement. I want to take some time unpacking what it means to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's interesting, first of all, that we are called to boast in the cross, not just Jesus, but in the cross. Because what is the cross? Well, the cross is a symbol of shame and it's a symbol of judgment. Crosses were an undignified death for the guilty. The cross wasn't a place where men were praised. It was a place where guilty men died. But Jesus didn't endure the cross because he was guilty.

[ 10 : 03 ] Now he endured the cross because we were guilty. And he went to the cross in our place so that our sins could be forgiven. So the cross just doesn't just point to that Jesus is the suffering Savior on our behalf, which is true. It also points to something else. It points to our guilt and our shame because of our sin. And what that says, it says we are unworthy of receiving any kind of praise. There is nothing boastworthy in us. The cross denies boasting in ourselves because it boasts in our weakness.

Think about this. What kind of person goes around bragging about their failures or the things they aren't good at? You know what kind of person does that? A Christian. That's what a Christian does. That's what we are called to do. That is what boasting in the cross means. It reminds us that we tried to be God and to replace God. And we did a terrible job. It never worked. We didn't even come close to equaling him or replacing him. And it reminds us that despite our best efforts, we were totally incapable of reaching up to heaven, of closing that gap that existed between us and God. So what did God do? He acted on our behalf. He acted where we were totally incapable. Jesus came down to us. And that is why we celebrate in the cross. We celebrate the cross. It points to our failure, but it points to Jesus's victory.

And like that saying says, to the victor goes the spoils. And to Christ, our champion was given the spoils. He rose from the dead. He was crowned king over all. He is seated on his throne in heaven.

And Ephesians 121 describes him this way. He's far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

But here again is where the cross deviates from the ways of our world, from the ways we naturally think. The cross not only points to our weakness, it points to God's grace. See, in this world, what we do is we boast in order to earn people's favor. That's what we're after. But the cross reminds us that God's favor was earned by Jesus. In verse 15, it says, for neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And that's for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. And then in verse 18, it says, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers. Amen. So Paul says, guys, circumcision, the thing that is in your power to do, that you can do with your own hands, that counts for nothing to God. And even uncircumcision, the things that is in our power not to do, man, none of those things even count to God. So then what does count in God's economy? Well, it says here, the only thing that does count is the only thing that we can't do, become a new creation. And being made a new creation is all God's doing. We are totally left out of that. And you know what? He doesn't even do it in response to our performance. He doesn't look at us and say, man, that Jesse guy, he is so good. He is just loving his wife so well and being a good dad. You know what? I'm going to make him a new creation. You know what? God found me. I was totally messed up. I was running from him. Man, I was a horrible guy, but Jesus came and he saved me. He made me a new creation. The Bible says while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were still sinners, he came and he rescued us and he called us out and he made us a new creation. It has nothing to do with our performance at all. And you know what? Too often our idea of getting into heaven has to do with our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds, right? But God doesn't need anything from us. He doesn't need anything from you and me. Like we always try to bring things to the bargaining table. And guess what, guys? There is no bargaining table. So we don't come to God like the Pharisee in

[ 14 : 30 ] Jesus's parable who boasted in his performance. Like we read in Luke 18 11, Jesus said this Pharisee standing by himself prayed this way, God, I thank you that I'm not like the other men who are extortioners and unjust and adulterers or even like this tax collector over here. You know what I do, God?

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. Man, what's he doing? He's bragging on himself. But we don't have to brag on ourselves to God. His favor towards us isn't based on anything we do.

And that's a good thing. And because it's not based on anything we do, there's another side to that. It also means we don't boast in Jesus to avoid God's punishment. Just as much as we don't boast to earn his favor, we don't boast to avoid that punishment. And so often I hear Christians so worried that they've lost their salvation or God's somehow punishing them for their lack of good performance.

And man, so often we can fall into this kind of Christianity that is so like self-focused and worried about where we're standing with God. And we spend so much time and energy worrying about that, trying to keep our salvation. And we cite all kinds of reasons why. Man, I recently lied. I wasn't totally honest. I thought that bad thought. I got really angry and I cussed someone out. I flipped someone off when I was driving. Or maybe even something big like, man, I committed adultery.

Now those things are bad, but none of those sins, even as horrendous as you think your sin is, none of those sins disqualify the one Jesus has saved. And when our confidence in God's favor falters, it's because we've stopped boasting in the cross alone. Somewhere along the line, we started boasting in something else in addition to or in place of the cross. But the cross, it reminds us that Jesus was cut off from God's favor so that we will never be. Verse 17, Paul says, from now on, let no one cause me trouble. Let no one disqualify me. Let no one put condemnation on me.

[ 16 : 43 ] Let no one judge me, not even myself. For I bear, why can I live that way? I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. I don't know anything that is more comforting than the assurance of salvation.

I don't know anything that is more a steadfast anchor for the soul, a calming and a peace in the turmoil that can happen in our souls. I don't know anything more comforting than the assurance of salvation. And that doesn't make us want to take advantage of God's grace. Man, if you think, oh, sweet, I'm saved and nothing can change, I'm just going to go out and do my own thing, man, I would say that might suggest you've never experienced God's grace at all. See, Jesus on the cross, what he did, he became our circumcision. He was cut off. And that is why Paul is so raving mad about boasting in anything but the cross. The cross, the cutting off of Jesus from God's favor, that is the sign that is written on our hearts by faith in Jesus. In the old covenant, you know what circumcision was? Circumcision was this sign, this outward sign of being one of God's chosen people. Now, in the new covenant, we don't do that because Christ died, he became our circumcision, and in faith in him, it says our hearts have been circumcised, right? It's not an outward thing, it's an inward thing that only God can do to our hearts.

And it's the heart that believes in Jesus, that he is our circumcision, that is the new sign, that is the mark of Jesus on us, that solidifies that we are God's chosen people. You and I, we can't undo circumcision. And you can't undo the circumcision of the heart that comes by faith in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so our boast, friends, our boast, our praise is in Jesus alone. It is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. We boast in the cross because by it, we receive the best kind of praise, the praise of God the Father that looks on us and says this, my beloved son, my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased. And he doesn't say that because of anything we've done, but because of what Jesus has done for us.