

In The Cross I Glory

Galatians 1:3-5

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The title of my message is, In the Cross I Glory.

In the Cross I Glory. That's the Christian's passion, the Cross of Christ in which we glory. Galatians chapter one, and follow with me beginning in verse three. Paul says, "Grace be unto you, and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself, here's the cross, verse four, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father, to whom be glory forever, amen." The Cross of Christ is being said to be the centerpiece of the table of God's redemptive plan. If you could take all the Bible and you could culminate it in one spot, it would be in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Everything before that points to the death of Christ; everything after that goes back to glory in the Cross of Christ. For Paul, it was the center and the circumference of his life and of, his ministry, and of his preaching. Paul said For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Perhaps nowhere else does Paul set forth the glories of the cross more than in his letter to the Galatians, and that may surprise some, wondering how can you think that the cross is set forth in the book of Galatians, and why would it be that in the book of Galatians, Paul speaks so much about the cross and glorying in the cross. Well, one simple understanding about the background of the epistle: Paul was writing to a group of believers who were coming under the influence of false teachers, and the false teachers were actually telling them that they had to do good works and righteous deeds and that they were not saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but they were saved by Christ, but they had to work their way to heaven as well.

This is not the good news. This is not the gospel. And so, all through this epistle, as Paul spoke to them and said, oh, you foolish Galatians who has bewitched you, Jesus Christ and His crucifixion was set forth among you, why would you so soon depart from the Cross of Christ? When you understand the Cross of Christ, you understand the sufficiency there for our forgiveness and for our full redemption, and for living the Christian life as well. So, I want to take verses four, five, and go back to verse three in just a moment to give you five facts about the Cross of Christ for which we should glory. Fact number one: the Cross of Christ was voluntary. Notice it in verse four, "who gave Himself", top right there. Jesus said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it up again," which is speaking of His resurrection. But the death of Jesus Christ was voluntary. Jesus did not reluctantly go to the cross. He voluntarily, willingly submitted to the Father's purpose and plan to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus said in John 15, verse 13; He said, "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

So, Jesus Christ gave himself voluntarily. And just in case you're wondering who the who is, of verse four, you back up to the end of verse three. It mentions our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave

Himself for us. So, Jesus willingly, voluntarily. So, the death of Christ was voluntary. In Philippians chapter two, Paul's great kenosis passage, he said, "Christ who being in the very form of God," which means essence of God, thought equality with God, not something to hold on to." But Paul said, He emptied Himself. Now, He didn't empty Himself of His deity; He emptied Himself of the display of His deity by robing Himself in humanity. So, He emptied Himself, took on Him the form of a servant, became in the likeness of men, stooped all the way to the death of the cross. So voluntarily Jesus, who was equal with God the Father, came down to earth through the womb of the Virgin Mary, conceived there by the power of the Holy Spirit, took on flesh. So, Jesus is the God-man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross voluntarily for man, the creature's sin. That's so very, very important. His death was voluntary.

The second fact we glory in is that the Cross of Christ was substitutionary. You say, well, what do you mean by that, Pastor Miller? Well, Jesus took your sin, took our sin, paid the penalty for our sin and death on the cross. He was our substitute. Look at the little phrase next in verse four, "for our sins." So, He gave Himself, why? For our sins. That's the reason why Jesus died voluntarily on the cross. Not just to demonstrate God's love, which indeed it did. The theologians of years past talked about what's called the theater of the cross. And then you see the love of God in the cross. You see the mercy of God in the cross. You see the grace of God. You see the holiness of God.

You see the righteousness of God. You see the goodness of God in the cross. But the cross is not just a theater where God says, I love you. The cross is also a substitute where He takes our place and dies for our sin.

I believe that this one-word substitute or substitutionary death of Christ is the very heart and essence of the cross. He came to die for me. He came to die for you. Not just give us good teachings, not just to give us a good example, but to literally, physically die. That's the reason why He became a man so that He could die for our sins upon the cross. The Bible says that our sins are great and that we are sinners in rebellion against God. We're in a fallen state and we need our sins redeemed only one way through the blood of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21, Paul said, that God the Father made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. So, when you celebrate communion this Good Friday, just remind yourself it was my sins that He paid for on the cross. He took my place. He died my death. The Bible says the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. So, He paid for my sins, dying for me so that He could give to me as a free gift eternal life, and I could be forgiven.

Remember when Jesus died on the cross that Friday afternoon? He hung on the cross from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. And the last three and a half hours from noon to three, there was this darkness over the whole earth. And my guess is that it was a universal darkness, not just a local darkness. But as He hung there, He cried, "My God, My God." He said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" And the answer to that is because our sins at that moment were placed upon the sinless Son of God. And for a moment, with something that had not been for all eternity, God the Father had to turn His back on God the Son. He could not look on sin.

So, He tasted death for every one of us. Jesus substituted Himself in our place.

Remember when Abraham was going offer Isaac a son on the Mount Moriah? And God spared Isaac, took Him off the altar, and there was a ram caught in the bush, and the ram was taken and placed in place of Isaac, substituted for Isaac, he died in his place. Jesus is that Lamb of God, John the Baptist said, who carries away the sin of the world. And when Jesus died on the cross, He not only said, "God, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" But He said, "it is finished," which is the Greek word to "tetelestai," which means paid in full. So, He finished by paying for my sins upon the cross. And we must trust Him, only He can save us from sin.

We give you the third fact about the cross that we glory in. The Cross of Christ was a rescue mission. It was voluntary, it was substitutionary, and it was a rescue mission. Why did Jesus give Himself for our sins? Look at verse four in Galatians one, "that He might deliver or rescue us from this present evil world." Jesus didn't die to just make us happy. To listen to some preachers, you think that's all there was. Healthy and wealthy, right? Jesus died to rescue us. Jesus died to deliver us from this present evil world, not to just improve us. Salvation is actually a rescue mission undertaken for people living in bondage and in Satan's kingdom. Notice the phrase, "this present evil world." The word world, there is the word "aionios". There are two basic worlds. There's the world of the devil, the Satan's kingdom, and there's God's kingdom. And you're either in Satan's kingdom living under Satan's rule, or you're living in God's kingdom living under God's rule. When you become a believer in Jesus Christ, and you're born of the Spirit of God, you're given new life, you're regenerated, you're taken out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and death, and you're transferred or translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Amen? What a blessing. So, we're celebrating today the fact that we've been rescued, that God came from heaven to rescue me. I love that.

When the children of Israel were in bondage to Egypt, they were finally instructed to take a lamb to slay it. And the lamb had to be without blemish and spot. No inherited defect, no acquired defect. And would take the blood, they would put it on the doorpost in the lintel of their homes. And that night when the death angel came in to destroy the firstborn in every one of the homes of the Egyptians, every home where the blood was applied, the angel passed over. So, Jesus died as our Passover lamb. He died at Passover. His blood is applied to us by faith, and then He passes over us in the judgment. It's meted out on Christ. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2, verses 5 and 6; he said, "There's one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for all to be a ransom in due time." One way to heaven through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you the fourth reason we glory in the cross. We glory in the cross because the Cross of Christ was planned by God the Father in eternity passed. It wasn't an afterthought. It wasn't a second thought. It wasn't a, "what am I going to do now that man is sinned in the garden?" Well, how am I going to save man? All of it was understood and planned and plotted out by God in eternity passed. It's nothing that we can fathom, we can't comprehend or understand. But notice in verse four of my text Paul says, "according to the will of God and our Father." So, Jesus gave Himself for our sins to rescue us, all drawn up, all planned out, all

designed by God the Father before the world ever was created. So, God the Father planned our salvation. God the Son purchased it on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit applies it to our lives. So, in eternity passed, it was all drawn up. In time Jesus died on the cross and in the present, when we trust Christ and we believe in Him, the Holy Spirit comes in, cleanses us from sin and gives us new life. We become the children of God.

So, Jesus gave Himself voluntarily, but God the Father planned it from all eternity. Now, this is again something that we can't fully comprehend or understand. One of the most amazing little pieces of understanding I've ever had about the cross. And I know that when we get to heaven, it will be unfolded in ways we never could understand here. Paul said in Corinthians, "We see right now through a glass dimly." But when we get to heaven, we'll be seeing clearly face to face. That man's fall and our redemption was all part of God's design for His greater glory. I'm not saying that God's the author of sin. Man was given a free will. He chose to rebel against God, and he brought sin and death into the world by listening to the devil, and he fell. But God knew it would happen. God was in control and God knew He would get greater glory through man's fall and man's redemption than had man never have fallen. And that, to me, is an amazing thought. The great glory of God all through His love demonstrated in a way that would not have happened had there been no fall in the garden. Remember when Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, and He was in great agony and He was facing the cross, and He said, "Father if it's thy will, let this cup pass from Me." And then He said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." So obviously, it was the will of God the Father to send God the Son to die for man, the creature's sin, so that we could be redeemed and bring greater glory to God. Amazing thought. The whole plan of redemption is according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. Paul said in Ephesians 1 in verse 11.

So, the Cross of Christ is voluntary. Cross of Christ is substitutionary. The Cross of Christ is a rescue mission to save us and recover us from sin and death. The Cross of Christ was planned and designed by God the Father from all eternity. And last but not least, verse 5, the Cross of Christ is for God's glory. The glory of God is seen in the cross, to whom be glory forever and ever. Paul says, amen. Salvation is theocentric. That means it's God-centered. Nothing about our salvation that we're going to celebrate in just a moment as we take the cup and the bread and we celebrate communion brings any praise, glory, or honor to man. All praise, all glory, all honor be to God, amen?

We can't take any credit. Paul says by grace, you have been what? And that not of yourself. It is a gift of God, not of works. Why? Lest any man should boast. Let's not boast other than in the Cross of Christ. How wonderful it is. I believe that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. Through the cross, we are saved by grace. Through the cross, we have peace with God and the peace of God.

Notice as you go back with me now to verse three of our text. Paul says, "Grace be unto you, peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." So, we're saved by grace. We stand in grace. We'll go to glory by the grace of God. What begins with grace will end in glory. And in between here and heaven, we have the peace of God and peace with God in our hearts, amen?

How marvelous and how wonderful. This is why Paul says at the end of his letter to the Galatians. In Galatians chapter six and verse 14, Paul says, "but God forbid that I should glory or boast, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto Me and I unto the world." When you become a Christian, you are crucified to the world and the world to you. You're content as we sing to let the world go by, to no gain or loss. My sinful self, my only shame, my glory all the cross. How marvelous.

To God be the glory, great things He hath done. Someone said, "He saw me ruined by the fall. He loved me, notwithstanding all. He saved me from my lost estate. His loving-kindness, oh how great."

Let's pray.