

The CROSS of CHRIST

by

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Galatians 6:14

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.

What do we think and feel about the cross of Christ? We live in a Christian land. We probably attend the worship of a Christian church. We have, most of us, been baptized in the name of Christ. We profess and call ourselves Christians. All this is well—it is more than can be said of millions in the world. But what do we think and feel about the cross of Christ?

I want to examine what one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, thought of the cross of Christ. He has written down his opinion—he has given his judgment in words that cannot be mistaken. The man I mean is the Apostle Paul. The place where you will find his opinion, is in the letter which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write to the Galatians. The words in which his judgment is set down, are these, "But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now what did Paul mean by saying this? He meant to declare strongly, that he trusted in nothing but "Jesus Christ crucified" for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. Let others, if they would, look elsewhere for salvation; let others, if they were so disposed, trust in other things for pardon and peace—for his part the apostle was determined to rest on nothing, lean on nothing, build his hope on nothing, place confidence in nothing, boast in nothing, "except in the cross of Jesus Christ."

I wish to say something about "the cross" to the readers of this volume. Believe me, the subject is one of the deepest importance. This is no mere question of controversy. It is not one of those points on which people may agree to differ, and feel that differences will not shut them out of heaven.



The Apostle Paul
Rembrandt van Rijn

A man must be right on this subject, or he is lost forever. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, life or death, blessing or cursing in the last day—all hinges on the answer to this question, "What do you think about the cross of Christ?"

I. Let me show you, first of all, what the Apostle Paul did NOT boast in.

There are many things that Paul might have boasted in, if he had thought as some do in this day. If ever there was one on earth who had something to boast of in himself, that man was the great apostle of the Gentiles. Now if he did not dare to boast, who shall?

He never boasted in his national privileges. He was a Jew by birth, and, as he tells us himself, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews."—He might have said, like many of his brethren, "I have Abraham for my forefather I am not a dark unenlightened heathen; I am one of the favored people of God—I have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision. I am a far better man than the ignorant Gentiles." But he never said so. He never boasted in anything of this kind. Never, for one moment!

He never boasted in his own works. None ever worked so hard for God as he did. He was "more abundant in labors" than any of the apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:23

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

No man ever preached so much, traveled so much, and endured so many hardships for Christ's cause. None was ever made the means of converting so many souls, did so much good to the world, and made himself so useful to mankind. No Father of the early Church, no Reformer, no Puritan, no Missionary, no minister, no layman—no one man could ever be named, who did so many good works as the Apostle Paul. But did he ever boast in them, as

if they were in the least meritorious, and could save his soul? Never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in his knowledge. He was a man of great gifts naturally, and, after he was converted, the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts still. He was a mighty preacher, and a mighty speaker, and a weighty writer. He was as great with his pen as he was with his tongue. He could reason equally well with Jews and Gentiles. He could argue with infidels at Corinth, or Pharisees at Jerusalem, or self-righteous people in Galatia. He knew many deep things. He had been in the third heaven, and "heard unspeakable words."

2 Corinthians 12:4

How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

He had received the spirit of prophecy, and could foretell things yet to come. But did he ever boast in his knowledge, as if it could justify him before God? Never—never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in his graces. If ever there was one who abounded in graces, that man was Paul. He was full of love. How tenderly and affectionately he used to write! He could feel for souls like a mother or a nurse feeling for her child. He was a bold man. He cared not whom he opposed when truth was at stake. He cared not what risks he ran when souls were to be won. He was a self-denying man—in hunger and thirst often, in cold and nakedness, in watchings and fastings. He was a humble man. He thought himself less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. He was a prayerful man. See how it comes out at the beginning of all his Epistles. He was a thankful man. His thanksgivings and his prayers walked side by side. But he never boasted in all this, never valued himself on it—never rested his soul's hopes on it. Oh, no—never for a moment!

He never boasted in his Churchmanship. If ever there was a good Churchman, that man was Paul. He was himself a chosen apostle. He was a founder of churches, and an ordainer of ministers—Timothy and Titus, and many elders, received their first commission from his hands. He was the beginner of services and sacraments in many a dark place. Many a one did he baptize; many an one did he receive to the Lord's Table; many a meeting for prayer, and praise, and preaching, did he begin and carry on. He was the setter up of discipline in many a young Church. Whatever ordinances, and rules, and ceremonies were observed in many Churches, were first recommended by him. But did he ever boast in his office and Church standing? Does he ever speak as if his Churchmanship would save him, justify him, put away his sins, and make him acceptable before God? Oh, no! Never—never! Never for a moment!

Now if the apostle Paul never boasted in any of these things, who in all the world, from one end to the other—who has any right to boast in them in our day? If Paul said, "God forbid that I should boast in anything whatever except the cross," who shall dare to say, "I have something to boast of—I am a better man than Paul"?

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in any goodness of his own? Who is there that is resting on his own amendments—his own morality—his own churchmanship—his own works and performances of any kind whatever? Who is there that is leaning the weight of his soul on anything whatever of his own, in the smallest possible degree? Learn, I say, that you are very unlike the apostle Paul. Learn that your religion is not apostolic religion.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in his religious profession for salvation? Who is there that is valuing himself on his baptism, or his attendance at the Lord's table—his church-going on Sundays, or his daily services during the week—and saying to himself, "What more do I lack?" Learn, I say, this day, that you are very unlike Paul. Your Christianity

is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Paul would not boast in anything but "the cross." Neither ought you.

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. Give up your secret pride. Cast away your vain ideas of your own goodness. 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.

Think, you who take comfort in some fancied ideas of your own goodness—think, you who wrap up yourselves in the notion, "all must be right, if I keep to my Church,"—think for a moment what a sandy foundation you are building upon! Think how miserably defective your hopes and pleas will look in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Whatever people may say of their own goodness while they are strong and healthy, they will find but little to say of it when they are sick and dying. Whatever merit they may see in their own works here in this world, they will discover none in them when they stand before the tribunal of Christ. The light of that great day of judgement will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of all their doings. It will strip off the tinsel, shrivel up the complexion, expose the rottenness of many a deed that is now called good. Their wheat will prove nothing but chaff—their gold will be found nothing but dross. Millions of so-called 'good works' will turn out to have been utterly defective and graceless. They passed current, and were valued among men—they will prove light and worthless in the balance of God. They will be found to have been like the whitened sepulchers of old—fair and beautiful on the outside—but full of corruption on the inside. Alas, for the man who can look forward to the day of judgment, and lean his soul in the smallest degree on anything of his own now!

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"Howsoever people when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their rewards, which in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God has measured and laid up as it were in bundles for them—we see notwithstanding by daily experience in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approaches, when they secretly hear themselves summoned to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causes the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their souls upon the rack. The memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them. They forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence. No staff to lean upon, no rest, no ease, no comfort then—but only in Christ Jesus."—Richard Hooker. 1585.

Once more I say, let us beware of self-righteousness in every possible shape and form. Some people get as much harm from their fancied virtues as others do from their sins. Rest not, rest not until your heart beats in tune with Paul's. Rest not until you can say with him, "far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

II. Let me explain, in the second place, what we are to understand by "the cross of Christ."

The 'cross' is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What did Paul mean when he said, "I boast in the cross of Christ," in the Epistle to the Galatians? This is the point I now wish to examine closely and make clear.

The cross sometimes means that wooden cross, on which the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed and put to death on Calvary. This is what Paul had in his mind's eye, when he told the Philippians that Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Philippians 2:8

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is not the cross in which Paul boasted. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of boasting in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix, as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous.

The cross sometimes means the afflictions and trials which believers in Christ have to go through, if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when He says, "He who takes not his cross and follows after Me, cannot be my disciple."

Matthew 10:38

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well—he carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

But the cross also means, in some places, the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross—the atonement that He made for sinners, by His suffering for them on the cross—the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up, when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one word, "the cross," stands for Christ crucified, the only Savior. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression, when he tells the Corinthians, "the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness."

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross." He simply meant, "I boast in nothing but Christ crucified, as the salvation of my soul."

"By the cross of Christ the Apostle understands the all-sufficient, expiatory, and satisfactory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, with the whole work of our redemption; in the saving knowledge of whereof he professes he will glory and boasts."—Cudworth on Galatians. 1613.

"Touching these words, I do not find that any expositor, either ancient or modern, Popish, or Protestant, writing on this place, does expound the cross here mentioned of the sign of the cross—but of the profession of faith in Him who was hanged on the cross."—Mayer's Commentary. 1631.

"This is rather to be understood of the cross which Christ suffered for us, than of that we suffer for Him."—Leigh's Annotations. 1650.

Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting-place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself, and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness, and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done, and Christ had suffered—of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In this he did boast. This was the sun of his soul.

This is the subject he loved to preach about. He was a man who went to and fro on the earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed His own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world

telling people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, "*I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins.*" (1 Cor. 15:3.)

1 Corinthians 2:2

"I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

He, a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he loved to dwell upon when he wrote to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ—how they run over with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly—he returns to it continually. It is the golden thread that runs through all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortations. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much about the cross.

"Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he has the word "Jesus" five hundred times in his Epistles."—Charnock. 1684.

This is what he lived upon all his life, from the time of his conversion. He tells the Galatians,

Galatians 2:20

"The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."\

What made him so strong to labor? What made him so willing to work? What made him so unwearied in endeavoring to save some? What made him so persevering and patient? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the food and drink of his soul.

And we may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it, the cross of Christ—the death of Christ on the cross to make atonement for sinners—is the center truth in the whole Bible. This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the law of Moses, and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple, all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honored in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Revelation. ***"In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts," we are told, "and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. 5:6.)*** Even in the midst of heavenly glory we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian hieroglyphics without the key that interprets their meaning—curious and wonderful—but of no real use.

Let every reader of this paper mark what I say. You may know a good deal about the Bible. You may know the outlines of the histories it contains, and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England. You may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. You may know the several precepts of the Bible, and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. But if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a key-stone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring

or weights, a lamp without oil. It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell.

Mark what I say again. You may know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, and where He was born, and what He did. You may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances. You may know how He lived, and how He suffered, and how He died. But unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience—unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins—unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross—unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross, and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.

"If our faith stops in Christ's life, and does not fasten upon His blood, it will not be justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for His doctrines; His holiness, which fitted Himself for His sufferings, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross." Charnock. 1684.

As long as you live, beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship, in this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak, and sculptured stone; there is stained glass, and brilliant painting; there are solemn services, and a constant round of ordinances; but the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Beware of such places of worship. They are not apostolic. They would not have satisfied Paul.

"Paul determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But many manage the ministry as if they had taken up a contrary determination—even to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."—Traill. 1690.

There are thousands of religious books published in our times, in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments, and praises of the Church. They abound in exhortations about holy living, and rules for the attainment of perfection. They have plenty of fonts and crosses, both inside and outside. But the real cross of Christ is left out. The Savior, and His work of atonement and complete salvation, are either not mentioned, or mentioned in an unscriptural way. And hence they are worse than useless. Beware of such books. They are not apostolic. They would never have satisfied Paul.

Paul boasted in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul. Listen not to any teaching which would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error—think not that anyone in this day is a better guide than the apostles. Do not be ashamed of the "old paths," in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let not the vague talk of modern teachers, who speak great swelling words about "catholicity," and "the church," disturb your peace, and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers, and sacraments, are all useful in their way—but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ's honor to another. "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord."

2 Corinthians 10:17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:31

that, according as it is written, "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord."

III. Let me show, lastly, why all Christians ought to boast in the cross of Christ.

I feel that I must say something on this point, because of the ignorance that prevails about it. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of His death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such people are quite wrong. I cannot hold with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the cross of Christ. It is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men—how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment—how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns—how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting—how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him up on Calvary between two thieves—how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His sufferings, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding until He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all four writers of the Gospel describe. Generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it. But there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident—they were all planned, counseled, and determined from all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that

redemption should be by the cross. Infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified "*by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*" (Acts 2:23.)

People seem to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all. With His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debt that God would accept—this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.

"In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory; in His death our life."—Cudworth. 1613.

"The eye of faith regards Christ sitting on the summit of the cross as in a triumphal chariot; the devil bound to the lowest part of the same cross, and trodden under the feet of Christ."—Davenant on Colossians. 1627.

People seem to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntarily, and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion. Of His own choice He laid down His life—of His own choice He went to the cross in order to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind. But He was a willing sufferer. His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open "a fountain for all sin and uncleanness," by shedding His own blood.

Zechariah 13:1

13 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

When I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fullness I seem to discern in it. The longer I dwell on the cross in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to be learned at the foot of the cross than anywhere else in the world.

(a) Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed-time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father's love—but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son—gave Him to suffer and die—that "***whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have eternal life.***" (*John 3:16.*) I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are! But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.

"The world we live in would have fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist—not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it; they were all forfeited by sin—but merited by His blood. If we study it well we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world."—Charnock.

(b) Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has

scattered them over the face of the earth? No! I can find a clearer proof still! I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that sin is so black and damnable, that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away. There I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker, that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us. Nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. If I listened to the wretched talk of proud people, I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful! But I cannot think little of sin, when I look at the cross of Christ.

(c) Would I know the fullness and completeness of the salvation God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a "God of love"? Oh, no! I will look at the cross of Christ. I find no evidence like that. I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart, like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken has come down on One who there suffered in my stead. The demands of that law are all satisfied. Payment has been made for me, even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven! My own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief. I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of people, when I look at the cross.

(d) Would I find strong reasons for being a holy man? Where shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes! I will look at the cross of Christ! There I see the love of Christ constraining me to "live not unto myself—but unto Him." There I see that I am not my own now—I am "bought with a price."

2 Corinthians 5:15

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Corinthians 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from all iniquity—but also to purify me, and to make me one of a "peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Titus 2:14

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, "that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness."

1 Peter 2:24

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

There is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin, when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.

(e) Would I learn how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and concerns of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God,

the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so. But I have a better argument still. I will look at the cross of Christ. I feel that *"He who spared not His only-begotten Son—but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things" that I really need. (Rom. 8:32.)*

He who endured such agony, sufferings, and pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good. He who has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He who gave His own blood to procure me a home in heaven, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. There is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with the foot of the cross!

(f) Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away? Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith, and love, and penitence, and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "this same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at the cross of Christ. This is my grand argument. This is my main stay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! what Jesus paid for, Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it. He will not let it easily be lost. He called me to Himself when I was a dark sinner—He will never forsake me after I have believed. When Satan tempts us to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, we should tell Satan to look at the cross.

"The believer is so freed from eternal wrath, that if Satan and conscience say, 'You are a sinner, and under the curse of the law,' he can say, 'It is true, I am a sinner; but I was hanged on a tree and died, and was made a curse in my Head and Lawgiver Christ, and His payment and suffering is my payment and suffering.'"—Rutherford's Christ Dying. 1647.

And now, will you marvel that I said all Christians ought to boast in the cross? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of the cross and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity, than the fact

that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony—well may the eyes of our mind be called blind—well may our whole nature be called diseased—well may we all be called dead, when the cross of Christ is heard of and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth; an astounding and a horrible thing is done,"—Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

(a) The cross is the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion. Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Savior. They cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. This is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way, might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

(b) The cross is the strength of a minister. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without weapons—like an artist without his brush—like a pilot without his compass—like a laborer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and morality; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others drench their congregations with teachings about the sacraments and the church; give me the cross of Christ! This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made people forsake their sins. And if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Spirit delights to bless. He loves to honor those who honor the cross.

(c) The cross is the secret of all missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon which has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of the globe. Greenlanders, Africans, South-Sea Islanders, Hindus, Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits, is more affected and bent by half-an-hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. "Brethren," said a North-American Indian after his conversion, "I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth, He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners.' I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening began among us." I say, therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Savior, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen. Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly, as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross!

(d) The cross is the foundation of a Church's prosperity. No Church will ever be honored in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up—nothing whatever can make up for the lack of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor. But without the cross no good will be done; dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the Church and an apostolic ministry—sermons about baptism and the Lord's supper—sermons about unity and schism—sermons

about fasts and communion—sermons about fathers and saints—such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some—they will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the lack of food. Christ crucified is God's ordinance for doing good to people. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcass, a well without water, a barren fig tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a speechless witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offense to God.

(e) The cross is the grand center of union among true Christians. Our outward differences are many, without doubt. One man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian—one is an Independent, another a Baptist—one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian—one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth Brother—one is a friend to Establishments, another a friend to the voluntary system—one is a friend to liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer. But, after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences, in heaven? Nothing, most probably—nothing at all. Does a man really and sincerely boast in the cross of Christ? That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother—we are traveling on the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not boast in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only, is union only for a time—union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease—error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union—union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if I had said nothing compared to what might be said. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about the cross were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. I do trust that I have shown you that I have reason for the question with which I began this paper, "What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?" Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to APPLY the whole subject to your conscience.

(a) Are you living in any kind of sin? Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear, I beseech you, what I say to you this day, "Behold the Cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation. Yes—careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! For you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! For you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you. Surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Savior who died for you, and is willing to save! Come, and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come, and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come, and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. How will you ever escape if you neglect so great salvation? None surely will be so deep in hell as those who despise the cross!

(b) Are you inquiring the way toward heaven? Are you seeking salvation—but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ—but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you—His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

(c) Are you an unlearned man? Are you desirous to get to heaven, and perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible which you cannot explain? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Read there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Savior? Does it not make one thing plain, and that is that it is all your own fault if you are not saved? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

(d) Are you a distressed believer? Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, overburdened with cares? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you; think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him who was crucified! It is the same hand which in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, "A crucified Savior will never lay upon me anything that is not for my good. There is a needs be. It must be well."

(e) Are you a believer that longs to be more holy? Are you one that finds his heart too ready to love earthly things? To you also I say, "Behold the cross of Christ." Look at the cross, think of the cross, meditate on the cross, and then go and set your affections on the world if you can. I believe that holiness is nowhere learned so well as on Calvary. I believe you cannot look much at the cross without feeling your will sanctified, and your tastes made more spiritual. As the sun gazed upon makes everything else look dark and dim, so does the cross darken the false splendor of this world. As honey tasted makes all other things seem to have no taste at all, so does the cross seen by faith take all the sweetness out of the pleasures of the world.

Keep on every day steadily looking at the cross of Christ, and you will soon say of the world, as the poet does—

*Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.*

*As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away
When Jesus is revealed.*

(f) Are you a dying believer? Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour, when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ by faith, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly, not on a man-made crucifix—but on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places, He will be with you. He will never leave you—never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruit shall be sweet to your taste. "Ah," said a dying missionary, "there is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross!"

I lay these thoughts before your mind. What you think now about the cross of Christ, I cannot tell. But I can wish you nothing better than this—that you may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, before you die or meet the Lord, "God forbid that I should boast—except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

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J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

The man of granite, with the heart of a child."

"My chief desire in all my writings, is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and make Him beautiful and glorious in the eyes of men; and to promote the increase of repentance, faith, and holiness upon earth."

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