

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

The Gospel in Galatians **Lesson 14: Boasting in the Cross**

Should the Holy Spirit impart a greater appreciation of what it means to say, “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”? Would we be less inclined to think someone a fanatic if he is “determined not to know anything among [his congregation], save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”? (Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2)?

Our Sabbath school lessons have directed our attention to Galatians because this is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and this book played a key role in that historic event. Martin Luther, John Calvin, James Arminius, and the Wesleys, did great for their day; God was with them. Likewise, Galatians was the center of attention in 1888 when George I. Butler published his *The Law in Galatians* and E. J. Waggoner his *The Gospel in Galatians*. The titles of their books reveal what each author saw in Galatians. Butler saw legalism; Waggoner saw *The Glad Tidings*.

Just what is the good news of Galatians? We live in this “time of the end.” The “hour of God’s judgment is come.” Now is the world’s grand cosmic Day of Atonement. What is due now is not a proud triumphalism to “glory in the cross,” but a self-humbling appreciation for the *agape* love seen there. Now is the time to “comprehend” what Christ accomplished on His cross (Rev. 14:6, 7; Eph. 3:14-21).

Now you will say, “Well, that kind of experience is normal for somebody who gets to be in their nineties.” We assume that the world cannot be crucified unto us until we get old. And then the advertisements for fast cars no longer appeal to us. And the lovely fashions no longer appeal to the ladies. The malls and Disneyland no longer hold an attraction. Is that what it means to boast in the cross?

“The world is crucified unto me,” says Paul. “I glory in the cross” (Gal. 6:14). I have seen a scintillating radiance in the cross that nothing in the big city can outshine. My thinking day and night is about the sacrifice of Christ. I am amazed. I marvel that the Son of God should go to hell to save my soul. I can never get enough of it. It’s the overmastering passion of my life from here on out. I can’t help but share it with others.

Does your heart crave the joy that filled the hearts of the early apostles? Yes! We are not satisfied with a dull, unenthusiastic, leaden kind of spiritual experience, common as it may be. What did the apostles have that we don’t seem to have?

They saw the significance of the cross of Christ! Yes, they also believed the resurrection of Christ; but the resurrection meant nothing without appreciating what He had

accomplished on His cross. Billions of Christians around the world all glibly profess that “Christ died for our sins.” But how and why did He die?

To study for the answer to that question is not an exercise in futility or riding a hobbyhorse. Paul told the Corinthians that he knew nothing save Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-3). The light which will yet lighten the earth with its glory will be a revelation of the significance of that love revealed at the cross. Something about the cross will yet stir Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, yes, even those billions of lukewarm Christians.

Did Christ die only as an alien millionaire stepping in briefly to pay our legal debt? The words used to describe this view are “vicarious atonement.” Or did Christ actually become one of us, the second Adam, and die as us? How closely did He identify with us?

On the one hand, the vicarious atonement is an exchanged transaction. On the other hand, Christ identifying with us is a shared experience. The vicarious atonement leaves the human heart cold, or at best, lukewarm. Christ identifying with us lightens the soul with unending joy. According to their testimony in the New Testament, the apostles clearly were fired with Christ identifying Himself with us.

Look at it this way: What did Christ accomplish on His cross? Does it matter what one believes? Why did Paul “glory” in that cross?

There were good reasons. Paul understood that: In becoming one of the human race, Christ joined His divinity to our humanity, “in Himself.” He became the “second Adam,” the new Head of the human race. In so doing, He reversed what the first Adam had done, who had brought “condemnation” on the human race.

Thus Christ brought “justification of life” “upon all men” (Rom. 5:18). That is why He treats every human with grace and kindness as though he or she had never sinned, “not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Instead, God imputed humanity’s trespasses unto Christ: “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). By His sacrifice, Christ took upon Himself the penalty for all human sin, dying for “every man” his or her second death (Heb. 2:9).

The only appropriate response for any human is to appreciate what Christ has already accomplished for us and has given us as a “gift.” That was the reason why Paul “gloried” in that cross; he loved the atonement, and reveled in the truth of what Christ had already accomplished at the cross.

Paul described his heart-reaction in these words: “The love [*agape*] of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live [you and I] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Without sensing that “constraint” imposed by a heart-appreciation of Christ’s sacrifice, we humans (we’re all naturally self-centered) find it impossible to live any other kind of life than self-centered. Before our selfish hearts can become truly grateful, we have to understand what it is that Christ has given us, not merely offered us. Several times in Rom. 5:15-18 Paul “glories” in what Christ has given “all men”—“justification unto life.”

If you want that kind of joy, know nothing but Christ and Him crucified; then His resurrection will mean new life for you in Him. Let’s learn to “glory” in that cross!

—*Paul E. Penno*

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/EOWmZmFpl8M>

You may subscribe to the e-mail version of *Sabbath School Today* by sending a request to sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org