



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It!

GALATIANS 6:14

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Around the capitol we all know people who singularly focus on one particular issue. They may work as a lobbyist or belong to a special interest group as they seek to promote or defend the issue for which they are advocating. You know when you see them approaching the subject about which they will always be speaking. In the give and take and compromise of the legislative process, many will still stand hard and fast to their message. In essence they are saying, “This is my story, and I’m sticking to it”.

During this session we have considered how the message of a Savior who would suffer and die for our sins is actually the story or theme of the whole Bible. Jesus shared with His disciples that the Old Testament – the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerned Him and were written about Him (Luke 24:27, 44). He “opened their minds” to understand this truth about the Scriptures (vs. 45) and proclaimed to them, “...*Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations...*” (Lk. 24:46-47) If this is indeed the main message or story of the Bible, then we should make sure it is the message upon which we focus as believers and followers of God. This was certainly the focus of the early church’s foremost preacher, teacher, and evangelist, the Apostle Paul. In his writings we find a clear statement of the focus of his life and ministry:

...May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
Galatians 6:14

In this verse Paul shares how the cross was what changed his own life. In other places he writes of how the message of the cross is what he proclaimed to others:

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to

know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2

“We preach Christ crucified...” 1 Corinthians 1:23

The message of the whole Bible is that all people have sinned against a holy and just God. Yet God, in His mercy and grace sent His Son to suffer and die for our sin so that through faith we might have our sins forgiven and be right with Him. This was the message that was central to Paul’s life and ministry. This is the message in which he “boasted”.

When Paul speaks of “boasting”, he is talking about that which he treasures; that on which he focuses; that about which he talks and preaches. We will do well to ask ourselves what it is in which we boast. As Americans it might be freedom and the democratic process. As those involved in the political process it might be the principles or platform of a political party or we may boast about our stands on certain social and moral issues. In the realm of faith and religion we may boast of good works – seeking to be right with God based upon how we live and what we do. All these things are certainly important – but they are not the gospel – the central message of the Bible. As believers we must make sure as we stand for all the above things that we do not forget or assume the message of the gospel and the cross. It is only the cross that can change people’s hearts and lives. It is only the message of the gospel that provides the real answers for our state and for our nation.

THAT IN WHICH PAUL DID NOT BOAST¹

Paul said he would boast in nothing except the cross of Jesus Christ. This is significant because Paul had much in which he could have boasted (see Philippians 3:3-6). He could have boasted about his religious heritage and upbringing. He could have boasted about his good works. He could have boasted about his great intellect and teaching ability. He could have boasted about the special revelation God had given him. He could have boasted about his position as an apostle of Christ. Yet all

BUDGET WEEK BIBLE STUDY

THURSDAY 12:00 NOON TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

West Virginia

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these things he considered loss for the sake of Christ (Phil. 3:7) and he chose only to boast in the cross.

Paul was a preacher, missionary, and church planter, so naturally his message would focus on Christ and the gospel. This does not mean that the believer serving in the statehouse, whether as a legislator, elected official, or lobbyist should talk only about the gospel and the cross. However, it does mean that the follower of Christ should keep in mind that the gospel – the message of the cross – is the only real answer to the real problems facing our state as a whole and her citizens as individuals.

IN WHAT PAUL DID BOAST

We should realize how striking it is for Paul to say he “boasted in the cross”. Why would Paul boast about this instrument of torture reserved for the worst of criminals and the dregs of society? The answer is very simple—the cross of Jesus Christ is the only way for sinful men and women to be reconciled to a holy God who is too pure to even look upon sin. While the cross may be foolishness and a stumbling block to many, Paul says that the cross “*is the power of God for those who are being saved*” (I Cor. 1:17-18). Paul desires to boast only in the Cross of Christ, because to boast in anything else, is to imply that men and women can be restored to a right relationship to God by some other means than through the sacrificial death and perfect righteousness of Christ.²

What is this “cross” in which Paul boasted? This cross is an expression used in more than one way in the Bible. It sometimes refers to the instrument of execution itself, the wooden cross upon which Jesus died. Paul is speaking of much more than this. The cross is sometimes used figuratively to refer to the trials and difficulties believers will face in life. Paul certainly endured such trials, but that is not what he is talking about here. Paul is talking about the truth – the doctrine – that Jesus died for sinners upon the cross. It is the whole teaching that God is holy; people are sinful and under God’s just

judgment; and that God provided His own Son as the perfect sacrifice to make atonement for our sin.

CONCLUSION

This is the only thing in which Paul desired to boast. This is the only message Paul wanted to proclaim. In our studies this session we have considered that this is actually the message of the whole Bible, including the Old Testament. The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms were all written about and concerned the Savior who would suffer, die, and rise again. The sacrifices pointed to the fact that an innocent had to die on behalf of the guilty. The Tabernacle demonstrated the means by which a Holy God could dwell with sinful people. The priest pointed out that there must be a mediator between God and man. The Psalms described and predicted the suffering of Christ many years before His birth and expressed the true suffering He would endure for us. Jesus was the full and complete fulfillment of all these. He is the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the better sacrifice, suffering once and for all that our sins might be forgiven. He provides for us as sinful people the way we might have access to a holy and righteous God. All this was done through His sinless life and His suffering and death on the cross. Our sins can be forgiven through repentance and faith in Him and we now draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:15-16).

➤ **NO WONDER IT WAS THE CROSS IN WHICH PAUL DESIRED TO BOAST. IT WAS HIS STORY, AND HE WAS STICKING TO IT. WHEN WE REPENT AND TRUST CHRIST, IT CAN BECOME OUR STORY TOO. AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, THIS SHOULD BE THE STORY WE SEEK TO SHARE WITH OTHERS.**

¹ Much of this study adapted from J.C. Ryle’s *The Cross of Christ*. http://www.gracegems.org/23/Ryle_cross.htm

²Riddlebarger, Kim. May I Never Boast. <http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/an-exposition-of-galatians>