

Read Galatians 6:14-16

*For my part, I am going to boast about nothing but the Cross of our Master, Jesus Christ. Because of that Cross, I have been crucified in relation to the world, set free from the stifling atmosphere of pleasing others and fitting into the little patterns that they dictate. Can't you see the central issue in all this? It's not what you and I do –submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what **God** is doing, and He is creating something totally new, a free life! All who walk by this standard are the true Israel of God – His chosen people. Peace and mercy on them. ~The Message*

1. What does it mean to boast?

The word “boast” in the dictionary says -verb meaning “to speak with exaggeration and excessive pride – especially about oneself”. We know what comes after pride, don't we? Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall”. Sometimes pride is described in the Bible as a good thing though isn't it? 2 Corinthians 5:12 says that Paul was giving people an opportunity to take pride in him *-based on his fear of the Lord-* so that they could answer people who were taking pride in what was seen rather than what was in the heart. In that same letter (Chapter 7:4) Paul indicates that he takes great pride in the people he is writing to and in Chapter 8:24 he encourages them to show the proof of their love and the reason for his pride in them. It seems that pride in other people is acceptable, but all based on what God was doing through each of those people. Paul demonstrated pride only in Jesus Christ and His work.

2. What things do we normally tend to boast about in life?

What is the first thing we usually ask when meeting a new person? “What do you do?” We want an opportunity to boast about and identify ourselves by our job. Sometimes it's not verbal, but we boast about what we drive, how much we make, and our marital/family status. We boast about what we wear and where we live. We boast about our education even as we say “it's not what you know, it's who you know” and we boast about who we know. We use all sorts of worldly standards to try and make ourselves look better to people in the world.

3. Why should we boast in the cross instead?

Remember the Message of the Cross last week? It is a message of forgiveness, assurance, connection, anguish, agony, triumph and confidence. It is a message that God loves us! This week we were reminded that the Cross has power! Power to free, re-create, bless, to give victory and hope. All wrapped up in a demonstration of how much God loves us. Romans 5:6-8 in The Message says “*Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't and doesn't wait for us to get ready. He presented Himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to sacrifice, but **God put His love on the line for us by offering His Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to Him***”. Now that is something to boast about! God loves us! Think about how much God loves you. Take a minute to think about that and allow it to really sink in. **GOD --- LOVES --- YOU!** Nothing in the world is worth boasting about – nothing we do or have or accomplish. We don't build our identity on anything that looks good by the world's standards. We identify ourselves with Jesus Christ and we **can** boast about the fact that God loves us!

4. How have we allowed society to set the standards for success in our life?

How can we reverse that trend?

As we have already discussed this week, we sometimes allow the world to decide what we should boast in. We allow the world to set the standards for what we should do for a living, what we should drive, what we should wear, what degree or education we should get, who we should marry, how many kids we should have and so on. Sometimes we even allow society to begin to tweak what we believe about Heaven, Hell, Jesus, God and how much He loves us. That's not just "society" trying to change God's standards - that is Satan trying to steal the joy of our salvation! Do you know that in Today's NIV for instance, Hebrews 13:17 has been changed to say "Have confidence in" instead of "Obey"? Talk about a four letter word! Society doesn't like to obey; society doesn't want to obey so we just change the wording and pollute God's standard. There is also talk of changing Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female...." so that there is no reference to gender. The verse is not exclusive to one gender or the other - it is purposefully all-inclusive! Satan just wants to muddle the message of the Cross and convince us that it is powerless or that we have something to contribute to our salvation. Paul wasn't confused. Philippians 3:7-8 says "*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.*" (New Living Translation) So how do we reverse the trend and not let society - Satan - change God's standard in our lives? We put on the whole armor of God! Ephesians 6:10-18. We change the way we think and the way we perceive things. We look at things the way God does. Do not conform to the patterns and standards of this world. Romans 12:2 "*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*" (New Living Translation) As we focus on the Cross, **God** does the work in us. As we are reminded of how much He loves us, it doesn't matter what the world thinks of us anymore.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of Earth
Will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

This week's memory verse: Galatians 6:14

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Challenge: Memorize this week's verse and quote it to yourself each time you find yourself wanting to boast in something other than the cross this week. We will all find opportunities to boast in the cross instead of anything else. Turn your eyes upon Jesus and boast in HIM!