



Living For The Glory of God, Part 1

Series: *Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Philippians 4:20, Galatians 6:14-16

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Christian catch-phrases, slang illustration.

Last week, I made the statement that there are really only two ways of living – either for your own glory or for the glory of God. You and I will either live in a way that says the center of everything is God or the center of everything is me. Now, it is probably natural to wonder, “Is this really possible to live all of life to the glory of God?” In fact, it would seem not only natural, but wise, to ask that question. “Is it really possible to live all of life to the glory in such a way that brings glory to God, as the unifying and animating principle of everything that you or I do?” Can our family relationships, our work, our marital intimacy, our leisure and recreational activities, dating, school work, our eating and our drinking, our buying and selling, everything, be done from a singular passion to glorify and exalt, to honor and magnify, to rejoice in and boast in God alone? And the answer to that question is “Yes.”

The Bible makes clear in Isaiah 43:6-7 that God created us and called us to live in Christ for His glory: **“I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”** (Isaiah 43:6–7, ESV) Even more than that, life is wasted if we do not live it for His glory. We waste our lives when we do not intertwine God and His glory into the whole of our lives. In his great song of thanksgiving in 1 Chronicles 16, David joyfully exclaims: **“Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!...Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods... Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness... Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!”** (1 Chronicles 16:8-10, 23-25, 28-29,

34, ESV) That's pretty comprehensive. This is where we find life – exalting God, lifting up His name, praising His name, honoring His name, declaring His works, living in a way to make Him greater and more beautiful than people have ever thought and enjoying and delighting in Him supremely. If we seek then, as we talked about last week, to gladly embrace the calling to live to display God's glory, His greatness, and His renown, where do we begin? Where does a life of living for the glory and praise of God begin? That's where I want us to put our thoughts this morning. I want "living for the glory of God" to be more than a Christian cliché to us. The fountainhead for a life that brings glory to God is boasting in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Boasting in the Cross – The Fountainhead of God- Glorifying Life (Galatians 6:14)

Paul makes a statement at the end of his letter to the Galatians that is one of those statements that you never forget. He said there: ***“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6:14, ESV)*** It is one of those sort of defining and decisive statements, one of those bold and all-encompassing statements that define a man and his mission. It was that for Paul.

Just to put this in context -- because remember a text without context is a pretext – this statement comes at the end of a letter that more than any other proclaimed the gospel salvation by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone with no mixture of human works or human accomplishment, so that God receives the glory He is due. In this letter to the Galatians, Paul was dealing with false teachers who had infiltrated the church, who had confused the gospel, who tried to mix the gospel with their version of the OT Law. These false teachers did this for the purpose of magnifying themselves, of seeking position and power for themselves, and to nullify the power and grace and the salvation of the cross of Jesus Christ, to rob from Christ His glory and take it for themselves, therefore rob men of salvation by making them to trust in something beyond the work of Jesus Christ in purchasing salvation through His own shed blood. Paul wrote this letter to deal with men who sought glory and honor and power, who boasted of their spiritual superiority and of their wisdom, men who lived for their own glory and not the glory of God – what man has been trying to do since the Garden of Eden, when Adam first ate of the forbidden fruit. To that, Paul says, ***“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”***

The word that is translated there as “boast” is a word that means “to magnify, to honor, to praise, to exalt.” Now here’s the thing. Just like us, Paul lived in an age of boasting. The Greeks loved to boast of their learning, of their wisdom, of their philosophy. The Romans boasted about their law, their government, their kingdom, their order, and their conquest. And it’s the same today. People boast in their intellect. They glory in their learning. They magnify their medical and scientific knowledge, their enlightenment and tolerance. They boast in their wealth-in how much they have and how much they are going to get. They boast of their power and accomplishment, in their skills and their beauty, in their shape, in their athletic skills. Man can find a way to boast about just about everything, even their victimhood. Here’s the problem with all of that boasting – none of those things is eternal, none of them is ultimate, and none of them are worthy to be ultimately exalted.

The apostle Paul refused boast in any of these things. And he says it pretty strongly. ***But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** The Greek words for “but far be it from me,” are a Greek figure of speech, something akin to “God forbid” or “under no circumstances,” or “may it never be.” Paul wouldn’t give himself to such idle boasting, such contemptuous boasting before God. God forbid, he says. I will not, I could not glory or boast in anything save the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is that?

Paul had had his perception and understanding completely reoriented by the saving grace of God. His entire outlook on life, his whole perception of reality, and his scale of worth – what really mattered – had been forever altered by Jesus Christ when He saved Paul’s soul. I have said this before and I’ll say this again, one of the great measures of Christian maturity is what someone thinks, “really matters.” One of the common characteristics of an unsaved person and someone who is spiritually immature is that they do not know the relative worth and value of things. They value what is of little worth and treat carelessly what really matters. Lost people do this all the time, but even believers can fall into this trap when they are not communing with Christ as they should.

The truth is that people are exceedingly faddish. You see this in all sorts of ways – the person who loses a bunch of weight and glories in the diet they are on, the athlete who touts a certain training regimen, the guy who makes it big financially by some certain investment, some platform for self-expression that everyone has to try, something “that

works” for somebody and they become all about it, on an on it goes. We expend our passion in a lot of different areas – this is the latest, the best, the greatest, “life-changing,” incredible, awesome – whatever, running from fad to fad, from trend to trend, from cause to cause. Paul just wasn’t like that. He had a solid grip on that which was of timeless and true value.

Timeless and Truly Valuable – The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

For Paul, this matter of boasting in the cross, this matter of glorying in the cross was a matter of boasting in what was of ultimate worth. The cross held that place in heart and head. Paul was a thoroughly cross-centered man. We hear that kind of phraseology used – cross-centered – but what do we mean when we say that? What I am saying is that Paul considered the Savior who hung on that cross - and the sacrifice Jesus made for him there - to be everything to him, the viewpoint from which he considered everything else.

Paul makes it plain that his boast is in the cross of "our Lord Jesus Christ." And to make his boast in the cross of Jesus Christ means that he makes his boast in everything that is involved in the cross of Jesus Christ. What does that involve? Paul, without question means, first of all, that he makes his boast in the One who died on the cross. We see this in his letter to the Philippians, when he says: ***“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*** (Philippians 3:8–11, ESV)

But along with boasting in the one who died on the cross for him, Paul also boasted in everything that Christ accomplished there and the implications that flow from it. The cross made everything else make sense. As strange as it may seem, he gloried in the fact that the cross confirmed him a sinner in need of a Savior. He boasted in the sentence of death for his own sins that the cross declared. He boasted in the scandal of the cross, what was

foolishness to man but wisdom from God. And he boasted and gloried in what Christ did there -- full atonement for his sin, redemption purchased by the blood of Christ shed upon it, the removal of sin and guilt, the satisfying of God's wrath, the peace and reconciliation with God forged there, the defeat of Satan, sin and death, all of this done by Christ on the cross for us. He boasted in the glory with Christ that the cross would lead to. He boasted in the cross that led to a crown, the public exaltation of Christ as Lord over the universe. He gloried in it all. He made it his delight. He made it his boast. That's what he gloried in, boasted of, if I can use this word, "bragged" about.

But Paul also gloried in the cross because he saw the cross of Jesus Christ as the source of every blessing that he enjoyed. Do you see that? John Piper makes this beautiful point so well: For redeemed sinners, every good thing - indeed every bad thing that God turns for good - was obtained for us by the cross of Christ. Apart from the death of Christ, sinners get nothing but judgment. Apart from the cross of Christ, there is only condemnation. Therefore everything that you enjoy in Christ - as a Christian, as a person who trusts Christ - is owing to the death of Christ. And all your rejoicing in all things should therefore be a rejoicing in the cross where all your blessings were purchased for you at the cost of the death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons we are not as Christ-centered and cross-saturated as we should be is that we have not realized that everything - everything good and every thing bad that God turns for the good of his redeemed children was purchased by the death of Christ for us. We simply take life and breath and health and friends and everything for granted. We think it is ours by right. But the fact is that it is not ours by right. We are doubly undeserving of it. 1) We are creatures and our Creator was not bound or obligated to give us anything - not life or health and anything. He gives, he takes, and he does us no injustice. 2) And besides being creatures with no claim on our Creator, we are sinners. We have fallen short of his glory. We have ignored him and disobeyed him and failed to love him and trust him. The wrath of his justice is kindled against us. All we deserve from him is judgment. Therefore every breath we take, every time our heart beats, every day that the sun rises, every moment we see with our eyes or hear with our ears or speak with our mouths or walk with our legs is free and undeserved gift to sinners who deserve only judgment. And who bought these gifts for us? Jesus Christ. And how did he purchase them? By his blood.

As Charles Spurgeon said: **A something lies within the Truth of the Cross which sets the soul aglow! It touches the preacher's lips as with a live coal and fires the hearer's hearts as with flame from the Altar of God. We can live on this Gospel—and for this Gospel die. Atonement by blood, full deliverance from sin, perfect safety in Christ given to the Believer call a man to joy, to gratitude, to consecration, to decision, to patience, to holy living, to all-consuming zeal! Therefore, in the Doctrine of the Cross we glory, neither will we be slow to speak it out with all our might!** Paul desired to boast only in the Cross of Christ and as a result, Paul had a radically reoriented life.

A Radically Reoriented Life

What do I mean that Paul had a radically reoriented life? Well, look at what he says here in the last half of this verse: ***“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*** (Galatians 6:14, ESV)

What did it mean that the world was crucified to him? When Paul uses the word “world” he is speaking of the everything that has set itself against God and the message of the cross, the system and values and worldview that is in opposition to God, His character, and His word. Paul was saying that his entire reason for living was radically reoriented. He did not live with the same desires, the same longings, and the same focus as the world. He was not driven any longer by the approval of the world or the ways of the world. Paul considered that when Christ died on the cross for him, he essentially "died" on the cross with Jesus. He no longer sought to live life according to worldly principles. He expresses this thought in Galatians 2:20, where he writes: ***“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*** (Galatians 2:20, ESV)

Though the world still had something of its pull - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life; it was no longer the driving force of Paul's life. Paul explained this so clearly in Romans 6:8-14: ***“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no***

longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:8–14, ESV)

Paul’s whole life had been radically reoriented around Christ and His cross. Trusting in Christ, alive in Christ, Paul’s bondage to the world was broken, and the overpowering lure of the world was broken. He was dead to the world, dead to living for what the world says is valuable, what the world says is worth much – pride, sinful pleasures, worldly wisdom. He was alive by faith that was not the world, but Christ, and especially, Christ crucified. The source of his life and his satisfaction and his joy was Jesus Christ and Paul gloried in Him, because He saw the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ, as opposed to everything the world had to offer. He gloried in Christ.

So what does that mean for us? Does it mean that I can find no joy in anything in this world? There are some things that are legitimately enjoyable and praiseworthy. How does this all work together? Beloved, it is a matter of placing...

Ultimate Praise Where Praise is Due

Paul did not glory exclusively in the cross, but he did glory supremely and ultimately in the cross and there is a difference. Let me explain what I mean. Paul himself uses the same word for "boast" or "exult" for other things. For example:

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice (boast) in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice (boast) in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,” (Romans 5:2–3, ESV)

“Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.” (2 Thessalonians 1:4, ESV)

“I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride (boast) in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” (2 Corinthians 7:4, ESV)

“In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;” (Romans 15:17–19, ESV)

So what is Paul saying? Is he speaking out of both sides of His mouth? Of course not. In each of these examples, the point is – all of Paul’s rejoicing or boasting is ultimately in the Lord. All exultation, all rejoicing, all boasting in anything should ultimately be a rejoicing in the cross of Jesus Christ that makes all these blessings possible. Let me illustrate this a little more clearly.

Is it right or good to rejoice in a good wife, in the birth of child, in academic achievement, in a successful football season, in a fine meal, in good and godly children, in a faithful church? Is it right to take pleasure in hard-won victory, a legitimate accomplishment? The answer to that is “yes,” but not ultimately. If our pleasure or joy stops there, it stops short of the real mark, the ultimate praise of the One who makes all good things possible. As believers, as those redeemed by the blood of Christ, the truth is that is every legitimate gift that we enjoy, every blessing that we receive, every honorable accomplishment must ultimately be a rejoicing in Christ. And why? Because, as we said earlier, everything good and every thing bad that God turns for the good of his redeemed children was purchased by the death of Christ for us.

For the mature believer, every legitimate pleasure, every blessing, every good thing in the world becomes a blood-bought evidence of Christ's love, and an occasion of boasting in the cross.

Do you see, too, how this focus, glorying in the cross of Christ, sets a guard over our hearts and lives. We have to ask ourselves about everything that we do – can I do this to the glory of God? Can I do this in a way that is pleasing to God and am I doing it in that way? Is this a legitimately good thing in the eyes of God? Does this serve His glory? Can I do this in a way that brings praise to God? This is an all-encompassing idea, isn't it?

These words call us to true and costly Christianity, not cheap discipleship, not easy believism, nominalism, formalism, moralism, religiosity or the like; not superficial or cookie-cutter or cultural Christianity. It calls us to gospel-rooted living. This means boasting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, confident that no good thing exists apart from the cross of Christ. Is your life rooted in the gospel? Are you boasting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone? Beloved, let us exult joyfully in one thing, the Cross of Christ, letting this be our single minded focus, our sole passion and joy. Christ crucified is to forevermore be our boast and exultation so that He alone receives the glory and honor for every good thing in our lives and every bad thing that God turns for good.

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