

## IS IT OKAY TO BOAST?

**INTRODUCTION:** How many of you like to be around people that **brag** all the time?

You know the type I'm talking about, right? No matter what the **topic**, they seem to be able to "one-up" everyone else in the group.

--If you are talking **fishing**, he (or she) has caught the biggest—and most!

--If you are talking **hunting**, he (or she) has shot the biggest buck—or the most deer!

--If you are talking **cooking**, he (or she) makes the best food—and of course, does not use a recipe!

--And if you are talking **shopping**, he (or she) gets best deals—always!

So...is it **Christ-like** to brag? Stated another way, can you be a **boaster**—and still be a good Christian?

We are going to look at that thought this morning. Please take your Bibles and turn to Galatians 6; follow along as I read verses 11-18. Back to v 14. "But God forbid that I should **glory**..."

The word "glory" here is **not** from the Greek word "doxa" like it usually is. Instead, it comes from the Greek word "kow-khah-om-ahee" and means to **boast** or to **brag**. In other words, 'God forbid that I should **boast**, save—except—in the cross.' 'I'm not going to boast about what I can do...or have done...or will do—I'm going to boast in the cross.'

We are just going to be looking at the first half of this verse this week; next week we will look at the second. Three points this morning:

1. What Paul could have boasted about—but didn't!
2. What we might be tempted to boast about—but shouldn't!
3. Why Paul boasted in the cross

### **1. What Paul could have boasted about—but didn't!**

God forbid that I should glory **save in the cross** implies there are **other** things Paul **could have** boasted in.

First... A. Paul could have boasted in his background

**Phil 3:4-5** "Though I might also have confidence in the **flesh**. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the **flesh**, I more: <sup>5</sup>Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews..." By "**flesh**," Paul obviously was not referring to his skin or skin color—he was referring to his background and upbringing.

Please turn to II Corinthians 11 where we see Paul telling the church in Corinth basically the same thing.

--v 18 "Seeing that many glory after the **flesh**, I will glory also." We have our word "flesh" again; we also have our word **glory**—twice! Not surprisingly, **glory** here comes from the same Greek word used in Gal 6:14 "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross..."

In other words, Paul is saying, 'Since others are boasting in the flesh, I'm going to boast too!'

--v 22 "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I."

Now if you're really paying attention—or have had plenty of coffee this morning—you might be thinking, "Wait a minute, Pastor! In the verse we **started** with, Paul said he **wasn't** going to boast about **anything**—except the cross—but here he is boasting in his flesh, his upbringing!"

To which I reply, "Look at the end of v 21—"I speak foolishly." He says the same thing in v 23 "I speak as a fool." In other words, 'I'm being foolish—this is **really dumb** to be bragging like this.' So why is he doing it? To prove the point that he was not inferior to those that were attacking his credentials.

Paul could have boasted in his background, but didn't. B. Paul could have boasted in his behavior

As a Pharisee, Paul had a fervor—a zeal for keeping the commandments. **Phil 3:5b-6** "...as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"

**Before he was saved**, Paul dotted every “i” and crossed every “t”. He **tithed**—gave 10%—of everything that passed through his hands to service of the temple. He observed all the fasts...and feasts...and hand-washings ...and rules...and prayers that the Pharisees created. In fact, if a person could be saved by keeping rules—Paul would have made it! He was blameless when it came to doing right—**outwardly**—according to the law!

He didn’t understand at that time that the **intent of the law** was not to save us, but to show us we need Christ! **Gal 3:24** “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to **bring us unto Christ**, that we might be justified by faith.”

The law—the commandments of God—was a schoolmaster; a tutor or guardian—to lead us to Christ. How does that work? --From the law, we realize that we are **lawbreakers**

--Because we are lawbreakers, we agree with God that we **deserve to be punished** for our sins

--And when we understand that we are condemned...and guilty...and will face the wrath of God if we die unforgiven, we come to Christ—the one who died in **our place** to pay what **we owe**. And when we come to Him in repentance and faith, we are justified—declared “forgiven”—by God.

--Have **you** come to Christ? Are **you** justified by faith? The point of the law is to point us to Christ.

Paul could have boasted in his background...and he could have boasted in his behavior.

He also could have boasted in... C. His works and sufferings for the cause of Christ

We’re in II Corinthians 11, please follow along as I read verse 23-28.

Quite a list, isn’t it? **Physical abuse** from persecution, as well as a whole list of **perils** in v 26.

Here’s one part of the list we probably don’t think about as much: v 27 “In weariness and painfulness...” Paul went on 3 missionary journeys—plus he traveled to Rome. Here are the lengths of those trips: 1<sup>st</sup> (1150 miles) 2<sup>nd</sup> (2500 miles) 3<sup>rd</sup> (2830 miles) To Rome (2000 miles)

Grand total: 8480 miles total—on foot, by ship, by mule, by horse, or by camel!

If anyone could have boasted in what they **did**—and what they **endured** for the cause of Christ—it would have been Paul! But he didn’t do that. Instead, he boasted in the cross!

There is yet a fourth thing Paul could have boasted in: D. His visions and revelations

Look at II Cor 12:1 “It is not expedient for me doubtless to **glory**”—there’s our word “boast” again. In other words, ‘It is not profitable for me to do this.’ ‘But now I’m going to share with you about visions and revelations.’

Before doing that, however, he tells them about this “man” that he knows who had this “out of body” experience 14 years earlier. Why do I say this person had an “out of body” experience? Because both verses 2 and 3 state “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell—but God knows.”

As the passage goes on, however, we see Paul switch from talking about this “**man**” (vs 2, 3, and 4), to talking about **himself** in verses 5-11. I agree with those who suggest that this “out of body” experience occurred when Paul was stoned—I believe to death—in Lystra (Acts 14:19).

Now v 4. What he heard—and undoubtedly saw—was unspeakable, not lawful to utter. What does that mean? One of two things. 1) God did **not want him to share** what he saw and heard; it was not allowed; or 2) What Paul saw and heard **couldn’t be put into words**—it was too great and glorious, and words would not do it justice.

V 5 “Of such an one will I glory”—I’ll boast about this guy, but not me!

V 6 “For though I would desire to glory—our word “boast” again—“I shall not be a fool.” It would be wrong to do such a thing.

V 7 God gave Paul “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan” to “buffet”—to afflict—him. Was the “thorn in the flesh” some kind of physical ailment, sent by Satan? Certainly seems that way! But God allowed it...and Paul asked God to remove it...and God said, “No!”

Why? We have the answer—twice—in this verse: “lest I be exalted above measure.”

And in the middle of v 9, we have our word “glory”—boast—again. What is Paul going to boast about? **Not** his revelations, but his **infirmities**—his weaknesses—that kept him dependent upon God!

Let's next consider... **2. What we might be tempted to boast about—but shouldn't!**

Not a surprise that we can be tempted to boast about some of the same things Paul was tempted in.

#### A. We can boast in our background

Just like Paul, we could be tempted to boast about our background and upbringing. We can brag about our family tree. I remember a kid in school telling us he was related to either Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett—can't remember which. There is a possibility that I'm related to Patrick Henry. Who is Patrick Henry? Some historians refer to him as the "Orator of the Revolution." In March 1775, he gave his famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, suggested by some as one of the most pivotal speeches in world history!

Could I boast about being related to him—if *I am* actually related to him? I suppose I could, but why? I had **nothing to do with** it so why boast!

#### B. We can boast in our behavior

Just like Paul, we can be tempted to boast about our **behavior**, how "good" we are (or at least **think** we are). We can boast about how we **never miss church**...and how much we **read our Bibles**...and how much **we pray**. We can boast about our **dress** standards...and how we **never cuss**—not even slang—and how careful we are about the **movies we watch** and the **music we listen to**.

But, just like Paul, we need to be reminded that what **we do**—our behavior—is not what gets us to heaven! Jesus had much to say about that, here are a couple of reminders.

In the parable of the Pharisee and publican in Luke 18, Jesus points out that although the Pharisee was not an extortioner...or unjust...or an adulterer—and that he **fasted twice** each week and **gave tithes** of all that he possessed—he was **not the one** that left the temple justified. Instead, it was the bad man; the sinner!

One more. Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 19, beginning with verse 16. We often refer to the man who came to Jesus as the rich young ruler; you'll see why in just a moment.

--Wants to know how to get to heaven.

At first glance, it seems that Jesus is telling him he can **work** his way to heaven. We see that in v 17.

Jesus lists some of the commandments he is supposed to keep but leaves out one **very important** one—the **first and great** commandment. Which is that? Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, & strength. Jesus isn't teaching him he can **work his way** to heaven—Jesus is using the commandments to **show him** his sin! What is the young man's response? V 20 "All these things have I kept from my youth up..."

Had I been Jesus, I probably would have said, "Liar!" Jesus didn't do that, though. Instead, Jesus showed this man that he **loved things**—and **himself**—more than he loved God! That is why Jesus said in v 22, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor..."

Jesus was using the law as a schoolmaster—a tutor—to show the man **his sin** and **his need** for Christ. What was the young man's response? Verse 22 "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

It is not what **we do** that gets us to heaven—it is what **Jesus did** on the cross for us! But a person **needs to see they are sick** before they need a physician and that is what Jesus was trying to show this man. Instead of **seeing his sin**, though, he saw only his riches. He had **gained the whole world**, so to speak—but now was on the verge of **losing his soul**! Did he change his mind later and repent? We don't know; we're not told.

But Jesus said it is hard for rich men to enter heaven (v 24)—and it is **equally hard** for the self-righteous! Don't boast in your **behavior**—it won't get you to heaven! Besides, God says "be ye holy, for I am holy" (**I Pet 1:15**) and we definitely haven't arrived yet!

#### C. We can boast in our service for God

Just like Paul, we can be tempted to boast in what we **do** for God. We may be tempted to boast about the work we do around the church—"our hats"—as Ron likes to call them. We may be tempted to boast in what we do **outside church for others** because we are "going about doing good" as Jesus did. Jesus had a remedy for that, too! **Luke 17:10** "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are **commanded** you, say, We are **unprofitable servants**: we have **done that which was our duty** to do."

- We've looked at...
1. What Paul could have boasted about—but didn't; and
  2. What we might be tempted to boast about—but shouldn't!

Lastly, let's consider: **3. Why Paul boasted in the cross**

Galatians 6:14 "But God forbid that I should glory, **save in the cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Why did Paul **boast about**—brag in—the cross? Before I attempt to answer that, a **disclaimer** is in order: Paul did not anywhere state 'This is **why** I boast in the cross!' That being said, I believe there are at least 3 reasons. First and foremost, Paul would boast in—brag about and rejoice in—the cross, because it **provides salvation**. Any "amens?" Another reason Paul would be willing to brag about the cross would be what it **reveals to us about God**. Yet a third reason—and one we **might not consider** a reason to boast in the cross—is because of what it **teaches us about sin**. Obviously don't have enough time to consider all 3, but I do want us to look at the last one:

#### A. Because of what it teaches us about sin

Does the cross teach us about sin? It sure does! But **what** does it teach about sin?

##### **i. That man is sinful**

One of the things that demonstrates the Bible is inspired by God and is not man's idea is the accurate picture it paints about the sinfulness of man.

If it was up to **Moses**, do you think he would have wanted it recorded that he couldn't go into the Promised Land because he lost his temper and disobeyed God?

If it was up to **David**, do you think he would have wanted it recorded that he committed adultery, then set up Bathsheba's husband—one of his faithful soldiers—to be killed so he could take her as his own wife?

If it was up to **Solomon**—the one whom God granted incredible wisdom—do you think he would have wanted it recorded that his many wives turned his heart away from God?

The sinfulness of man is seen throughout the Bible—and it is on full display at the cross!

--He had done nothing wrong, but they said, "Crucify Him!"

--The soldiers stripped Him...and whipped Him. They made a crown of thorns and beat it unto His head. They spit on Him...and mockingly bowed down to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

--They weren't the only ones, of course. Those that passed by Him shouted, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, **if He will have Him**: for He said, I am the Son of God."

Not only does the cross show us the sinfulness of man, it also shows us....

##### **ii. That sin requires a payment**

**What is the cost of sin**; what is the required payment? **Death!**

**Whose death?** The death of the sinner; the one who sinned!

**What kind of death?** Not just the **physical** death of our body, but the **spiritual separation** of our soul from God forever in a place called hell. **Question for you:** Do you **believe** in hell?

You should! In fact, can you **really be saved** if you don't know **what** you are saved from?

In my mind, there are two main reasons we should believe in hell!

1) Because Jesus **taught** us about it. In fact, Jesus spoke **more about hell** than He did about heaven! Since Jesus taught it, we really don't need any other reason!

2) But there is another and it is this—the **cross** shows us there is a hell!

If **baptism** can wash away sin, why did Jesus die on the cross?

If **being good** can get rid of our sin, why did Jesus die on the cross?

If **giving money** can get rid of our sin, why did Jesus die on the cross?

Sin is so bad, that **God left** heaven...and came to earth...in the person of Jesus. And the hatred God had for sin—and the punishment God required for sin—was placed on Jesus—and then He died.... the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Why did Paul boast in the cross? Because it reveals the truth about our sin...and the required payment for sin.

Why is that good to know? Because once we see those truths, we better understand the wonderful truth about Jesus—that He provided the **only way** of escape. **Acts 4:12** “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

So, what is it that God wants **you** to **do today**?

1. First and foremost, I believe God wants you to be saved if you're not. He wants you to look at the cross—and see how what it teaches us about our sin and the penalty of sin. If you truly see that, you will not need to be coerced into accepting Christ—you will run to Him!
2. What do you boast about? Don't boast about your background...or behavior...or belongings...or talents...or what you do for Christ. Boast in the cross; rejoice in it; tell others about it!