

Galatians 2:14

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 September 2007

Preacher: W.D. Graham

[0 : 00] I'd like us to look again this evening at the same verse we had this morning for a text in Paul's letter to the Galatians in chapter 6 and at verse 14, where we read there, 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.

But I would like us also to look at another verse this evening as well, and that is found in the Gospel by Matthew in chapter 16 and at verse 24, where Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

At the morning service, we looked at some aspects of the Bible's teaching about the cross on which Jesus Christ was put to death.

Thinking, first of all, that the cross was a symbol of the humiliation of Christ, and how the cross is absolutely central to the Christian faith.

You cannot be a Christian without coming to the cross, as it were. And then we saw also that the cross is a symbol of the amazing love of God.

[2 : 05] And this evening, I want us to concentrate on some other aspects of the way in which the importance of the cross is addressed to us in the Bible, directing the spotlight more on our life as Christian people, if we are Christians, converted people, and how the cross is central to our experience as Christians.

thinking again of the fellowship of the cross as a way of identifying us as Christians in the world.

In the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he tells us there that the unbelieving, how the unbelieving world looks at the cross of Jesus Christ.

It is, he says, to the unbeliever, an object of foolishness, to think that anyone claiming to be the Son of God could be crucified.

It is foolishness. And it is to others, he says, a stumbling block. And the reference contained in the words is to something that is scandalous, altogether an object with which we would ordinarily have nothing to do.

[4 : 08] And then in the second chapter of that same letter, Paul tells us that in their willful ignorance, the authorities in Jesus' day crucified the Lord of glory.

That is how Paul describes Christ there, the Lord of glory. And when you think of that, they crucified the Lord of glory.

The enormity of it can scarcely be taken in. We know from the Bible that this was the means by which God secured the salvation of his people and again we know from the Bible that Christ gave himself willingly, knowingly, to endure the bitter agonies of the cross in order to to perfect the salvation of his people.

The salvation of his people. He was the absolutely sinless, the perfect, divine, yet human substitute on behalf of each one of his people.

Taking upon himself their guilt, their punishment for all their sin. the sin of all the people for whom he died.

- [6 : 08] We know that that is true. Yet, that doesn't in any way lessen the enormity of the sin perpetrated against Jesus Christ when they put him to death on the cross.
- They crucified the Lord of glory. The Bible says that he was taken by wicked, evil, hateful, spiteful men and put to death.
- God in human flesh yet crucified as we read already. Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree.
- That was what the world thought of Christ then. And that's how the world thinks about Christ now. Especially when you mention to people the need for the cross as far as salvation is concerned.
- what Paul said long, long ago still holds true. The message of the cross is to them foolishness.
- [7 : 35] But it's foolishness to those who are perishing, he says. But to those who are being saved it is the power, the dynamic of God.
- But now for a moment let's turn the spotlight as I mentioned to see how the cross affects us if we are Christian people.
- To those who are perishing it is foolishness but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.
- And that's wonderful. what does it mean for us if we are within this fellowship of the cross? Remember that verse from Matthew chapter 16 and verse 24 where Jesus said if anyone would be my disciple he must take up his cross daily and follow me.
- so here we see the cost of being in the fellowship of the cross. If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- [9 : 10] in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 38 Jesus said anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.
- And again in the gospel by Luke in chapter 14 and verse 27 Jesus said anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
- It's hard very hard for us to realize the impact that these words must have made on the people to whom Jesus spoke them initially.
- his first disciples. And particularly hard when you read the context in which you find them the verses round about them where Jesus speaks about for his sake people losing one's life.
- I came he says not to bring peace but to bring a sword that we had to put Jesus before even father and mother counting the cost of being within the fellowship of the cross.
- [10 : 47] And then there's the very idea of the cross itself a scandal something that was repugnant to people and to think of the sight of anyone bearing his cross must have been terrifying to people when they saw someone doing that.
- If they saw a man bearing his cross that person was on his last journey to a gruesome death condemned in circumstances that were terrible and each condemned person was forced to carry his cross the cross bar on which he was to be hung and crucified and that is the picture that Jesus speaks about our life if we're to follow him.
- It's a life of cross bearing and it's costly. In what ways is it costly we might ask?
- Well it is first of all death to all our pride. We cannot get anywhere with God but by the cross where God did everything for us.
- Remember that verse in Galatians 6 14 Jesus died for us it also forces us to order our life's priorities according to what honors Christ himself and this can be a costly business.

[12 : 59] Look at your life's priorities in that way. The other evening on Monday evening of this week that's just passed the opening service of the Free Church College was held in Edinburgh and the principal Donald MacLeod gave a plea for men in the church to consider the claims of the gospel ministry.

This year there are only two men and these are mature students older men who are going into the college for the first time as candidates for the ministry of the Free Church.

And at the end of the last session there were only four Free Church students but only two of them have entered into the ministry at this time and are in pastoral charges now.

So the situation is very serious and Principal McLeod made an appeal for young men to consider the claims of Christ in this respect.

But the sad thing is that apart from the students who were either in the college or the two who were going in there were no other young men present at that meeting to be challenged by his plea.

[14 : 55] God is speaking to us. There is a cost in following Christ but the Saviour whom we follow if we are Christians the Saviour who bore the cross for us said that he came into the world to do his father's will.

That was the overriding priority in his life and that must be the chief priority in your life and mine as well if we are Christians.

We have to put Jesus first. Self must always be subordinate to him.

The cost of serving Christ means the crucifixion of self. Francis Schaeffer has a very telling passage in his book True Spirituality where he writes these words we are surrounded by a world that says no to nothing.

When we are surrounded by this sort of mentality in which everything is judged by bigness and by success then suddenly to be told that in the Christian life there is to there is this strong negative aspect of saying no to things and no to self.

[16 : 46] It must seem hard and if it does not seem hard to us he says we are not letting it really speak to us.

There is a cost in following Christ. And there is a cost also to be seen in our relationships and lifestyle.

In the fellowship of the cross there's no place for immorality for vanity for any desires that are forbidden in the word of God.

It is no accident that Jesus uses the figure of the cross to speak of our following him. It's death to the flesh he says for the flesh all the things that are associated with the chaotic world the sinful world is powerful.

We can easily be led astray and fall. And it's only as we daily bear our cross that we find the grace and the strength to live as Jesus would have us live.

[18 : 16] And the cost of following Christ is also experienced in the way that the world looks at us. remember they crucified the Lord of glory and Jesus said what they will do to me they will do to you also.

Very often Christians come up against opposition in the world in the workplace in the classroom among friends or maybe even at home.

And this is part and parcel of cross bearing and it's something that we have to consider well when we say that we want to be a follower of Jesus you've got to count the cost.

well you may be thinking it's all negative doom and gloom confirming your worst fears that Christianity is so negative but that's not true the cost is there but there's so much that the cross as it were yields to us.

[19 : 52] Thomas Akempus a quaint saint of long past times said these words set me where you will and deal with me in all things just as you will when could it be ill with me when you are present I would rather be poor for you than rich without you I rather choose to be a pilgrim on earth with you than without you possess heaven for for where you are there is heaven and where you are not there is death and hell and that's the experience of one who knew the cost but who also knew the blessing that came with it and when you daily carry your cross you find

Jesus walking with you that's the blessing of the fellowship of the cross and that leads to notice for a moment the to notice the rewards of cross bearing with Christ in each context where Jesus speaks about us bearing the cross for him he also speaks of finding life in one sense the cross leads to death but after death there is the resurrection life in undying fullness they did indeed crucify the Lord of glory but he was raised from death to give us who believe the hope of glory and as

Thomas Akempis said in the passage I've just read where Jesus is there is heaven and it's with you every day the cross is far outweighed by the crown of blessing and to be a Christian is to be a privileged person on earth we have many privileges as Christian people and one of the most precious is to know that you are a citizen of heaven Paul could say if we have been united with Jesus in his death that is on the cross we shall certainly be united with him in his resurrection and in Galatians 2 and 20 he says these words

I've been crucified with Christ it's 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 and friends that is better by far than anything anything that this world could give us there is a cost there are rewards the great reward of having Christ as our Saviour and the vast vista of blessing and fellowship and service that that opens up for us and in closing may

I direct you to Paul's words again in Galatians 6 and verse 14 may I never boast he says except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ what does the cross mean to you tonight what does the Christ of the cross mean to you tonight one person expressed his thoughts in this way I take O cross thy shadow for my abiding place I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face content to let the world go by to know no gain or loss my sinful self my only shame my glory all the cross could you echo these sentiments in your own heart through knowing

[25 : 52] Christ and being at the foot of his cross knowing his salvation it's a privilege to be a Christian whatever the cost whatever the cost but it's a terrible thing not to be a Christian because the cost of that at the end is a lost eternity and that is something that I trust not one of us here this evening will be subject to come to Jesus you will be found welcome at the cross amen shall we pray oh lord our god we pray that all of us may indeed be part of that great fellowship of the redeemed those who know

Christ as their saviour and claim no other we pray lord that this night if there is anyone who has not yet come to know Jesus as their saviour that you would awaken in them such a longing for him that they will not rest until they find him for we know that in finding him they will be truly truly satisfied we know that there is salvation in no other for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved so lord grant that all may seek you and have the joy of knowing you and then going out into the world facing the world bearing the cross knowing that whatever the cost there is also a wonderful crown of blessing that will not fade away be near us go with us when we go and bless us according to our need for we ask it all in

Jesus name and for his sake Amen to do one the one even that is