

CRUCIFIED TO THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: Galatians 6:14

What are you glorying in at the present time? Is it some great accomplishment of yours? Some great honor bestowed upon you? Our verse begins, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The question has been asked, "Why would anyone want to glory in the cross?" We find the answer of course in our context.

Before we look at Paul's answer to this question, we need to see that he was warning the Galatians against "wrong glorying." In verse 13 we read, "but [they] desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." Even though circumcision is not practiced today in the same manner, we could well add, baptism, confirmation, church membership and a host of other things in which men are glorying. Instead of these things causing one to look to God, they only exalt men. Paul declares that "they glory in your flesh"; but I glory in the cross, for it is there that God enables men to live for the Lord.

There are two accomplishments of the cross the apostle calls to our attention. First of all, "By whom the world is crucified unto me." Please note here the focus is not upon the cross itself, but the One who died there. It is through our identification with Christ on the cross that this is so. The same is true of the second truth as well, "And I unto the world." This is not true through the flesh, or as he states, through circumcision. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature [creation]." We are sanctified, set apart unto God and from the world, through our identification with Christ's death.

Floyd Baker

Notes.

ABSTAINING FROM EVIL

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 5:22

As we consider our text, we note that verses 21, 22, and 23 should be understood together. We might paraphrase thus: "Prove, by testing with the Word, all things. The good, hold fast; from every form and kind of pernicious evil, hold back; and may the God of peace, Himself, sanctify you wholly." The word for *abstinence* literally means *to hold oneself back*. Just as we are to hold fast that which is good, we are to hold back from every appearance of evil. *Appearance* here is *that which is exposed to view* and means every sort and form of evil. The word *evil* means *pernicious activity, or malignant ungodly activity*.

In all, God has provided us with a perfect formula for personal sanctification. Romans¹² expresses the same thought. First, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (taking in the Word of God), enabling us to prove what is good (verses 1-2). Next, by obedience, we are to abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good (verse 9). God has enabled us to obey through the Holy Spirit Who indwells all who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The actual step of obedience, however, is a decision which must be made by the believer. Another very similar passage is in Ephesians 5. There, Paul says we are to be "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but, rather, reprove them" (verses 10-11). Can there be any question about God's will for our walk or His gracious provision? Hold fast that which is good, and hold back from every form of evil; and (in your obedience) the God of peace will sanctify you wholly. "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it."

Donald A. Webb

Notes.

SEPARATION FROM BRETHREN

Scripture Reading: II Thessalonians 3:6, 14

When the prophetic kingdom is established, God's people will serve with one mind and one spirit and will obey all of God's commandments (Ezekiel 37:24-28). This unity will be possible because God will put His Spirit into His people and cause them to do only what is right (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

As brethren in Christ, we have been given the Holy Spirit and are exhorted to be united with our fellow brethren (Philippians 2:1-8). The key ingredient for unity of the Spirit is humility—the same type of humility that our Lord exemplified by dying our death on the cross. We should endeavor to have unity of the Spirit with fellow believers in all humility; but unity must be based on truth, otherwise it is merely a show of faith based on compromise.

Those who understand the distinctiveness of Paul's apostleship and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery are sometimes accused of being dividers and troublemakers by church people. Paul proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God and was persecuted and his authority undermined by religious zealots who thought they were doing the will of God.

We are exhorted to stand firm in the truth of the gospel of this dispensation and follow the example set by Paul (Ephesians 6:10-21, I Corinthians 11:1).

Dick Johnson

Notes:

UNSOUND TEACHING REBUKED

Scripture Reading: I Timothy 1:3

Our text for today makes it quite clear why Timothy was left in Ephesus: "That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." There was in Ephesus, as there will be in any Christ-honoring church, efforts to promote false doctrine to entice believers away from the truth. With such there is to be no tolerance, but rather bold, outright confrontation. Timothy was not to reason with the false teachers, nor was he to seek to establish a "dialogue." He was to charge them; that is, he was to give an authoritative commandment that the promotion of false doctrine must stop.

Many complain that such an approach to the ministry is narrow-minded; and to that charge, faithful ministers of the Gospel must plead guilty. There is only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). If it is narrow-minded to believe that God has spoken, if it is narrow-minded to believe that God has given a distinctive message for the Dispensation of Grace, if it is narrow-minded to emphasize that we are expected to know what that message is, then let us all be narrow-minded.

The reason many are unsettled regarding doctrine, is that they do not understand where, in the Bible, doctrine is to be found. Efforts to amalgamate the Kingdom to the Body and Law to Grace are futile. Out of desperation, many determine that there are no absolutes—anything goes.

When such an attitude is prevalent, the ministers of Satan thrive. Paul warned the Corinthians of those who "corrupt," the Galatians of those who "bewitch," and the Colossians of those who "spoil." Let us also heed these warnings.

Jon D. Bekemeyer

Notes:

FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6:3-5

The Apostle Paul told the overseers of Ephesus (in Acts 20:28-30) that savage wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock. He said they would speak perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. Paul warned Timothy, in this letter, about those who would teach any other doctrine, or fable (1:3). He also told him there would be those who would give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy (4:1, 2).

Who are the "such" Paul tells Timothy to withdraw from in 6:3-5? No doubt, they are some of the same ones Paul has had in mind all along. In 6:1-2, they aren't teaching the saints submission and humility but to rise and rebel, to assert their rights. These teachers aren't acknowledging that God committed to Paul "wholesome words," "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (verse 3). They are ignorant and proud at the same time and are obsessed with arguing and debating over words (verse 4). These are "destitute of the truth" and teach that Godliness is a means of gaining this world's goods (verse 5). "From such withdraw thyself!"

Timothy was supposed to save (deliver) himself and his hearers (4:16). He was supposed to establish the saints in "the faith" (the body of truth for the Body of Christ). To do this it was, and still is, necessary to "withdraw" from those who cause the saints to "depart from the faith" (4:1), who cause God's Name and doctrine to be blasphemed (6:1) and those who bring about envy, strife, evil suspicions, constant friction, and confusion (6:4, 5) among the Body of Christ. From such withdraw thyself, because we're talking about eternal truths and eternal souls!

Dick Ware

Notes:

SEPARATION BRINGS JOY

Scripture Reading: Ezra 6:19-20

The book of Ezra records the return of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to Jerusalem in two phases—One under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (chapters 1-6) and the other under Ezra to rebuild the people spiritually (chapters 7-10). In chapter 6, we see the completion and dedication of the temple, and we see God giving the "joy of salvation" to those Israelites who "separated themselves from the filth [uncleanness] of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel." The LORD made them joyful!

The negative side of separation is "out of," and the positive side is "unto." When God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17, God set him and his nation apart from the rest of the world and unto Himself. When the Mosaic Law was given to the nation Israel, it made them separate from the world, and unto God (Exodus 19:3-6). In Ezra 6:21, a Jewish remnant separated themselves from the nations, to seek the LORD God of Israel. The result was "they kept the Feast of the Unleavened Bread seven days WITH JOY; for the LORD made them joyful" (verse 22)!

The majority of the nation Israel remained in Babylon and Assyria, where it seemed they were prospering; but only those who were participating in Godly separation, understood "the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). I'm afraid the majority of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ today are fitting in with this "present evil world." They want to be accepted by men and busy in the religious systems, even when they know these systems are not compatible with the Gospel of Grace committed unto the Apostle Paul. They don't want to offend anyone, nor make any enemies. They don't know anything about Godly separation, nor "the joy of the LORD." My friend, Godly separation brings God's joy!

Dick Ware

Notes:

IN BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: John 17:14-16

How very opposed to God's Word of truth is the world system! Even here in John, where the Jewish kingdom saints are referred to, we find a principle that is sown throughout the Scriptures. Those who obey God's Word will come under the attack of the world! The Apostle Paul in II Timothy 3:12 says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." So we see that even in this dispensation of grace in which we live today, the cost of living for Christ is still the world's disdain. The world persecuted Christ, and it will treat those who have believed in Him no better.

As the Lord prayed in John, so it is today. He does not take us out of the world to do God's service, but rather He sends us in amongst the people of the world and commands us to be separated from the world's sins. However, the Lord has more than equipped us for our sojourn here. The Lord prayed in John that they would be kept from [the] evil [one], and that through the Word of truth they would be sanctified. Even so today, it is the Word of truth *rightly divided* that will give us clear instruction in sanctification.

One added dimension, however, in this age of grace is that members of the Body of Christ have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to empower and enlighten. How great should be our sanctification seeing the spiritual blessings we have in Christ! All that remains is for us to yield our hearts to the Saviour Who redeemed us, and obey. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says in this regard, "For ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light...and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but, rather reprove them....See then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise" (5:8, 11, 15).

Donald A. Webb

Notes:

SEPARATED BY THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:2-4

Acts 13:2-4 records the details of the separation of Paul and Barnabas unto a particular ministry. It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit designated this by special revelation, that is, God spoke audibly and definitively regarding this ministry. There is no more such special revelation today (I Corinthians 13:8). When one hears stories of God "telling" so-and-so to do such-and-such, he may wish to inquire as to exactly how this special revelation was made manifest. Were there voices echoing in the plumbing? Perhaps the typewriter suddenly began to mysteriously record a message. Maybe there was handwriting on the wall. All too often people give credit (or blame) to the Lord for their own wishes and aspirations.

God has fulfilled His Word (Colossians 1:25), and now He speaks only through it (I Corinthians 13:9, 10). Nevertheless, God is still involved in placing people in *specific* capacities of service. When one believes the Gospel, he is placed into the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). The individual has a special place in the Body (I Corinthians 12:18) and a distinct capacity for service (Ephesians 4:16). The gifts in the Body *differ*, because God has designed it that way (Romans 12:6).

How can one know his specific calling when there is no more special revelation? He can know it as he studies God's Word and understands God's program for today. As he does so, he will read of different capacities of service. He will then go on to discover a burden and ability toward certain areas of ministry in the local assembly. He then, by faith, will serve in those areas with boldness and confidence, believing that he has found God's special calling for his life.

Jon Bekemeyer

Notes:

MAKE NO PROVISION*Scripture Reading: Romans 13:14*

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). Those who are saved by grace should live holy lives. In our text, it is stated in two ways—in the positive and in the negative. The positive side is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and the negative side is to "make not provision for the flesh."

The oriental garments covered the whole man. It illustrates here that the Christian is to be completely clothed with the character of Christ. Upon believing the gospel, the Christian puts on Christ in a mystical union (Galatians 3:27). Here, it is the putting on of Christ in daily experience—to live in Christlikeness.

The negative side is to deny the flesh even a foothold. "Provision" is *pronoia* in the Greek. It means "foresight" or "forethought." The meaning here is that the believer is not to plan to sin. He is to say no to the flesh. The best place to start is in the mind—in the thinking. The "flesh" is what is inherited from Adam. It is that tendency to sin that is the result of the Fall. It is manifested in the life through the body, hence the term "flesh."

God has dealt with the power of sin in us. Therefore, we "are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Romans 8:12). It is now possible to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Salvation by grace does not lower the standards for holy living. Sin's dominion has been broken because we are under grace (Romans 6:14). Through grace, God's enablement, we can live for God.

*Donald W. Weffald**Notes:***A PROMISE OF ALL OUR NEEDS***Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:19*

Paul spoke to the Philippian church of the matter of need. He said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11-12). It was only after this preliminary discourse that he assured the saints, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

If we are left to judge for ourselves, we are inclined to confuse desires with needs. The promise is not that God will supply all our whimsical wishes but all our need. His power is limitless. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). However, it is HIS judgment that will determine how and when that power will be exercised in our behalf. He will provide our needs as He sees fit and in accordance with His will and purpose. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). If our hearts are in tune, our desire will be that He alone will define our needs and provide them only as He deems appropriate.

Even Paul had not the power of decision. Note his words to the Philippians: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24).

*Robert E. Hanna**Notes:*