God forbid that I should glory

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0:00] Let's turn now to the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, on the sixth chapter, reading at verse 14.

Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
All of us boast and all of us glory. And sometimes we're entitled to boast about our own nation, our own language, our own culture, our own environment, our own faith.
We can say with pride, it scared me. We can believe that some areas of this high peninsula are the most evocative spots on earth.
We can be proud of our own traditions, our own music and poetry, our own church.
[1:25] Proud of the contribution made by our own Ireland to national affairs and to world affairs.

Proud of the 1939, a quarter of our and our service came from these islands.
Proud of our young people, sailing forth to fulfil their dreams and bring credit upon the land of their own upbringing and origin.
The Jews were proud. Proud of their own great history. Proud of the law.
Proud of the Torah. Of the temple. Other great heroes. Moses, Elijah, David and others. And Paul too was proud.
[2:34] In fact, he had always been proud. Proud of his nation. Proud to be a Jew. Proud to be a Pharisee.

And then God had turned his life upside down. And Paul was still proud. And Paul still boasted. But now Paul had different boasts.
He was still boasting. But not in these old things. In fact, he uses the word time and again. He was proud of his hope of the glory of God.
He was proud of his sufferings in the service of Christ. And he was proud above all of his God. The kind of God that is God was.
The God who took our human nature. And came into our human situation. And bore our human sin. And shared our pain.
[3:41] And empathised and sympathised with us. And Paul thought that God was without compare.

The greatest God imaginable. No greater God could be conceived. For there was something that towered.
Even above all of these. That of which Paul speaks in the words of our text tonight. He boasted.
He boasted. And he boasted. And he boasted above all. Of the cross. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. That above all.
Is what Paul was proud of. He thought. It was the greatest. And the most amazing event in human history. That nothing like this had ever happened.
[4:39] There had never been. Or never would be. A man like Jesus. And there would never be an event. Like the cross of Calvary.

And God was simply and sheerly. So absolutely and so overwhelming. Being proud. Of that kind of Lord. And that cross.
On which his Lord had died. And that was Paul's boast. And Paul's pride. He followed the Lord crucified.
On the cross of Calvary. And yet of course. It was such an amazing boast. What a thing to boast of.
That the Lord he loved. Had been crucified. And it wasn't only that. But there was so much else.
That made it anomalous.

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[5:38] And extraordinary. As a boast. It was the cross. Of Christ his Lord. That meant. That meant.

That it was the cross. Of one who had known no sin. Because he knew no sin. He was without sin. And of course.
In Paul's Jewish mind. Death was linked to sin. And why had this sinless one died? And yet. Although he had died.
Paul was so proud of it. Proud. That the one who had known no sin. Had received. Had received. The wages of sin. Of that.
Paul was proud. God. And beyond that. This crucified one. He was God's own son. He was the one in whom.
[6:36] There was. The very nature of God. God. He was. In every respect. God. Yet all the qualities of God. All the perfections of God. He had done all those God things.

He had created the world. He had designed it. He had upheld it. He was omnipotent. He was submissive. He was omnipresent. He was all of these things.
He was the Lord. He was Jehovah. And yet he'd been crucified. And Paul was. Was proud. I won't say that. That his God was crucified.
But I say that. Christ God the son was crucified. And Christ the Lord. He was crucified. The object. Of her supreme adoration.
The one he loved most. The one he admired most. In the whole world. He had been crucified. And the cross.
[7:36] Was above all to Paul. The ground of boasting. And the reason for pride. Of all that cross. A sinless man had died.

And on that cross. God's own son. Had suffered. And expired. And died. And Paul was boasting about it. God.
And not only so. But it was God himself. In the last analysis. Who had done it. He made him. Sin. Had preached the Lord to bruise him. God did not spare his own son. But delivered him up for us all.
God delivered up. His own son. And I think often that we just. Walk past the cross of Calvary.
[8:33] And we feel well. It's always been there. We've always known about it. And so forth. And in a way. We don't stop to realise. To think just how utterly amazing it is.

And how astonishing it is. That the apostle of Christ. Should be proud of this. Above all else. He doesn't talk. About being proud of how meek Jesus was.
Although he was meek. Or what a great teacher he was. Although he was a great teacher. Or how accessible he was. Although he was so accessible.
Or his tremendous sympathy with us. In our own human weakness. And our own human pain. Although there is. Such sympathy of course. In Jesus. And maybe Paul. Was indeed proud of all these things.
But he fingers out this thing. The cross. This cross. On which. The only sinless man. The world has ever seen.
[9:34] Was executed. That cross. Is what Paul is proud of. This cross. On which the prince of glory. He died. He died. Paul is proud of it.

This cross. In which. The life of the world. Was extinguished. And the light of the world. Was put out. There. Paul says. I'm proud.
For the word of God. Was reduced to silence. There. At that cross. Paul. Is proud. Of the cross. This cross.
Of the sinless man. This cross. Of God's own son. This act of God. This inexplicable act of God. That there. God. Ordered. Arranged. The crucifixion. Of his own son. And Paul is so proud.
[10:29] Of that. God. Why. And how can he. And how can we tonight. Be proud. Of this cross. And how can I ask you.

To make this your boast. Above. All other boasts. This cross. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well there are two great reasons.
First of all. What the cross achieved. And secondly. What the cross demonstrated. What did this cross achieve. Well Paul would say.
This cross achieved. The expiation of sin. The covering. Of my sin. And your sin. Because Paul of course.

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Was very conscious. Of his own sin. But Paul saw himself as. The chief of sinners. He was under no illusions. As to the quality. Of his own life.
[11:28] And he knew the pain. Pains and pleasure. Pleasures. Of that guilt. That guilt. Of his own disobedience. But he saw. In the cross of Christ.

The covering. For his own sin. And I wonder tonight. How many burdens of guilt. We bear you and I. Those things that.
Still pain. Our consciences. We may think of our parents. We may think of our children. We may think of those of God's people.
Who we perhaps insulted. Or mocked. Or sneered at. We may think of those moments in life. When we have. We have known what is right. And not done it.
And not something to be wrong. And gone and done it. If I'm not mistaken. That out of the life of each one of us here tonight.
[12:31] Moments would rather not revisit. And yet moments. Which we visit ourselves. Constantly. The pained.

Pained faces. Of those. That we are disappointed. And those we have heard. And the pained face. Of the God.
Whom we have maligned. Sin. Is no abstract thing. Sin. Sin. Is what we have done. Sin.
Is the pain. And injury. And the grief. That we have caused. And I'd say to you tonight. There is no remedy for it.
There is no place of peace. But the obedience of Jesus. In my place. That obedience climaxing. In his death.
[13:28] On the cross of Calvary. And it is there that I find. Relief. From my own guilt. And peace. From my own sin.

That Christ. Has obeyed. In my place. And so far as my faith. Is operating properly.
It does not let my sins. Come back. To haunt me. God has cast them. Into the depths. Of the sea. And my disobedience. Is covered. By the obedience. Of Jesus. Now it may be. That you have no sin.
Or it may be. That you have no conscience. But if you have sin. And if you have a conscience. Why live.
[14:28] In the torment of guilt. And the fear of judgment. Whether it's God's peace. Available to us. In the expiation.

In the covering. Of our sin. By Christ's obedience. On the cross. The poet. George Herbert. Contemplates. Sinners coming. On the last day. To the throne. Of God's judgment. And their sins. Being read out. And a sin. After sin. Is read out. Those sins of believers. In the poet's imagination. Then. Jesus Christ. The advocate. He steps forward. And says. I think you'll find.
[15:25] My Lord. That that sin. Is my name on it. And that I died. For that sin. And then. When my next sin.

Is read out. He steps. Forward. Yet again. And as my Lord. Jesus Christ. And he says. I think you'll find. My Lord.
That that sin. Has my name on it. And the judge. Looks up. And reads out. The next sin. And yet again. The advocate.
My Lord. Jesus. Stands forth. And says. I think. My Lord. You'll find. That that sin. Too. Has my name. On it. He bore.
The sin. Of the world. It's an amazing thing. To me still. After all those years. Of reflection. Upon it. That. At that place.
[16:19] Called Calvary. On Good Friday. And those. In that small period. In that small body. Of my Lord. Jesus Christ. That. There.

God. Gathered. The sin. Of the world. And there. God. Condemned it. And there. Christ. Expiated it. And there. Christ. Covered it. And I am.
Loosed from my sin. It's not my sin. It's his sin. It's against his name. In the ledger. That's the glory. Of the cross. And that's why.
Paul. Boasts. So much of it. Because by this cross. His own sin. Was expiated. And by that cross. God's anger. Was propitiated. God's anger. Was appeased. I don't know how it is. With you. And the anger of God.

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[17:15] I know that in the Bible. It's made palpably clear. That God hates our sin. And God is angry with sin. And I know that.

Even those. Who proclaim themselves. The biggest atheist in the world. That sometimes. Conscience comes back. And tells them things.
They'd rather not know. And summits them to God's tribunal. And sometimes. They have their own fears. And sometimes.
You have your own fears. As Hamlet said. Conscience. Doth make cowards. Of us all. Hamlet reminder.
Told us. Die is not the thing. Oh yes. He said. In all my mental torment. I could take this dagger.
[18:15] And put an end to it all. Yes. I could. He says. Ah. But who died? Suppose I go. Along that. Born from which no trouble returns.

Can I be sure. It's oblivion. And amnesia. And unconsciousness. And annihilation. And nothing. And perhaps he said.
I'll breathe. And what dreams. And so conscience. Doth make cowards of us all. That anger of God. Which I know I deserve. That anger of God. Dealt with. On the cross of Calvary. Where in my name. Jesus Christ. Experienced. Rejection by God. As heaven. Closed its face.
[19:15] Against God's own son. Who in the agony. Of bearing my sin. Said. My God.

My God. Why have you forsaken me? Why are you turning your face away? Why wouldn't you hear me? Why would you listen to me? Why are you hurting me away?
Into this terrible terrible black hole. In which there is no light. Why are you so angry with me? In my place condemned he stood.
Hallelujah. What a savior. Covering my sin. And dealing. And dealing. With the anger that my sins deserved.
It achieved. The expiation of sin. It achieved. The propitiation. And appeasement of God. And it achieved.
[20:20] Redemption. For believers. For me. For you. Our redemption. I offer tonight. To everyone. Within these walls.

What is redemption? It is liberation. It is emancipation. Redemption is freedom.
Freedom. Freedom. From the curse of the law. Freedom. From condemnation. Freedom. Freedom. From damnation. Freedom. Freedom. From the fear of death. Freedom. From the oppressiveness. Of our legalistic religion.
That says to me. If you don't go on your knees now. You'll go to hell. If you don't read the bible now. You'll go to hell. If you don't improve your religious life.
[21:18] Then you'll go to hell. Freedom. Freedom. From the manusiae. Of human taboos. And human traditions. And all the burdens of human religiosity.

Freedom. From all of these. Isn't that a great word spoken by my Lord? You shall know the truth. And the truth shall make you free.
We are free. Are we free? That's the impression we ought to be making. On the whole wide world. All these people.
They're so free. They're just so emancipated. They serve God. No longer to slaves.
And crave and serve I'll fear. But they serve God as sons. And they serve God as daughters. And they say Abba. And they say Father.
[22:21] Because they know that he loves them. And they know how much he cares. And they've been redeemed from fear and phobia.

They've been redeemed from the burdens of legalism and of the law. They've been redeemed from all the oppressiveness of having to say themselves.
And almost I say this to you. And you'll take it carefully. They've been redeemed from the burdens of trying to be good. And trying to reach and to match our people's standards.
And they know that they've been justified as ungodly men and ungodly women. And God said to them. You don't need to be perfect saints and pure for me to let you into my family.
Will you not come just as you are. Because I'm the God who justifies the ungodly. And can I plead with you this very moment.
[23:24] Will you please stop trying to be good before you come to Jesus. Because if you don't come to your good you'll never come.

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And once you come he'll make you good. But come just as you are. There is no need to change a thing.
Don't change a thing. But just come as you are this very moment. And so he boasts in this cross. Because it achieved these great things.
The covering of my sin. Dealing with the anger of God against my sin. Redeeming me and making me free. That's what Paul experienced.
That's why Paul said. Stand fast therefore in the freedom with which Christ has made you free.
[24:21] Go and be free. Don't be afraid of each other. Don't live lest people find out.

Let's be ourselves. Let's be ourselves. Our Christian selves. Our Holy Spirit redeemed selves. In the presence of God.
Because God loves you as you are. And God tonight calls you as you are. So you go and you dare to be free.
So the cross it achieved all these things. And the cross also. It demonstrated things. It made certain declarations.
And above all it made two great declarations. First of all. It demonstrated the love of Jesus Christ. How much he loved you.
[25:20] The son of God who loved me. Says Paul in Galatians 2. When you think of Jesus. What do you think? Those of you are God's people by faith.

When you think of him. What do you think? How do you think? Who is the son of God? Said Luther. Oh the son of God. That's the one who loved me.
And who gave himself for me. That's who he is. And when he thinks of Jesus. He thinks of the love of Jesus. And he sees that love.
Coming to its full expression. On the cross of Calvary. He loved me. And gave himself. He loved the church. And gave himself for it.
Love and giving. That is how Paul sees the cross. And you go back. Into that shadow of Calvary.
[26:20] In those days and those hours. That led up to the cross. And you think of Christ our Lord. As he moves closer and closer.

To this moment. Of unimaginable pain. And torture. And trauma. And what keeps him going.
He is going. Going towards. The flogging. And going towards the stabbing. And going towards the wounding. And going towards the humiliation.
And going towards the mocking. Going towards the rejection. Going towards. The nakedness of the cross. Going towards. That dreadful moment. That dreadful moment.
When his hands and feet. Are nailed to the cross. And those. Long, long, long hours. Hanging there.
[27:19] Nailed to the tree. And in his human finitude. Not knowing quite how awful it's going to be.

And in his human finitude. Wondering. Will God be there? What would it be like?
If God is not there. Because he'd never been without God before. And remember that. To that human mind of Jesus.
All information could not be present at one and the same time. So. He didn't know. Until it unfolded. What it was going to be like. And he moves into the darkness.
Moves towards the moment of execution. Why? Because. Having loved his own over in the world. He loved them to the end.
[28:25] And then. From Gethsemane onwards. He realises. What that's going to mean. You've got to love them all the way. And you've got to go through with it.

You've got to love them to the end. And as the full horror dawns on him. Of what the cross means. And as he moves further and deeper into its anguish.
He still loves. And he stays there because he loves. Because he loved you. There are those of you who know tonight. And that's why he went through with it.
Because he loved. And loves you. There's so much. He gave himself. For you.
But it shows too. It demonstrates. It demonstrates. The love of God the Father. God so loved that he gave.
[29:25] God did not spare his own son. But delivered him up. How much. God the Father loves you. Loved you. Loved you with an everlasting love.

And with a love. That spared no cost. Never. Never did anybody love a son or a daughter. The way God loved his own son.

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You have sons. You have daughters. You have brothers and sisters. Would you give. The way God gave.
Would you give what. God gave. It's painful enough for some to see. Their children. Off a missionary service.
God so loved. So loved the world. So loved you. A love with your name on it. Your name engraved.
[30:24] In the palms of his hand. Abraham loved Isaac. And God said to him. To sacrifice him.

And you have stood with Isaac at Mount Moriah. And your heart has bled for Isaac. And you felt his pain. You understand. You understand. And I want you to stand.
At the cross. With God the Father. Loving you so much. That for you. He bears in his own son.
The cost of your salvation. And bears the damnation. And bears the damnation due to my sin. And to your sin. God the son loves you so much.
And God the Father loves you so much. And the cross. Is a great proof of that. And so Paul both.
[31:27] And Paul is proud of it. And I want you tonight. Each one of you. I want you to be proud of it. I want you to boast.

And nothing else. But the cross. Of Christ our Lord. That's going to mean one great thing. First of all. I want you all to put your faith in it.
Your whole trust. As a great act of atonement. As God's answer to your sin and my sin.
As the key to our salvation. This cross. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Put all your trust in it.
All your weight on it. Cast your whole soul. Upon it. I mean. It doesn't need supplements. Don't feel all but.
[32:28] I've got this. That the cross can't cover this sin. Or maybe. I love this. I'm very good at witnessing. Or I'm very good at praying. And I'll add that. Or maybe you feel.

That because you're not. Very good at witnessing. Or praying. Or whatever. That therefore. Somehow the cross. Won't be enough. Can I plead with you.
To abandon that kind of madness. And to let the cross. Be the whole. Of your righteousness. Whoever. Whoever you are.
And whatever. Whatever your sin has been. And however. Utterly ashamed you are. Of whatever it was. Or however. Not ashamed you are. However. Irreligious.
Non-religious you are. This is the whole. Of God's answer. It's all. I need. Christ's righteousness. His obedience.
[33:23] Culminating. On the cross. Of Calvary. Paul. Paul. Paul. Paul. With his unimaginable guilt. Because he almost strangled the church of God in its cradle.

And Christ bore his sin. Martin Luther. Tormented by his own conscience. And horrified. By the quality of his own personal religion.
Yet he found peace here. John Bunyan found his peace here. I have found my peace here. The church is full of people.
Who have found their peace here. Who have absolutely no argument. Who don't go to God and say. Lord. My prayer life has been not too bad.
My church attendance record has been quite good. I've had some very good feelings recently. And I quite like God's people. And so if I bring all these along.
[34:25] And throw in the cross as well. Will I be okay? Or do you say. Well. Things are not okay with my private religion. And my prayers. And my Bible reading.

And so on. You can't then say. Well the cross is not. Because. It's because things are not okay with me. That I need this cross. And it's all that I need.
I need nothing else. But the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if I put my faith in it. I want to add two more things.
That are involved in glorying the cross. One is this. That we are to emulate it. And live in its spirit. And live by its example.
Let me say it once of course. That that is not where the real power of the cross lies. In my imitating it. And yet those who boast in it.
[35:20] Are going to imitate it. And every traverse ground. I covered this morning. When we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The crucified one.

Who made himself nothing. And died because. He was willing to be a nobody. The recent surveys have shown.
That the primary ambition. Of so many of our young people. Is to be. A celebrity.

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They don't very much care. As to. Celebrity for what. They don't want to achieve something. And then get.
Become celebrities. We just want to be celebrities. And I am saying to you. Jesus chose.
[36:17] A different road. The road in a way. Towards insignificance. The road towards being a nobody.

Towards being despised. Towards being. Rejected. And I am saying. That those who owe everything to the cross.
Within the church of Christ. Will live. By the mind that was in Christ Jesus. The only.
Really great person. Who ever lived. Who was willing. To be a nobody. And what a church we'd have.
If every one of us. Elders. Deacons. Ministers. Professors. Members. Adherents. Sunday school children. If we all had.
[37:22] The mind that was in Christ Jesus. Or simply. Wanted to serve. Quite content. Quite content. To be nobody.

Quite content. Simply. To be. At God's disposal. Am I speaking tonight. To somebody.
Who is a somebody. Or thinks that she or he is a somebody. How absurd. Our pretensions look.
At the cross of Calvary. Let us think. The way that Christ thought. And my last word is this.
A big glory in the cross. We become heralds. Of that cross. We want the world to sing.
[38:22] We want the world to know. We want the whole world to know. About this cross of Christ our Lord. The Coca-Cola company.

Has a great mission statement. And it's this. To put. A can of Coca-Cola. Within reach of every man.
Woman and child. On the planet. The church of Christ. Has a mission statement. And it is this. To put the story.
Of the cross. Within reach. Of every man. Woman and child. In point. And in this island. And in this land. And in this world.
That is your mission statement. When Paul. went to Corinth. He was conscious.
[39:21] Of certain pressures. Because he. What they were saying. In Corinth. Or they were saying. There's this. There's this. Great apostle coming. There's this.

Great preacher coming. And he's going to have such. A wonderful message. And such a wonderful delivery. And Paul was. And Paul was horrified.
Because. Paul wasn't a great communicator. And Paul didn't have a great. Unmagnetic presence. And Paul didn't have any wonderful.
Personal message. Or any great philosophical. And headline capturing truths. And he tried to get them to hear one thing. To say to them.
Please. Please. He said. Try and understand. I really am. And a super apostle. And I'm really not. A charismatic preacher.
[40:22] And when you see me. You're going to be. Very disappointed. I'm just. A wee man. With bad eyesight. And I stammer a bit. Please. That's all I am.

And I have nothing original to say. He said. All I've got to say is this. We preach Christ crucified. And that was all.
And I tonight. I have nothing original. Nothing new. Nothing you haven't heard before. Nothing you haven't heard.
Better put before. Others will preach. My gospel better. But no one will preach. A better gospel.
God forbid. That I should glory. Save on the cross. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Can I expect tonight.
[41:26] A large number of new adherents to that banner. And more voices. Glory. Glory. In the cross. Of Calvary.

And can we go beyond saying. It's good to me. To say. It's clear to me.
I. Am. A Christian. Let that. Let that. Be your boast. And mine. Let's join in prayer.
O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. We ask you to bless your word to us.
you. You whose word and whose power it is. Who alone can. Open hearts and show the beauty of your son Jesus.
[42:26] Draw us. Draw us each one we pray. Some to re-consecration of themselves to you. And others to consecration.

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For the first time. The dedication surrender. Of our whole lives. To our crucified. Lord Jesus Christ. Granted so. For your glory's sake. Amen.

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