

## Glorying in the Cross of Christ

*But God forbid that I should glory,  
save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
by whom the world is crucified unto me,  
and I unto the world.*

—Galatians 6:14

It is an old and useful observation that many of the most excellent objects in the world are objects whose excellency does not appear at first view; as, on the other hand, many things of little value appear more excellent at first, than a narrower view discovers them to be. There are some things we admire, because we do not know them, and the more we know them the less we admire them; there are other things we despise through ignorance, because it requires pains and application, to discover their beauty and excellency.

This holds true in nothing more than in that glorious, despised object mentioned in the text. There is nothing the world is more divided about in its opinion, than

this. To the one part it is altogether contemptible, to the other it is altogether glorious. The one part of the world wonders what others find in it; the other part wonders how the rest of the world are so stupid as not to see them and are amazed at the blindness of others and their own former blindness.

It is said of the famous reformer Melancthon, when he first saw the glory of this object at his conversion, he imagined he could easily, by plain persuasion, convince others of it; that the matter being so plain and the evidence so strong, he did not see how, on a fair representation, any could stand out against it. But upon trial he was forced to express himself with regret, that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, and that human corruption was too strong for human persuasion, without divine grace.

The true use we should make of this, is certainly to apply for that enlightening grace to ourselves, which the Apostle Paul prays for on the behalf of the Ephesians, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:17). But as here, and in other cases, prayers and means should be joined together, so one of the principal means of right knowledge of the principal object of our faith, and ground of our hope, is to meditate on the glory of that object asserted so strongly in this text, and that, by one who formerly had as diminishing thoughts of it as any of its enemies can have.

In the verses preceding the text, the Apostle tells the Galatians what some false teachers among them gloried

in; here he tells what he gloried in himself. They gloried in the old ceremonies of the Jewish law, which were but shadows; he gloried in the cross of Christ, the substance. He knew it was an affront to the substance to continue these shadows in their former force after the substance itself appeared; therefore, he regrets that practice with zeal, and at the same time confines his own glorying to that blessed object which the shadows were designed to signify. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.

Here the Apostle showeth us, both his high esteem of the cross of Christ, and the powerful influence of it upon his mind. The cross of Christ signifies in Scripture, sometimes our sufferings for Christ, sometimes His suffering for us. As the latter is the chief and most natural sense of the words, so there is reason to think it is the sense of the Apostle here. This is the sense of the same expression in verse 12 of this chapter, which speaks of persecution (that is, our suffering) for the cross of Christ, that is, the doctrine of Christ's cross; besides, it is certain that it is not our sufferings, but Christ's sufferings, which we are chiefly to glory in, to the exclusion of other things; and it is not the former chiefly, but the latter, that mortifies our corruptions, and crucifies the world to us.

The cross of Christ may signify here, not only His death, but the whole of His humiliation, or all the sufferings of His life and death; of which sufferings the cross was the consummation. The Apostle, both here and elsewhere, mentions the cross, to remind us of the manner of His

death, and to strengthen in our minds those impressions which the condescension of that death had made or ought to have made in them. That the author of liberty should suffer the death of a slave; the fountain of honour, the height of disgrace; that the punishments which were wont to be inflicted upon the meanest persons for the highest offences should be inflicted on the greatest person that could suffer; this is the object that the Apostle gloried in.

There are not two things more opposite than glory and shame; here the Apostle joins them together. The cross in itself is an object full of shame; in this case it appeareth to the Apostle full of glory. It had been less remarkable, had he only said he gloried in his Redeemer's exaltation after He left the world, or in the glory He had with the Father before He came to it, yea, before the world was; but the object of the Apostle's glorying is the Redeemer, not only considered in the highest state of honour and dignity, but even viewed in the lowest circumstances of disgrace and ignominy, not only as a powerful and exalted, but as a condemned and crucified Saviour.

Glorying signifies the highest degree of esteem. The cross of Christ was an object of which the Apostle had the most exalted sentiments, and the most profound veneration; this veneration he took pleasure to avow before the world, and was ready to publish on all occasions; this object so occupied his heart and engrossed his affections, that it left no room for any thing else; he gloried in nothing else; and, as he telleth us in other places, he counted every

thing else but loss and dung; and would know nothing else, and was determined about it (1 Cor. 2:2).

The manner of expressing his esteem of this object has a remarkable force and vehemence in it: God forbid, or let it by no means happen. As if he had said: “God forbid, whatever others do, that ever it should be said, that Paul, the old persecutor, should glory in any thing else but in the crucified Redeemer; who plucked him as a brand out of the fire, when he was running farther and farther into it; and who pursued him with mercy and kindness, when he was pursuing Him, in His members, with fierceness and cruelty. I did it through ignorance (and it is only through ignorance that any despise Him), He has now revealed Himself to me, and God forbid that the light that met me near Damascus should ever go out of my mind. It was a light full of glory, the object it discovered was all glorious, my all in all; and God forbid that I should glory in any thing else.”

His esteem of that blessed object was great, and its influence on him proportionable; by it the world was crucified to him, and he was crucified to the world—here is a mutual crucifixion. His esteem of Christ was the cause why the world despised him, and was despised by him; not that the cross made him hate the men of the world, or refuse the lawful enjoyments of it. It allowed him the use of the latter, and obliged him to love the former; but it crucified these corruptions which are contrary both to the love of our neighbour, and the true enjoyment of the creatures. This is called fighting, warring, wrestling, and

killing. The reason is, because we should look upon sin as our greatest enemy, the greatest enemy of our souls, and of the Saviour of our souls; this was the view the Apostle had of sin, and of the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4).

He looked upon it as the murderer of his Redeemer, and this inspired him with a just resentment against it; it filled him with these blessed passions against it mentioned by himself (2 Cor. 7:11), as the native fruits of faith and repentance, zeal, indignation, revenge, that is, such a detestation of sin as was joined with the most careful watchfulness against it.

This is that crucifying of the world meant by the Apostle; the reason of the expression is, because the inordinate love of worldly things is one of the chief sources of sin; the cross of Christ gave such a happy turn to the Apostle's affections that the world was no more the same thing to him that it was to others, and that it had been formerly to himself. His soul was sick of its pomp; and the things he was most fond of before had now lost their relish with him; its honours appeared now contemptible, its riches poor, its pleasures nauseous; its examples and favours did not allure, nor its hatred terrify him. He considered the love or hatred of men, not chiefly as it affected him, but themselves, by furthering or hindering the success of his doctrine among them; all these things may be included in that crucifying of the world mentioned in the last clause of the verse, but the intended ground of the discourse being the first clause, the doctrine to be insisted on is this: