



Boast In The Lord

Introduction:

We all struggle with pride. It's part of our fallen human condition. Whether hidden and masked or open for all to see, we all have the deep desire to be the best, or at least better than others. We do all sorts of things to satisfy that craving. In the church in Corinth, their pride manifested itself in whom they followed. Different preachers and leaders brought their unique strengths in service to the church; members of the church aligned themselves with the personality they deemed more impressive, and then felt pride against those who followed different leaders. The global church today struggles with the same issues. Some follow celebrity personalities, others follow gifted theologians, while others follow certain music styles, and they feel superior to other believers because of it. The issue is not about submission to leadership or the willingness to respect and honour leadership, because that is what God expects from the church. Pride is different. It can appear the same on the outside, but on the inside it is self-centered and arrogant, and is essentially a human heart sin-issue. And the truth is, we ALL struggle with it at some level, which makes this text extremely pertinent to us today. Paul teaches them, and us, that *God's saving work strips humanity of all its pride at the cross of Christ.*

Today's Scripture Text

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

Sermon Points

#1. God's saving work strips the pride off our **WORLDVIEWS**

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:21-25

In Paul's day, the Jews were unable to accept the cross as God's plan for their redemption, because their worldview held that a saving king (the promised Messiah) would be powerful and political. So, even though the Jews in Israel would have had Jesus walking among them and performing miracles, and although they would have heard of his resurrection from the dead, their worldview would not allow them to accept him. The Jews in other places, such as in Corinth, would have had the same worldview of what the Messiah should be – and Jesus, as a carpenter from Nazareth, was not it. The claim was utter foolishness to them.

At the same time, the Greek world around them had a different worldview, and they could not accept the message of a crucified Lord, because it seemed too simple and unglamorous to fit in with their lofty and



philosophical ideas. It just had no place in their paradigm. Both camps found the message of the cross to be foolish, and rejected it outright.

Our world today faces the same problem. Though we have multiple worldviews in place, none of them can accept the simplicity of the cross, and also believe it to be utter foolishness.

The primary reason throughout the ages that humanity has been unable to accept the message of the cross is because they have never understood the human fallen-condition – and our absolute need for rescue. Without that, it makes no sense that God would come and die for us. But we know that scripture tells us that we are utterly broken by sin and in need of the rescue that only God himself, in the form of a sinless man, could achieve for us. No other worldview is able to provide the solution to man’s need for redemption and reconciliation to God, that was achieved in the death and resurrection of Christ. The wisdom of the world cannot compare to God’s wisdom that was displayed in the cross.

- ♣ For the benefit of the rest of the group, what do we mean by “worldview”? (Reflect on or explain some of the differences in worldview you may have among you in the room.)
- ♣ Why is failure to understand the fallen-condition, the biggest common barrier for people in accepting the cross of Christ?
- ♣ Why was it necessary for God to send Christ in human form to live, suffer and die, instead of coming in a “god-like” form?
- ♣ Think about your unbelieving close friends or family members and their perspective on the gospel. Do they actually know what you believe in detail? What part of the message do they feel is foolish?

#2. God’s saving work strips the pride off our STATUS

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

None of the believers in the church in Corinth seemed to have come from any ‘pedigree’ or to have had any real influence in society. But Paul reminded them that their social status, or lack thereof, had nothing to do with their salvation. Before God, in Christ, we are all equal, whichever side of the societal spectrum we may fall. This is helpful for us as a community too. A large portion of our church is educated and privileged, at least in comparison to most South Africans. Some are even influential in business or politics and other areas of life. Without us recognizing it, we often gain our sense of pride from our position in life, and yet salvation is the great leveler. We are all equal in Christ. This must impact how we view ourselves and one another within the body of Christ. It also reminds us to keep exceptionally humble in whatever environment God has placed us, knowing that the only reason we are saved is because God saved us. Our response to this incredible realization should be for us to live our lives in such dependency on him, and in such humility before him and others, that our lives are compelling to the world.

- ♣ Why do you think it would have been important for the church in Corinth to remember that they were not saved for any other reason but that God wanted to save them?



- ♣ Why do you think it is equally important for us as a church, with all of our resource and education, to realise that our salvation makes us equal to everyone else?
- ♣ How do you think this realization should affect the way in which we relate to one another in our local church, as well as those of different churches?

#3. God's saving work strips the pride off our HUMAN ABILITY & CONFIDENCE

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When Paul was in Athens, he engaged with the Athenians at their level of philosophy and appealed to their sense of reasoning, which seemed to evoke some form of interest. However, in the end, we do not see a great harvest of believers emerging there as a result of that trip. When he arrived in Corinth, he spoke plainly to the believers there, not trying to impress them with eloquence. Instead, he wanted to make sure that the message of the crucified cross was clear and simple to understand. He had a growing confidence in the fact that the gospel message is what speaks, and it is the Holy Spirit that brings about the faith in people's hearts to accept Christ as Lord. His ability to preach perfectly, or to convince them in fine sounding arguments was not where the power in salvation lay.

The church in Corinth had begun to put all their confidence in the different leaders, each of whom had different gifts and abilities. Paul wanted to ground them once again in the fact that personalities and gifting were not responsible for their salvation, nor should they therefore put their confidence in various personalities.

This does not mean that the faithful use of gifting is not important. We are all called to use our gifts to serve the church, to the best of our abilities, and that goes for teachers and preachers as well as the rest of us. But it is important to distinguish between gift and ability, and the power of the Spirit.

This is liberating for us as believers, because it dismantles our need for our leaders to preach perfectly on that one day that our friends/loved ones come to church. It also allows us to realise that we are able to talk to people about the gospel, however imperfectly, and that their response from the heart, is not contingent on our ability to perform. So whether we fail or succeed at evangelism, we are not responsible for the final outcome, God is. Our job is to be faithful in telling the message in the best way we can, within our gifting and ability. The rest is up to God.

- ♣ Why is it foolish to place all our hope for the salvation of our friends/family on the success of the preacher?
- ♣ If Salvation comes through the power of the Spirit, then what is the purpose of teaching and preaching of the gospel?
- ♣ Knowing that it is not our eloquence and skill that convinces people to turn to Christ, what is our role and how can we best prepare ourselves for it?

Take-Home: Consider the following personal questions this week:

- What are you boasting in? (e.g. education, wealth, status, church leaders, our church, your job, the people you are friends with? Etc.)
- In what area of life are you growing in wisdom?
- Are you experiencing the power of the cross in your life? (i.e. in unity, reconciliation & togetherness).