

Boasting Only in the Cross

by John Piper

John Piper calls believers to boast only in the cross of Christ, urging them to live lives dedicated to His glory rather than trivial pursuits.

Duration: 37:31

Scripture: Isaiah 26:8, Matthew 6:33, Acts 20:24, Galatians 6:14

Topics: "The Cross", "Eternal Impact"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not wasting one's life on worldly pursuits. He urges the audience to reject the American dream of material success and instead focus on making a difference for eternity. The speaker shares the tragic story of Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards, who dedicated their lives to spreading the message of Jesus Christ in difficult and unreached areas. He also speaks as a father figure, urging the audience, including his own sons, to not throw away their lives on empty success but to lay down their lives for Jesus and go to the hard places for the glory of the cross. The central message is to boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and to prioritize making a meaningful impact for eternity.

Transcript

Father in heaven, you know how inadequate I feel at this moment, and so I ask for a very special anointing and help from you in the name of Jesus because of the cross where he died for me. Father, it's a frightening thing to call a generation to die. We sing of it very lightly.

We run to this cross, which is where we should run. And it is a frightening thing to call my sons and my daughters to die. And so I pray that you would give me the grace to say what you once said, not say anything more, anything less.

I pray that you'd fill me now with your Holy Spirit. I pray that you'd come upon this assembly with a sense of resolve to walk with Christ to the peoples and to the campuses with the cross and on the cross. Into your hands, Lord Jesus, I commit these few moments and pray that you'd guard me from the evil one and that you would grant me a prophetic word that would have a ripple effect to the ends of the earth and to eternity.

In Jesus' name, amen. You don't have to know a lot of things in order to make a huge difference for the Lord in the world. But you do need to know a few things that are great and be willing to live for them and

die for them.

People that make a difference in the world are not people who have mastered a lot of things. They are people who have been mastered by a very few things that are very, very great. If you want your life to count, you don't have to have a high IQ and you don't have to have a high EQ.

You don't have to be smart. You don't have to have good looks. You don't have to be from a good family or from a good school.

You just have to know a few basic, simple, glorious, majestic, obvious, unchanging, eternal things and be gripped by them and be willing to lay down your life for them, which is why anybody in this crowd can make a worldwide difference, because it isn't you. It's what you're gripped with. But one of the really sad things about this moment right now is that there are hundreds of you in this crowd who do not want your life to make a difference.

All you want is to be liked. Maybe finish school, get a good job, find a husband or a wife, a nice house, a nice car, long weekends, good vacations, grow old healthy, have a fun retirement, die easy, no hell, and that's all you want. And you don't give a rip whether your life counts on this earth for eternity.

That's a tragedy in the making. That is a tragedy in the making. About three weeks ago, we got news at our church that Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards were killed in Cameroon.

Ruby Eliason, over 80, single all her life, a nurse, poured her life out for one thing, to make Jesus Christ known among the sick and the poor in the hardest and most unreached places. Laura Edwards, a medical doctor in the Twin Cities, and then in retirement, partnering up with Ruby, also pushing 80, and going from village to village in Cameroon. And the brakes give way, over a cliff they go, and they're dead instantly.

And I asked my people, is this a tragedy? Two women in their 80s, almost, a whole life devoted to one idea, Jesus Christ magnified among the poor and the sick in the hardest places, and 20 years after most of their American counterparts had begun to throw their lives away on trivialities in Florida and New Mexico, fly into eternity with a death in a moment. Is this a tragedy? I asked. It is not a tragedy.

I'll read you what a tragedy is. I've got a little article here from Reader's Digest. You don't read Reader's Digest, I know that.

But there is a generation who does. This is a tragedy. Title of the article, Start Now, Retire Early, February 1998.

Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball, and collect shells. That's a tragedy.

That's a tragedy, and there are people in this country that are spending billions of dollars to get you to buy it. And I get 40 minutes to plead with you, don't buy it. With all my heart, I plead with you, don't buy that dream.

The American dream. A nice house, a nice car, a nice job, a nice family, a nice retirement, collecting shells as the last chapter before you stand before the Creator of the universe to give an account with what you did. Here it is, Lord, my shell collection.

Look, Lord, my shell collection. And I've got a good swing. And look at my boat, God.

Look at my boat, God. Well, not for Ruby and not for Laura. Don't waste your life.

Don't waste it. I grew up in a home where my dad was an evangelist and he lived for one thing, to make Jesus Christ known among people who didn't know him. And I would watch him leave on Friday and put him on the airplane.

He'd gone for a week or two weeks or three weeks and then come Monday and he'd come home and we'd welcome him home. And I loved my dad and I still do because at 81 he's still doing it. And there was on the kitchen wall in our house a little plaque.

I grew up with it from the time I was six on and now it hangs on the wall in my living room at home. And it said this, only one life till soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.

48 years, I've seen that almost every day of my life. And I am here to plead with you to make your life count for the cross. I'm 54 years old and most of you are 17 to 23 or so and some exceptions around.

I have four kids your age. Carson's 27. Ben is 24.

Abraham is 20. And Barnabas is 17. And then there's Talitha, she's four.

So I have four sons who could be sitting out there and nothing moves me today to long and yearn and ache and desire more than the desire that these boys not throw away their lives on fatal success. And therefore I come to you, this came over me like a wave yesterday, I come to you as a father. I'm old enough to be the father of almost everybody on the grass.

And I speak to you as the father perhaps that you never had. And I speak to you perhaps as the father that you did have who never had a vision for you. Or maybe the father that you had who has a vision for you and it's all about money and it's all about status.

Or maybe, this would be the best of all, I speak as a father exactly what your father has always wanted you to hear. And you never would listen to lay down your life for Jesus and to go to the hard place and do the hard thing for the glory of the cross. So hear me as a father speaking to my sons and my daughters this afternoon.

I love passion. Passion 97, 98, 99, one day. One of the reasons I love passion is because the 268 declaration based on Isaiah 26.8 goes so close to the center of what I feel like I'm about.

You know what it says, especially that last phrase. Your name and your renown are the desire of our souls. So here's not just a body, but a soul.

And here's not just a soul, but a soul with a desire. And here's not just a soul with a desire, but a desire for something infinitely great and infinitely glorious and infinitely valuable, namely the name and the renown of Jesus Christ. And the reason I love passion so much is because my own life mission and the life mission of my church is almost identical with that vision.

And it goes like this. We exist, I exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God, the supremacy of Christ, the supremacy of the cross in all things for the joy of all peoples. That's my passion.

And I pray that I could deliver it to you, that I could call forth a generation to take this passion to the hard places, lay down your lives for it. You don't have to say it like I say it. You don't have to say it like Louis Giglio says it.

You don't have to say it like Beth says it. You don't have to say it like anybody else on this platform says it. But you got to find your way to say it.

You got to find your passion and lift it up and say it and live for it and die for it. And then you become like Paul. Don't you just love the way the Apostle Paul spoke about his passions? For example, there's one you may not be too familiar with.

In Acts chapter 20 verse 24, he says, I don't count my life of any value nor as precious to myself. If only I might finish my course and the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Do you hear it? My life doesn't count but for one thing.

To make a difference in the world, you don't have to know a lot of things. One thing. Get one thing clear and die for it.

Philippians chapter 3. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I might gain Christ.

I love the way Paul spoke these words of consecration. One thing. And so I asked myself this week and weeks gone by, what's the one thing I could say that perhaps would rivet your hearts on your passion to go to the hard places and do the hard thing among the hard campuses, among the unreached peoples? And this verse came to my mind and I emailed it to Louis a few days ago and he said, that's it, that's where we're going.

It's Galatians chapter 6, verse 14. It's so short, you don't need to look it up. You can just read it.

Galatians 6, 14. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world was crucified to me and I was crucified to the world. May I never boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world was crucified to me.

Let's say it positively. Boast only in the cross. There's one idea.

You don't have to know a lot of things. You don't have to have a great, long education, but you need to know this thing and live for it and die for it. Boast only in the cross.

The word boast is used for exalting, rejoicing. Rejoice only in the cross. Exalt only in the cross.

Boast only in the cross. Now, how in the world can that be? That is a shocking statement, isn't it? It's a shocking statement. Why? Two reasons.

It's like saying, if you're going to exalt, exalt in lynching. If you're going to exalt, exalt in the electric chair. If you're going to exalt, exalt in the gas chamber.

If you're going to exalt, exalt in lethal injection, lynching. I glory in lynching. That's strange.

That's one reason why it's strange to say, if you're going to boast in life, boast in one thing, the execution of the Son of God under the device more horrible than has ever been devised by a human being to die. If you had been there, you would have thrown up. You would have pulled on your hair.

You would have screamed and torn your clothing. No, no, no, no. You would have cried and you would have run away and thrown yourself on the ground.

This we're going to boast in. This we're going to exalt in this bloody, horrible screaming. You think Jesus died quietly.

I think he screamed until his voice was raw. No human being can have nails driven through his wrists without screaming. That's one reason why it's shocking to say only boast, only exalt, only rejoice in the lynching of the Son of God.

But there's a second reason why it's so shocking. The word only may I never boast except that's the negative way of saying, may I boast only. But really, it's not just double talk for me to say that to you.

Exalt only in the cross. What? Don't exalt in the glory of God. Don't exalt in sufferings.

Romans 5, 3. I exalt, same word, same word in Greek. Exalt, I exalt, I boast, I rejoice in my sufferings because they were patience and patience works approvingness works hope or second Corinthians 12. I boast, I exalt, I glory in my weaknesses.

Or first Thessalonians 3. You are my boast, he says to the church. So what in the world does he mean when he says boast only in the cross? He's boasting in other things. He's exalting in other things, the glory of God, his own sufferings, his own weaknesses, his own converts.

What does it mean? Boast only in the cross. Here's what I think it means for the Christian. All other boasting should be a boasting in the cross.

If you boast in the hope of glory, Romans 5, 2, let the boasting in the hope of glory be a boasting in the cross. If you boast in your tribulations, let your boasting in your tribulations be a boasting in the cross. If you boast in your weaknesses, let your boasting in your weaknesses be a boasting in the cross.

If you boast in your converts, your friends, your family, your health, let it be a boasting in the cross. In other words, boast only in the cross means bring all other boasting under that boasting and make that boasting expressed through this boasting. Now, what in the world is that? What does that mean? What am I saying? Here's what I'm saying, and this is the most important thing I think I will say today.

When Christ died, he purchased for sinners everything they enjoy that is not part of their condemnation. Say it another way. We are sinners all.

The only thing everybody in Shelby Farms deserves is damnation. That's all we deserve. Therefore, every beat of your heart on this lawn, every sight with a wholesome eye, every word sung to the Lord, every movement of a strong arm, every step taken with healthy legs, every word heard with a healthy eardrum, every friend at your side, every word that you can read, every joy that springs in your heart is a blood bought gift, which you would not have had he not died.

Therefore, if you boast in one of these things, if you glory that you have eyes, glory that you have ears, glory that you have hands, glory that you can sing, glory that you have friends, glory that there's an

assembly like this, it is, if you're thinking rightly, a glorying in and a boasting in the cross because he bought them for you on the cross. That's the meaning of boast only in the cross. Let every legitimate pleasure and every pain that God turns for your good become an occasion for glorying in the cross by which they were purchased for you.

My heart's desire is that all of you would see why we should be a cross saturated people. I fear that we have a theology of the cross that says it has to do perhaps with the Bible study or with the evangelistic effort or with missions or with something when in fact, the cross is everything. You would not have anything but judgment if it weren't for the cross.

We are sinners all. You are and I am doubly undeserving. How so? Here's what I mean.

First of all, you are creatures, not creators. God made you. He is not beholden to you.

You have absolutely no rights over against the living God. He has all rights over against you. You have no claims on God.

He may do with you as he please. The Lord gives. The Lord takes away.

Job says, blessed be the name of the Lord. Therefore, you're not deserving of anything good from God. You have done nothing to enrich him who has given a gift to God that he should be repaid, who has been his counselor that he should counsel back for from him and through him and to him are all things to him.

Be glory forever and ever. You are creatures and deserve nothing from your creator. So that's the first sense in which you are not deserving.

Which means if you get anything from him good, which you all do every day. It was bought by Jesus. Because you are secondly, sinners as I am.

Please now don't water this down. We've talked about sin this morning, but let me say one more thing that needs underlining. Sin has to do with God, not people.

The world thinks of sin is killing somebody or stealing from body or lying to somebody. And the Bible thinks you've offended God. You've dishonored God.

You've not trusted God. You've belittled God. And therefore, if you get anything good from a holy God, it's because God himself interposed with his blood his son and bought for you everything you have.

My son, my 17-year-old son totaled our car about two months ago. We had a 91 Dodge Spirit. He just got his license about a month before.

This has happened with every one of my sons. They get a license, they wreck the car. He's coming home on a snowy night.

And I tried to teach him when it's snowing, you don't have to go to the speed limit. You know, most young people think it's a speed minimum, not speed limit. And so they always push it up to the limit.

And he lost control, skidded, hit the guardrail in the back, then the front spun around on the freeway off to the right side. And God spared him, didn't have a scratch on him. The car was totaled as the cars whizzed by.

Now, I'm a sinner and Barnabas is a sinner. Where did that come from? That mercy came from the cross. So should I exalt in the safety of my son? Yes.

But only, only, there's the word from Galatians 6.14, only as a boasting in the cross. Do you see how thoroughly cross-centered and cross-saturated your life will become if you get a hold of this? Everything you will enjoy on Selby Farms, everything you enjoy and all the bad that comes into your life that God turns for good was bought by Jesus. And therefore, yes, exalt in it.

Yes, exalt in food. Yes, exalt in friendship. Yes, exalt in sports.

Yes, exalt in mission. But remember, everything good that comes into your life and everything bad that comes into your life that God then turns for good was bought for you by the infinitely valuable blood of Jesus. Therefore, all of life, if it isn't exalting, all of life, it is a boasting, is a boasting in the cross.

Well, that's what I wanted to tell you today. I wanted you to hear that. I want to call you to that.

You don't have to know a lot of things to make a difference in the world, but you do need to know that on the cross, Christ became your righteousness. On the cross, Christ took away your sins. On the cross, Christ bore your guilt and your condemnation.

You need to know that and then be gripped by it and then let your life be saturated by it. You need to know that everything you experience, everything that's good, everything that's bad, that's turned for good was bought by the cross so that you become only. Across Boaster, I said I was 54 years old when I get home.

After a leave that I'm on in June, they're going to have a 20 year celebration because I'm just finishing 20 years of ministry at my church and it has caused me to think a lot about the next chapter. And then I thought about your chapter, which is the first ministry chapter, perhaps. And I just want to say publicly that my coming here has been an occasion both in the preparation and the presence of rededication and reconsecration of my last chapter from 54 to whatever God gives me of life devoted to the supremacy of God in the cross.

And I'm just inviting you to let that be what you dedicate yourself to in the first chapter and all the chapters that God gives you of your life. We should boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. One last thought.

Isn't it remarkable? Isn't it amazing, according to Galatians 6.14, that Christ died for his own glorification? May it never be that I should glory or boast or exalt except in the cross by which the world was crucified to me and I to the world. Christ died on the cross so that my exaltation would be in his cross, that is, so that his cross would be glorified. So put it another way.

Christ died in order that his cross might be glorified in my exalting in it. Do you hear what the implications of that are? Christ died so that his cross would experience a glorification in my exaltation in the cross. To me, this is the best of all possible theologies.

The best of all possible worlds is that Jesus Christ would come into the world in order to magnify his cross through my exalting in his cross so that he gets the glorification and I get the exaltation. But that's not quite where I want to end. One more step.

It's not simply you and me in our little wonderful, glorying, exalting, happy exaltation in the cross because our sins are forgiven and we're heading for glory when we go over a cliff. Rather, this is the way to say it

biblically. Jesus Christ came into the world in order to die on a cross in order that his cross might experience a glorification in my exaltation in campuses exaltation in the cross or that his cross might experience a glorification in my exaltation in the people's, the unreached people's exalting in the cross.

I hope that you will realize what Galatians 6.14 and boasting in the cross ultimately means about your joy and your glorification in the cross. Let me say it again. God is going to get the glory in the cross.

You're going to get the joy in the cross, but your joy will not be full in the cross unless and until that glorification of the cross is experienced in your exaltation, not just in the cross, but in the campuses exaltation in the cross and the people's exaltation in the cross and the nation's exaltation in the cross. Then your joy will be full. And so I call you as a generation to join me in my last chapter on your first chapter.

May it never be. May it never be that we would boast or glory or exalt in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world was crucified to me and I to the world. Lord, take it.

Please take this call to die because there is no place where you get more glory than when we are on the cross with you. Take this plea to die and seal it so that there are martyrs here. And there are thousands who take up the challenge to go to the nations and to go to the campuses, the hard ones at the hard time in the hard places for the glory of the cross through Christ.

I pray. Amen.

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