

# (Education for Exultation) Christ Crucified, Our Boast

by John Piper

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*John Piper emphasizes the importance of boasting only in the cross of Christ as the source of grace and transformation in the believer's life.*

**Duration:** 40:15

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:1-11, Galatians 6:14

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing our unworthiness and the value of the cross. He states that if we feel good about ourselves and believe we deserve everything we have, the message of the cross will not resonate with us. The preacher encourages believers to see every good thing in life as a result of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and to boast in the cross as the source of all blessings. He uses the image of a beam of light shining on us to represent the good things in life and urges believers to boast in the cross as the means by which these blessings were purchased. The sermon concludes with a reminder to exalt in the cross and to find hope and joy in God.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org). The authority for Pastor John's remarks come from the scriptures today, Galatians chapter 6, 11 through 18. See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

And those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand marks of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen. Let's pray together.

There isn't anything greater in all the world, Lord. No event has ever happened more significant than the death of the Son of God on the cross of Golgotha, Calvary. And so as I undertake to speak about it and exult in it, would you grab me your help so that there's some correspondence, Lord, between what I say and the weight of the truth.

And I pray for those in our midst here who love the cross, that they would see it and love it more. And I pray for those who feel indifferent toward the cross right now, that they would be awakened to the infinite value of what happened there and what significance it has in their lives above all other things. And so I pray that people would come to Christ, see him and be drawn into fellowship with him and make their lives one long tribute to the cross.

In his great holy name, I pray. Amen. So here we are at the third message in the series, education for exultation.

And today, exultation in the cross. There's a very strange sound to it. Would have been an unthinkable sound 2000 years ago in Rome.

Education for exultation in the electric chair. Exultation in the lethal injection. It's all exult in the gas chamber.

Yay. Exultation in the lynching rope. It's all exult in lynching.

It's a funny sound to it. And it would have been worse than that because the cross. In the first century was preserved for the dregs of the criminals and was designed to hurt as much as it could hurt for as long as it could hurt.

Whereas all those others are relatively short by comparison and easy. So let's exult in the lynching of the son of God. Let's exult in the, in the killing of Christ.

Strange religion. We have strange religion, but there it is in verse 14. You see it.

This doesn't come out of my series. This comes out of the text. Verse 14, may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that word boast, if you think back to our last messages on Romans, three times that word occurred in Romans five, one to 11, we will exult. That's the word exult in the hope of the glory of God. Verse two, not only that we will exult in tribulations because they were hope that's verse three, verse 11.

We will not only that, but exult in God. So we're to exult. So when we talk about education for exultation in the cross, that comes straight out of verse 14, our business at Bethlehem, the business of Christians is to exult in boast in rejoice in delight in praise, magnify display.

The electric chair, the lynching Jesus. It's very, very frightening to have a religion like that. May it never be that I would boast except in the cross lynching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No boasting anywhere but in him. So I thought, all right, I've got to preach this series of messages on education for exultation. And I see that there's exultation here in the cross.

So I will make my third message after exulting in God last week, exulting in Christ this week, exulting now in the cross, because surely the cross and our exultation in it is one essential component to this vision of

why we exist as a church. And when I said it like that and read the text, it didn't work, wouldn't fit. Why? Because if I say, all right, alongside God, alongside Christ next week, alongside faith, then alongside training and education, then alongside money and alongside building and alongside whatever city missions alongside all those, you got this piece exulting in the cross.

It won't work because this text says, may it never be that I would boast in anything else besides the cross. So you can't preach the sermon that way. You can't say alongside God, alongside Christ, alongside faith, alongside missions, alongside money, alongside building alongside whatever.

This is a piece. This is a piece. It's not a piece.

There is nothing else, it says, to be boasted in. But this nothing else to be exulted in. But this.

So I had to say, OK, I had an idea in my head when I chose that title weeks ago. But now I've got a text in front of me and it doesn't work. So I did the best I could to to now try to figure out what do you mean? What do you mean you only exult in or boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus? Because you said in Romans five, verse two, I exult in the hope of the glory of God.

You said in verse three, I exult in tribulations. You said in verse 11, I exult in God. You said in second Corinthians chapter 12, I exult in my weaknesses.

It looks like there are other things you exult in besides the cross. What do you mean? You only exult in the cross. And here's my answer.

He means that for Christians, all the boasting we do in anything and everything else must be a boasting in the cross. Any boasting you do, choose what you will. Any exulting that you do must be a boasting in or exulting in the cross.

Measure the rightness of all your boasting in other things by whether the boasting in those other things is a boasting in the cross. And if it isn't wrong, it's worldly, it's idolatrous. Now, why is that? Why is it that a boasting in God or a boasting in tribulations or a boasting in hope or a boasting in weaknesses, or you continue the list? Why is it that all of those must be, if they're to be done rightly, a boasting in the cross? And here's my answer to that.

I'm a sinner and deserve, in my sin, apart from Christ, nothing but pain, nothing ultimately but hell for my sin. Therefore, everything good that comes into my life and everything bad and painful that comes into my life that God then takes and turns for my good, I don't deserve. But rather, it comes from sheer mercy and grace bought by one thing, the blood of Jesus for me.

Therefore, everything good that comes into my life and everything bad that comes into my life, which God then takes and turns for good, is owing to the cross. And therefore, if I am to exalt in that good thing because of how good it feels or the bad thing because of what good it will do for me, I should at that moment, above all things, be boasting in the cross by which it was purchased for me. Now, that's the sermon in a nutshell.

And I talked with one young woman, and she may have stayed again, and you're so welcome if you did, for this service who said to me, I don't feel that undeserving of the good things in my life. And I just guess that that's where a lot of you are right now. This message will not make sense to you.

What I'm about to say and what I'm saying about the cross and its value and the intensity of its preciousness won't go home to you if you feel pretty good about yourself. I deserve to breathe. I deserve to go to school.

I deserve to have clothes. I deserve to have a car. I deserve to have a computer.

I deserve, I deserve, I deserve, I deserve. You don't deserve anything but hell. Now, if you don't believe that, the rest of my message would just not make sense.

And so I'm praying in my heart that sin will land on us this morning so that we will sweetly cherish the cross, because the cross is foolishness and stumbling block for people who don't feel desperate, who feel pretty good, who feel like they deserve the job they have, deserve the health they have, deserve, deserve, deserve. Maybe there's some other people that need the gospel, but I'm making it. And if you're there, would you just open your eyes? Would you just open your eyes? I said to her, you know, to feel this, you have to see how high God is in His worth and His holiness and His beauty and His purity and His deserving, infinite praise, infinite obedience, infinite allegiance, infinitely intense love.

And we give Him what? Little bit every now and then during the day we think of it. And we don't feel bad about it because we don't see Him. We don't see how magnificent He is and what He deserves.

And so the gap, this infinite gap between God and me, I don't see that. I don't feel that. And so all this talk now that you're about to talk about the cross being that which you exalt in for every blessing so that you're exalting and boasting and everything is a boasting in the cross that bought it for you.

I don't get it. Now that wasn't in the first service, close parenthesis, just because it hit me like a ton of bricks when she said that. I don't feel that undeserving.

Please feel undeserving. You are undeserving. Get connected with reality.

Get connected with reality. You deserve nothing from God, but hell because He's so great and you have sinned against Him by ignoring Him or neglecting Him or defying Him so consistently in your life. You've come nowhere near the bottom of the line that He deserves from you and He loves you.

You believe that? So the reason I say that all boasting and all exalting in anything should be a boasting in Christ and the cross is because if Christ had not died for me to cover my sin and to be a righteousness on my behalf, all I would get from God is judgment. And now because He's covered my sin, has been a righteousness for me, I get wave upon wave upon wave of grace so that every time I taste some grace, it's a cross issue. That's not hard, six-year-olds can get this.

If the cross purchased for me all the benefits I receive as an undeserving sinner, every benefit in which I exalt is an exaltation in the cross or I'm a blasphemer. That's not hard to understand and it's the essence of the gospel. He died to purchase for me everything good and everything painful that will be turned for my good.

Illustration from life. We totaled our car this week and nobody got hurt. Well, where did that come from? Nobody got hurt.

We deserve to be hurt. I deserve every disease I have, every sore throat I have, every car accident I have, I deserve. Where did that safety come from? Where did that rescue come from? Came from grace, sheer

undeserved providential watch care of a God who had every right to kill.

And who bought that for us this week? Who bought that? That come from nowhere? Did that cost nothing? Did that mercy cost nothing? So that a just and holy God who has every right to punish me, lavishes me with safety. Did that cost nothing? It cost him his son. And therefore, safety in the totaling of car results in boasting in the cross or it's an illegitimate boasting.

Let's take it just a little further. Call the insurance company and looks pretty bad. Would you get an adjuster out there as soon as you can? Adjuster calls and says in his technical language, the cost to repair your car exceeds the value of your car.

I said, that's what I thought. So he gave me a check for \$2,800. And David Livingston has a friend in Iowa who sells cars.

Called him up, said, well, I got these two cars, just got them in yesterday. 92 Lumina and another one. My wife drove to Iowa with a check yesterday and bought a new car, drove it home in snow and got home safely.

Now here we are on Sunday and we totaled our car. We got a check. We bought a car and I'm preaching.

It's like it never happened. What's that called? Mercy. Mercy.

Mercy. Sheer grace. Sheer grace.

Takes my breath away. I tremble at that kind of ease of life. That check for \$2,800 was bought by Jesus blood because I deserve to be in hell instead of receiving a state farm check.

And the only reason I'm not in hell is because Christ died for me. To purchase for me eternal life and every blessing that lands on me, including a crushed car. And had my son died, I'd be preaching this sermon.

Which is why, and this was the second thing I had to share with this young woman, so I'll stick in another parenthesis here. I have added in this manuscript here, and I mean to add wherever I think of it, not only every good thing that comes into my life, but I add and every bad thing that God turns for my good. Have you been hearing me say that? Raise your hand if you've heard me say that.

Okay, because if you don't hear that, you're going to get a real naive view of the Christian life. I don't believe that. I believe that God does allow his children to suffer big time, big time this week.

And that that too was bought by the blood of Jesus in its redeeming, sanctifying, purifying, sanctifying effects over my life. So don't, please don't miss that. I can preach this sermon when the insurance check comes and when the funeral happens, I can do it.

I will do it. I have done it for many of you and I will do it for my own children if I have to. So as I see this text, I boast only in the cross means I boast when I boast over anything else.

Only at that moment in the cross, because I would not have it without the cross so that all my boasting, whether it's in good things that come to me or hard things that come to me is a boasting in the cross. Now, here's my question. How do you get to be a person who does that? And one simple answer that relates to this vision of education for exaltation is that you have to know these things.

I wonder how you're doing in this cross work. Dad's how you're doing at home is do you see how pervasive the cross is in life? Nothing good comes to us, but what was bought by the cross so that all gratitude and all exaltation and all boasting is boasting in the cross. So let our homes be pervaded by cross of Christ and in our Sunday school classes pervaded by cross of Christ and in our sermons pervaded by cross of Christ and in all your witnessing pervaded by the cross of Christ education for exaltation in the cross must be education about the cross.

So if you wonder what is this project all about? One way to say it would be educational for exaltation means education about Jesus Christ crucified so that we would know him and what happened to us in him so that we would now exalt in the cross as we ought. These things don't come out of nowhere. You don't live that way just because you were born.

If you're going to be a cross centered person, a person who exalts only in the cross all day long in everything you boast in, you got to be taught this. So my job is to do it right now. I'm doing it.

I'm doing it. And your job is to learn it, live it, and then do it for somebody else. That's what it's about.

I'm teaching you how to understand what happened to you. Now let me clarify that. This is not a parenthesis.

I know where I'm going here. Where, from where do you exalt in the cross? That's an odd question, but I mean it. From where, where are you located when you exalt in the cross? Now the answer to that is in the second half of verse 14.

May it never be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I have been crucified to the world. Boasting in the cross happens only one place, on the cross. If you're not on the cross, you can't boast in the cross.

By the cross, it says, I was crucified to the world. And you may be sitting there saying, I feel alive. I think I'm alive.

I think I'm sitting here. Yes, I feel that. So what do you mean? I've been crucified.

I'm dead. Let's go to chapter 2 verse 20 to get the answer of that. Just flip back a page maybe in your Bible to chapter 2 verse 20.

I have been crucified with Christ, Paul says, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So here's what that says.

When Christ died, all those who are his died. When Christ died, everybody who was to belong to him died. And now if you say, well, how do I get connected to that? Is it kind of automatic or there's something I need to do or what? There's a key word in this text.

Let's read it again. I have been crucified with Christ, so I'm dead. I'm dead.

And it is no longer I who live. I'm dead. I'm dead.

Christ lives in me. His death was my death. His life becomes my life.

Keep reading. And the life which I now live. Oh, I'm alive.

I'm alive. Well, which is it? I'm crucified. And now he says, and the life which I now live in the flesh.

Yes, there is skin there. I do feel it. I'm living in the flesh.

I'm alive. I have a body. My heart's beating.

I have a brain. The life which I now live in the flesh. And here comes the key phrase.

I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So, yes, there's something you must do. And that death, which he died for his own takes effect through faith.

So here's the way to think about it. You're an unbeliever. God moves in your life, draws you to Christ, displays the glory of the son in the cross, and you're drawn out to say yes to Jesus.

You put your faith in him at that moment. The Holy Spirit, by your faith, unites you to the son of God unites you. There is some profound union.

And when that union happens, all that he did for you becomes yours and his death that he died becomes your death. So now you can say I was crucified with Christ, meaning my faith unites me to Christ so that what happened to him really did happen to me. It's counted as mine.

His resurrection is counted to mine. His righteousness is counted as mine. And that's the gospel.

That's good news for all you undeserving people in this room, which is all of us. The link is faith. The link is faith.

But we really are the old. Well, who died? Who's dead anyway? I mean, if I'm dead and I'm alive, who's dead and who's alive? And one way to say it would be the old old rebellious, unbelieving you is dead, died with Christ and the new you. It's called in verse 15.

Is it not a new creation, a new creation? The new you is alive. Well, who's this new you? This new you is what verse 14 of chapter six is describing the believing you. But let's just let verse 14 have its say one more time.

Back to chapter six. Verse 14 is describing the new you that's alive. May it never be that I should boast.

You got a new way of boasting. That's the new you. That I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world was crucified to me and I to the world.

Now let's just. As we close, unpack that for just a moment. I was crucified to the world.

The world was crucified to me. So I'm a corpse to the world. The world is a corpse to me.

What does that mean? It means that the overpowering lure of the world to conquer me and make me sin is broken because the back of the world was broken on the cross when Jesus died my death. And my subjective bondage to that world has died and I'm freed from that overpowering lure of the world to triumph in my life. I'm a new creation and the new creation has a new boast.

I will not boast in anything now, in anything but the cross. But you may say, yes, you do. Yes, you do.

The insurance check. You smile. We could tell you were happy the way you told that story.

You liked it. You liked the check and you like this new car that you have, this 92 Chevy Lumina. I didn't know there was such a car until Wednesday.

Now there is one sitting somewhere, I hope far away from the church. So you like the world. What do you mean the world is dead to you? You're dead to the world.

Sounds like hypocrisy. Looks like hypocrisy. Let's just talk about the world is dead and you're dead to the world.

And I think, I think state farm checks are world and they are. So am I a hypocrite? Is there no point in preaching this sermon? There's no such thing as death to the world and the world death to us. What is this? Well, here's the way I understand what Paul means because Paul taught us in several places not to be ungrateful for food and marriage and other things of the world, but to make them an occasion of Thanksgiving.

First Timothy 4.2. That's like the check from the insurance company, like breakfast this morning. Did you enjoy breakfast? Is that idolatry? Is that world? Here's my effort. Being dead to the world doesn't mean going out of the world and it doesn't mean not feeling the world, feeling the pain when the world deals you a blow and feeling the pleasure when the world deals you a blessing.

It doesn't mean you have no feeling anymore. You get one day and kissed another day. I don't feel anything.

I'm a stone. I'm a stoic. I was the way the stoics were.

They don't feel anything. It's not Christianity. Not feeling anything in the world.

Well, what is it then? How, how do you, what do you mean when you say the world has died to you and you've died to the world? If in fact you're happy, you got that check from state farm. Here's what I mean. What I think it means.

It means that every legitimate pleasure in the world becomes a blood bought evidence of Calvary love and an occasion of boasting in the cross. I'll say it again. Every legitimate pleasure in the world becomes for the person who's died to the world becomes an evidence of blood bought Calvary love or a blood bought evidence of Calvary love and an occasion for boasting in the cross.

So that when the blessing of an insurance payment comes, or if you didn't have insurance and you've got a deal with the loss and the blessings that God will bring through the loss, whichever way it goes in your life, when the blessing comes either positively or negatively through that circumstance, do you at that moment experience the new creation of boasting in God and Christ and the cross as that which provided it so that every single thing in life becomes an act of worship towards Christ crucified. Let me change the image one last time as we close. I picture in my mind every good and perfect gift that comes, whether it's hard or whether it's easy as a beam of light shining on me.

And I'm not thinking of it as coming down now as coming through history. And I trace the beam, I get on the beam as it were, and I let my eyes run down the beam. Where's this beam coming from? Where's the light? Where's the light? Where's the fire? And I trace it all the way back until it gets to the cross where it

was bought for me at the cost of the life of the son of God to have died to the world means that when you see a beam of light in the world, you let your eyes run back to the source and give the source glory and credit to be worldly and to be alive in the world is to look at the beam and to love the beam alone.

The beam loses its worldliness when you trace it back in all purity to its source in the cross of Jesus Christ. It retains its worldliness if you look at it alone and don't give Jesus the credit for it and exalt the cross because of it. And that's the difference between a dead man and a living man in Christ.

So, oh God, may education for exaltation mean at Bethlehem that all of our planning and all of our hope filled meetings and all of our praying and all of our bricks and all of our dollars and all of our teaching and all of our displaying of these things be occasions even in the process of education for exaltation, an occasion for exalting the cross, exalting in the cross of Jesus Christ. All I once held dear and built my life upon, all this world reveres and wars to own, all I once thought gain I have counted loss, spent and worthless now compared to this. Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing.

You're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you, Lord. I love you, Christ crucified for me. I'll be here at the front and elders and other prayer team members will be.

If you want to pray about anything at all in your life, linger and we'll pray with you. Now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And all the people said, amen. You're dismissed.

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