

Boast in the Cross of Christ

† Carry each other's burdens (vv.1-10)

† Crucified to the world (vv.14-16)

In the name of Jesus, who bore our sins on the cursed tree, dear Christians crucified with Christ:

Little kids in school and grandparents too have a problem we never outgrow. After we learn something, we feel as if we always knew it. You fifth graders forget what it was like not to know in fourth grade. And what you're learning now, next year in sixth, you'll think you always knew it. Parents sometimes have a hard time relating to teenagers because we forget how hard it was to learn those real life lessons. That's why Dr. Becker liked to remind us, "We must all maintain a healthy respect for our own stupidity." Looking down on others for not knowing what we know means we've forgotten how hard it was to learn. We pray for wisdom today to thank God for our parents and grandparents, pastors and teachers, yes, even our Christian friends who teach us so much. God help us stop boasting in our hearts about ourselves and learn to **Boast in the Cross of Christ** as He teaches us to...

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In too many ways we Christians are still toddlers. You know what toddlers do? They totter and then they topple. Watch a toddler learning to walk. He leans a little too far this way and then sways back a bit until, oops! Too far, and down he goes again. The worst problem for us Christians learning to walk is that sin is always right there trying to reach up and grab your leg to trip you so that you fall again.

That's the kind of sin Paul is talking about here. It's not as if you want to fall down. It's like trying to carry a sixty-pound bag of salt into the house over an icy sidewalk. Sin is cold, it's hard, it's unforgiving. But worse than the fall would be someone laughing or scolding when you go down.

Self-righteous church-goers think like the Galatians, always busy "*biting and devouring each other.*" (Galatians 5:15) Remember the old saying? "If you think there are too many hypocrites in the church, there's always room for one more." Hypocrisy comes naturally to sinners. That's why our Lord's Apostle Paul speaks kindly, but firmly: "*Brothers, if someone is caught in [the trap of] sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.*"

Here's how this works. A new member says something about his former life. An old member blurts out, "The Pastor is not going to like that." Question: How do you know? Jesus Christ is Lord, and we are "*your servants for Jesus' sake*" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Undershepherds of the Good Shepherd want to lead His flock gently. If you hear about sin, don't pass on your Christian duty. (Matthew 18:15-17) God put you there. Don't know what to say? Pray for a humble spirit. Study your Bible. Pray for your fellow Christian, then go back and say, "Remember when we were talking about...? May I say something about that?" I often pray, "When words are called for, let them be the words you call forth from a heart that you've made clean and new." Or as one wise old hymn writer put it, "*And then, when in my place I must and ought to speak, My words grant power and grace, Lest I offend the weak.*" (CW 459:3)

Spiritual people test their own work against the perfect holiness of God's Holy Scriptures. Try it. You'll find a boatload of burdens to bear. Discontent with job and family, impatience with wife and children, materialism, greed, covetousness, selfish ambition, sinful motives, disgusting attitudes – all pop up in the light of God's Word. Your New Man wants better, but the Old Adam keeps tripping you up.

Drag those burdens back to the cross and leave them there. Kneeling at the cross you can see others in need of help. Carrying our own burdens gets us in spiritual shape to help others. If we think like Jesus, the big kids will always be helping the little kids – the way our big Brother Jesus helps us.

He picked up all our bad thoughts and selfish attitudes and carried them outside the city. The dreadful burden of our sins crushed Him under the cross. Your sins and mine He washed away with His holy blood. They're gone, fully paid, in God's sacrifice, fully accepted because Jesus rose again.

Faithful pastors and teachers keep giving us guilt-free peace from God **in the Cross of Christ**. How can we thank God for these servants of His Word? His answer: **“Carry each other's burdens. When you honor them, you honor Me.”** **“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.”** What does it say for the second year our missionaries, professors and synod administrators have their salaries frozen? Are our congregations so focused on local needs that we forget these servants training our future pastors and teachers, and spreading the Gospel worldwide?

Let us heed God's warning: **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”** Baptized we are...

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“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” The size of my church or school, outward trappings of religion mean nothing. **“What counts is a new creation,”** living to please God in **“the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control....Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”** (5:22-24 NIV) God blesses sincere faith: **“Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”**

How can God bless us if we love the things of this world more than we love Him? It's like a farmer keeping all his seed in the barn instead of sowing it on the fields to let God's sun and water make it grow. If you keep God's blessings to yourself, you're like the Dead Sea or a stagnant pond where the water can't get out. Only dead things and mosquitoes grow there. But the more we pour out God's gifts and blessings to help others, especially with God's Word, the more God loves to increase our **“store of seed.”** (2 Corinthians 9:10; Malachi 3:10-12.) This is the opposite of “giving to get.”

My family loves missions because WELS missions brought us the Gospel. And with that Good News came so many other real life blessings. It's awesome how God keeps proving that you can't out give the Giver. It's exciting the way He keeps giving you opportunities to say, “Thank-you, Lord!” Saved by grace, **“we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”** (Ephesians 2:10 NIV) As God guards and guides us, we find many opportunities to repay Him by serving our neighbor. One young dairy farmer liked to say, “It's more fun helping your neighbor with his chores than doing your own.” As Pastor Paul said to the Ephesian elders: **“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”** (Acts 20:35 NIV)

Thank God for **the Cross of Christ**, not only the one where He hung in our place for all our sins. But give thanks for **the Cross of Christ** which He gives you to carry too. When your friends forsake you because you love Jesus, thank Him for His friendship which never goes away. When health and wealth run out on you, give thanks for the chance to be **Crucified to the world** and find new life joy in Jesus again. The blessed **Cross of Christ** reminds us how much we still have to learn. It helps us **Carry each other's burdens**. Soon **“we shall see [Him] face to face....Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”** (1 Corinthians 13:12). Forever we shall **Boast in the Cross of Christ** – and Christ alone. Amen.

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