

# **Trinity 8 - Galatians 8th week**

## **17/07/16 09:30 St Peter Baptism**

## **& 11:15 St Margaret Baptism**

In our churches for the last few weeks we've been reading St Paul's letter to the new emerging church in Galatia, in modern day Turkey. We come today to our last Sunday, as we hear the ending of his letter. Verse 14 says

"May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

I wonder if you have a favourite family photograph? Somewhere in my parents home still stands a rather cute photo of me, looking all innocent on my baptism day. Its one of many photo's of course. It comes out on an occasional basis, especially to embarrass! We all like to boast of our families.

Today's baptisms are a great occasion. Following on from the wedding, perhaps the Christening of the children are the great family occasions. We come together in church, and we then have a great party afterwards. Everyone wants to admire the baby, and congratulate mum and dad. The photo's taken will be shared - these days, Facebook, Instagram etc. will be adorned with the photographic results. And then mum and dad will have at least one photo put up on a wall or mantelpiece to remember the day. For in Charlie [Milo] they quite rightly boast. This is their son.

But St Paul, urges the new Christians in Galatia never to boast of anything except their faith in Jesus Christ. In secret, against the tide of Roman oppression, many of them had found a new faith as they had heard of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They had come to faith themselves and been baptised. But in the midst of new members, and a growing church, the Christian community had begun to squabble and fall out. Who should be allowed to be a Christian? And should new Christian's still follow the strict rules of the Jewish faith, governing what you do, who you mix with, what you eat, etc.? Paul was very clear to the Galatians, there is no division between anyone in Christ. Neither slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male of female. In a world still with many divisions - and how we have experienced some of those divisions in the last few weeks - the Church has a powerful message of unity for the world.

But beyond their unity in Christ, Paul bids those new believers to boast of Christ crucified. For the Christian, the cross stands at the very centre of our faith. It was on that cross we believe that Jesus - God made human - was crucified to restore us back into full relationship with God. So the symbol of the cross has for two Millennia been found worn by Christians, adorning churches and homes. It is the symbol of the cross that will be placed on Charlie's [Milo's] forehead in a few minutes, with the words "Christ claims you for his own". For it is in baptism that countless millions have gone before Charlie [Milo] and been welcomed by Christ into his family the Church.

And we are to boast of that cross. Although a symbol of torture and death, the cross was crucial for God to be able to provide us with salvation - to make it possible for us to be how he wants us to be. So Charlie's [Milo's] baptism today is the beginning of a journey. A journey of faith. As they are promised into God's love today you, as parents and godparents, are charged with ensuring they have the opportunities to grow in this new faith. To teach them the stories of Jesus, to bring them to church, so that later in life they might make decisions to follow Christ themselves. To boast of Christ crucified means therefore to hold before Charlie [Milo], and for each of us to hold before ourselves, the very core of our faith.

We are very good in church of getting caught up in all the paraphernalia of church going - like any institution or organisation, the Church needs administering and managing. But all that can

get in the way of our calling to believe in God, and trust our lives to him. St Paul's letter to the Galatians asks us to place ourselves in the wider context of the family of the Church - not just us here today, but all Christians here and throughout time. Its what we call the Body of Christ. A body that has no 'us' and 'them' - that doesn't fall into the trap of segregating people. The Body of Christ is open to all who put their trust in Jesus. Charlie [Milo] take that step today. And of that we can boast.