

## Galatians 6:11-14 “Boasting in the Cross of Christ”

GAL 6:11-14 “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. 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.”

As Paul now wraps up this letter to the Galatians I’m sure he is glad to bring it to a close as these Galatians were. This has been a disciplinary letter which has painstakingly dealt with the abuse and perversion of the cornerstone of our faith and that is the very gospel of Jesus Christ.

To distort the truth as to how we might be reconciled back to the Father is tantamount to playing spiritual Russian roulette. In fact it’s worse because in Russian roulette there’s only one bullet in the chamber of the revolver you put to your head. In this game which the Judaizers were playing with the Galatians every chamber was loaded. There is no chance of redemption.

If there is any lesson we should take away from this study it is that there is no room for adding to or taking away from the only means by which we can come to God as a friend, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

And as Paul ends this letter he continues to stress the importance of rejecting any aspect of human endeavor to try and earn salvation.

GAL 6:11 “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!”

It was customary for Paul to end many of his letters in this fashion, where he personally wrote the last part of the letter to ensure his readers of his special involvement in what was being conveyed. It also assured his readers that this was not some forgery as the handwriting was unique to Paul.

Now, for the most part, when Paul would write his letters to the church he would use a scribe to pen the letter. Now, the reason for this may have been due to what many believe to be Paul’s poor

eyesight, possibly due to his encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus when he was blinded by the Lord.

In any event he would dictate the letter and the scribe would write it down for him. We see this in a number of places including the book of Romans.

ROM 16:22 “I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.”

But, so as to show Paul’s personal involvement and love for the saints, he would take pen in hand and often times give the final greeting in his letters as he does for the Corinthians.

1CO 16:21-24 “I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. If anyone does not love the Lord - a curse be on him. Come, O Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

And now, as if to add the weight of his apostolic office to this letter to the Galatians, Paul ends in a similar way where he shows his unique penmanship with large letters which were obviously different from the rest of the letter.

But it’s what follows verse 11 that is also unique in this letter. It seems that whenever Paul took the pen from his scribe in other letters it was to give a closing on a high note, an encouraging note. And though the very last verse of this chapter does this, Paul’s closing is really anything but light and fluffy.

GAL 6:12 “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

Unfortunately, the NIV doesn’t capture the play on words Paul utilizes here in this verse. A better translation would be found in the KJV, the NKJV and the NASB. The NASB puts it this way.

“Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

The play on words has to do with the outward act of circumcision and making a good showing in the flesh.

What Paul is saying here is that these Judaizers are boasting of the cutting away of their foreskin and using that to display their spirituality. And so, what Paul means to say is that they are letting

their spirituality hang out, in a manner of speaking, for all the world to see, and now they want the Galatians to join them in such nonsense.

But despite the fact that the Judaizers want to make a good showing in the flesh they only show themselves to be carnal and fleshly in their approach to salvation and sanctification.

But what's interesting in verse 11 is that Paul also shows one of the motivations of the Judaizers in compelling the Galatians to become circumcised and that "is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ."

These Judaizers weren't interested in following Christ. At best they were playing lip service to the Messiah. They didn't want to be identified as those "rebel Jews" who were sold out to the only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They were more interested in making sure their fellow Jews liked and respected them.

And so, whether it was persecution from Roman authorities or unbelieving Jews in their community they only had their best interests in mind, not the believers in the church at Galatia.

As John MacArthur points out, "the Judaizers identified themselves with the church but not with the cross of Christ and therefore not truly with Christ."

The cross of Christ was in a sense repugnant to them because it didn't hold to any of the Jewish traditions and customs which these Judaizers were used to glorying in. They couldn't boast in their own achievements because the gospel tells us that only Christ gets the glory for our salvation.

They couldn't boast in their ability to be better Christians because that is the spiritual work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we submit to Him, knowing that we can only follow because we are new creatures in Christ with a new life and new desires which God put there.

And when the rubber meets the road it is the cross of Christ we adhere to for our salvation, and by the way, when we talk of the cross of Christ here in our text we are not talking simply about the wooden instrument of death which our Lord Jesus was nailed to. The cross of Christ is used as the icon for what Christ accomplished as He died in our place to redeem us with His blood, His life.

He took our sin and gave us His righteousness. That's what took place at the cross and for anyone to try and add to that with their good works, be it through circumcision or rules they make up to ensure our salvation, is nothing short of blaspheming our God and Savior and calling His ability to save men into question.

And don't think for a moment that we can't add our own version of circumcision to the cross of Christ today. There are many people who claim to be Christians who insist, for example, that unless you are water baptized you cannot be saved.

I don't mean to suggest that water baptism isn't important and that out of love and obedience to Christ we shouldn't be baptized, but to teach that baptism is part of the equation of salvation is heresy and must be exposed, even as Paul alludes to when writing to the Corinthians.

1CO 1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

I've mentioned this before but one of the largest religious groups in the world today teaches that unless you are water baptized you cannot be saved. It's the religious group I was brought up in, the Roman Catholic faith.

The other prominent group which teaches a similar heresy is the Church of Christ which makes it clear that unless you are water baptized you cannot possibly be saved.

Now, for the Judaizers in Galatia they were trying to avoid any confrontation with anyone who would accuse them of being religious zealots, "Jesus freaks", if you will. They didn't mind the association with Jesus, but it was in the context of following the footsteps of the Jewish Messiah as He perfectly kept the law during His earthly ministry.

In other words, in their minds, Jesus was a good Jew. And so as not to upset the cart the Judaizers didn't want to be persecuted for something which would distinguish them from Judaism. Put simply, they were cowards when it came to being true believers in Christ.

This was part of their motivation for wanting to make a good showing in the flesh. They were afraid of the circumcision party. And don't think for a moment that any Jew in this day and time,

even a true believer in Christ, wasn't tempted to please his former associates in Judaism.

Remember, it was in this very letter where Paul uses Peter as an example of how a Jew could get caught up in wanting to please other Jews rather than their Messiah Jesus.

GAL 2:12-14 "Before certain men came from James, he [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

I can assure you that at sometime in your walk with Christ you will be tempted, as we all are, to consider downplaying the cross of Christ so that we won't be persecuted for our faith.

Now, in this country persecution may be more benign; maybe a fellow employee at work we want to impress, or a family member we don't want to upset because of our faith in Christ. But at some point we will make a decision not to bring Christ to the forefront because of not wanting to come under any negative scrutiny.

So, let's not think that we would somehow be different when it comes to the temptations these Galatians encountered regarding their Messiah, or even Peter for that matter.

But unlike the Judaizers, Peter did prove himself a true believer as he repented, as he had obviously given his life to Christ. He was not ashamed of the gospel, nor the cross of Christ which accomplished our salvation.

And we shouldn't be ashamed either because it is the power of God whereby men can be saved from the penalty of their sin and reunited to their God and Savior.

These Judaizers, unless they repent, prove themselves enemies of the cross, despite the fact that they are well entrenched in the very church which bears the name of Jesus Christ. But their destruction is sure if they remain enemies of the cross.

PHI 3:18-20 "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of

Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

And so, for these Judaizers, one motivation was cowardice, so as not to be ostracized from their fellow Jews in their community. But they had another motivation which Paul points out in verse 13.

GAL 6:13 "Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh."

This is the dirty little secret which is not often discussed among those whose righteousness depends on obeying the law. Like that outward showing of the flesh, or that outward showing of righteousness by keeping a particular law, what goes on behind closed doors, or in places where others are not around, these same people who boast in the law don't even keep it themselves, nor can they.

These Judaizers were making the case that the Christians in Galatia needed to become like them. They needed to be circumcised, they needed to keep the Jewish holy days, and everything else which is associated with Judaism.

And yet, these same people were not able to keep the law perfectly. They were trying to put these believers in bondage, not unlike how the Pharisees had put God's people in bondage. In fact, Jesus had a word for those leaders of Israel.

MAT 23:15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

But boy, could they boast in that convert. "We got another one circumcised."

This is what was happening in Galatia. The Judaizers were boasting in the fact that they had or were about to convince these believers to become like them. And yet, as Paul points out it's only a boasting in the flesh. It has no spiritual significance whatsoever. None.

In fact, if you want to boast in something why not boast in the one who gave you life? That's Paul's point. Boast in the One who came to deliver you from some fleshly approach to salvation.

GAL 6:14 "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."

What a clear distinction. The Judaizers were ashamed of the cross of Christ and Paul is saying we as believers need to boast in His finished work on the cross, to boast in our great God who is full of mercy and compassion and love.

This is essentially the same thing Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

1CO 1:26-31 "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Paul is saying in our text that because of Christ and His redemptive work on the cross for us we too have been crucified. When Jesus hung on that cross for our sin, it was as though we were hanging there as the penalty for sin was being paid.

When Jesus died on that cross it was as though we died there on Golgatha as we bore the brunt of the righteous and just wrath of the Father. But this is the beauty of the gospel, and what makes it such good news. We didn't have to die there for our sin. We don't have to suffer God's wrath because Jesus did it in our place.

But because we have been identified with Christ's death we are also identified with His resurrection and life. And what Paul means here in verse 14 is that since he has found his salvation, his life, in the cross of Christ, he also realizes that since Christ came to deliver us from the world system of sin and unbelief there is no reason to continue to live in that system of denial and unbelief.

This is what he means when he says the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

You see, in Christ, we no longer belong to the world. And again, that just means that we don't belong to the world in the sense that we will gain the prize this world has to offer. We don't look to the world for any salvation.

In fact, the only prize the world offers is death and destruction which the apostle John points out in his first epistle.

1JO 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does -comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

Well, if the world only offers death and is passing away then how do we overcome the world? Well, John answers that question as well in this very same epistle.

1JO 5:5 "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

And so, as believers in Christ, we may be in the world, but we are not of the world. This world is not our home. It doesn't mean we despise what God has created as we look at His great work of the universe. But when sin entered the world it brought the death sentence not only on man but on all that God created.

The universe itself is in the process of decay because of sin. In scientific terms it's called the second law of thermodynamics; entropy. Just look at your car. If you've ever had to take it in for repairs you have personally experienced the second law of thermodynamics. Everything is breaking down. It is caused by the sin of Adam. Paul addresses this in his letter to the Romans.

ROM 8:19-22 "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

This is in reference to the new heavens and the new earth. This earth will be burned up by God, but from it He will form a new and glorious earth as well as new and glorious heavens; in other words the entire universe will be made new for our eternal pleasure.



We as believers will live in a universe, and in the presence of God, where decay and destruction will be a thing of the past. The new bodies we receive in Christ will be glorious and as Paul says, incorruptible; in other words they will be designed by God to live forever and will never experience decay or death, or anything else associated with this present world.

I get excited when I think that sadness, and grieving and death and sorrow will no longer be our experience with the Lord. I get excited to know that sin will never haunt me, either in its penalty or in its power.

There will be a time in our salvation experience when we will not be capable of having a sinful thought, let alone a sinful action. Now, that won't happen outside of being glorified with our Lord, but it will happen.

When we are glorified, ultimately on the new earth, we will be forever in a state of holiness and righteousness which Christ has purchased for us and this will be our eternal experience with Him.

That's the difference between putting our gaze on this world and the things above. We might as well start getting used to what our eternal state will be because we've already been given the down payment as the Holy Spirit has sealed us for the day of redemption and given us the hope we will one day realize in full.

People today who have their eyes set on this world as the only thing that is important need to realize that this world has nothing to offer. Yes, it may offer wealth and power and prestige for a short time. But what is seventy, eighty or a hundred years compared with eternity?

Is there really any comparison? This was the very question Jesus asked when He confronted the crowds He spoke to.

MAR 8:35-37 "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The only thing man can exchange for his soul is the wages he deserves and has earned in this life outside of Christ. And we know that the wages of sin is death. This is why it is so vital that we never be ashamed of the gospel, because this world needs to hear this good news.

They need to come to grips with the truth as we all have who have embraced Christ by faith. We can't boast even in that because even our faith is a gift from God, but we ought to be boasting in the One who has given us all things in Christ.

This is what Paul is talking about. And this is why he is so upset with the Judaizers. Their message is the message of the world. Their message is that you can do something to earn God's favor and righteousness, and that is simply the lie of the enemy which goes back to the Garden of Eden where Satan convinced the first man and woman to seek after something which would make them wise in their own eyes.

We have so great a salvation and we have the ability and the power in the Spirit to carry out God's will which is to live and demonstrate this life as we bring the message of hope which leads to this life. May we join with Paul.

GAL 6:14 "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."