

A STUDY IN GALATIANS
Part 22 – “The Glory of the Cross”
Galatians 6:11-18

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Today we come to the final exposition of our series through the letter of Galatians. The Apostle Paul uses an interesting reference as he begins to close the letter. He speaks of writing with “large letters.” Understand that he normally dictated his letters (cf. Romans 16:22). Here, evidently, he has taken the pen himself and attached his signature as an authenticating mark of the entire letter. This was not in itself unusual; however, he was not content to simply add his signature. Instead he puts this postscript of great importance for his readers to hear. It is this postscript that we learn some important truths today.

TAKE YOUR BIBLES, PLEASE...

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. (Galatians 6:11-18 ESV).

There is an interesting legend from the childhood of Jesus that is both touching and of interest. It is merely a legend, but it bears repeating as it draws our attention to a very important truth that Paul underscores clearly in our text. It is said that when Jesus was a young boy living in Nazareth he met a man named Fidus who confided his desire to meet Joseph. He said, “I am looking for Joseph, the carpenter. From him I want to learn the art of his craft.” “I can lead you to him,” said Jesus, for I am called the son of Joseph.” As Fidus watched and learned from Joseph, Jesus told him of a great king who would one day be raised upon a thorn so high that all the world would come to see him. Fidus exclaimed, “would that I might build the throne of that great king!” “Fidus,” said Jesus, “you will be the one to build the throne of the great king; the throne from which he shall rule the nations. I promise you.” Years passed, Fidus went home to Jaffa and practiced his trade with honor. He happened to return to Jerusalem on the day when the Jewish capitol was in an uproar. He could hear the cries of “Crucify him! He makes himself a king!” As he passed the gate of Pilate’s palace, a Roman soldier who knew the skill of Fidus greeted him: “You are especially welcome Fidus. Three are to be crucified today, and only two crosses are prepared.” Fidus was assigned the task to construct the third. He put all skill into its making, and viewed the finished product with pride. Later he followed the crowd outside the town and up a hill. He heard a voice, a voice he could never forget. Yes, it was the boy from Nazareth, now a man, but writhing in agony on the “throne” he had made. His eyes opened, and he viewed what he had done.

Though the cross makes no sense to a human's logic, we are called to glory in it. Christians make their boast in that which the first century considered a terrible scandal. It was the ultimate disgrace. To be hung on a cross to die. Yet when Jesus was crucified it became a throne. It became His glory.

Paul expresses this truth in a beautiful way in this very personal conclusion to the Galatian letter. His boasting in the Cross was a very personal thing. It was this consideration of the total impact that the Cross had on his life that prompted the apostle to boast. **The more understanding we have of the Christian life, the more we can Glory in the Cross! The wonder of what was accomplished there should increasingly fill our soul. Since we experience the Cross in the same way as Paul, there are some things for us to learn about this Glory.**

First, We Glory in the Cross Because of Its Impact on Our Relationship to God (v. 14).

How can sinful man ever cover his sins from God? How can he ever hide his sins so that God will accept him into his presence? The Judaizers that came from Jerusalem were emphasizing the law of Moses and the act of circumcision. They believed that God accepted men based on what they did, the obedience of certain rules and the observance of certain rituals. They felt they had accomplished a great work when they circumcised some Gentile seeker. Then, and now, they were wrong. **Any religious system or belief that puts the emphasis on what a man does is wrong.** It is not what we do, but what Jesus has already done that will allow us to stand before a Holy God and be declared right! **There are two principles to note:**

1. **First, Christians glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ because it is there that their relationship with God has been changed.** The cross was the altar placed on the earth that Jesus voluntarily laid himself down as a sacrifice for our sins. He was uniquely qualified for this position because of His person. Notice in verse 14 that Paul uses all three names in association with this uniqueness: **But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.** He is "Lord," which is his divine reference. He is "Jesus," which is his human reference. And, he is the "Christ," which is a reference to being sent by the Father for the task of redemption. He is the promised one. He is the God-man who successfully lived fulfilling every requirement and prerequisite for this "throne." He successfully withstood every test and temptation. The law could find no blemish in him. Therefore, our relationship is no longer that of the condemned, but of the redeemed.
2. **Second, Christians glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ because on it he satisfied every demand of Holy God on our behalf.** He paid the price of ransom for us, which we could not pay in our bankrupt state of sin. He paid it all, When Christians hear the awesome thunder of the judgment of God against sin and realize the awful penalty of the condemnation that they bear because of sin, they also realize the death of Jesus sets them free!

I wonder how many animals were killed in sacrifice under the Old Testament system? We know the first sacrifice was made by God as Adam and Eve were thrust from the Garden. Abel made his sacrifice as the first man and it continued from that point forward in search of acceptance and approval from God. If all of these animals had been killed at the same time, their blood would have run like a river. Their lifeless bodies would have been piled into a heap the size of a mountain! And still man would have had no assurance of the removal of sin. But now, once for all, God had given an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Every demand was met; every issue was satisfied. There was not a jot or tittle

left undone. Should we not glory in the Cross of Christ! In that Cross we have found the forgiveness of sin and acceptance before a Holy God!

Second, We Glory in the Cross Because of Its Impact Upon Our Relationship to the World (v. 14b).

Once you see the cross for what it is, the world can never look the same. This is what Paul meant when he wrote: *by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* By “world” Paul means the world system that was all about Him and is all about us. It included the political and religious systems of which Paul had been a part. **The world may talk about love, justice and brotherhood, but their actions speak clearly of hatred, prejudice and conflict. The world hates God. When you understand this truth, as Paul did, you also understand that friendship with the world is really treason against God.**

F.F. Bruce suggested an interesting translation for the word “crucified” in this verse. He contends that in this context it is a play on words; it carries with it the meaning of “to fence.” Whether this is true or not, the Cross of Jesus was a barrier to the Apostle Paul in regard to his relationship to the world. And, so it should be to us. How could he ever become enamored with the things of the world again? Every time he felt himself pulled in that direction, there he saw the Cross. It was always before him. So it should be for us.

In North Carolina there is a town with a very old and very large cemetery, Calvary Cemetery. For many years the only means of transportation from one end of the town to the other was the train. I was told that for many years, because in that part of town there were many more dead than living folks, the train did not stop at the cemetery except on specific request. Just after leaving the nearest station to the cemetery, the conductor would open the door and announce, “Next station is Calvary. Train stops on signal only. Anyone for Calvary?”

Well, isn't that a parable for life's train? At every other station every train stops. At Market Street, at School Street, at University Avenue, at Main Street, at Vanity Fair, at Broadway, at Home Avenue, even at Church Street the train stops. No special notice is necessary. But, to get off at Calvary, that requires voicing our desire to stop. Don't be deceived, the world would tell you that freedom can be found all along the way from any of these stops, but there is only one stop that will set you free. That stop is Calvary!

Third, We Glory in the Cross Because of Its Impact Upon Our Relationship to Ourselves (vv. 15-16):

Life can be so frustrating. It exposes us so completely to what we ought to be and do, and fails to give us the power to do anything but fail. The religion of Israel had done this to Paul. It had filled his life with a real sense of the Ideal. He knew what God wanted, but he was powerless to achieve it. He failed again and again. Finally he exclaims, *Oh wretched man that I am.* This is where the Cross of Christ comes in to provide us the means to achieve what God calls us to be and do: *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.* **The Judaizers had come offering an alteration of the old man, a reformation of the old man. Everything they did affected the old man externally, but they still left him powerless to do anything significant about his life. They affected his**

body by circumcision, they affected his diet, and his observance of holy days, but they still left him powerless to do anything about his life.

When the Apostle Paul saw Jesus and realized He was the sacrifice for his sins upon the Cross something incredible changed in his life. A new life was released into him so that he became a new creation. Things would never be the same. Now he not only had the knowledge of the Ideal, but a power to move in that direction. This is the Christian view of the Cross.

The Cross is not just the source of death to the world; it is also the source of life in this world and forever. Men who place their faith in Christ alone, in his work on the Cross, find new power to do what God requires and become that which please God. This is Godly character. It is wholly and completely a work of grace through the cross. This is why we glory in the cross!

I have read a story of an American Indian who was in New York City. Walking down the crowded sidewalk, he stopped and said, "I hear a cricket." "You're crazy," said his friend. "No, I hear a cricket. I'm sure of it." "It's the noon hour. There are people bustling around, cars honking, taxis squealing, all of the city's noises and you say you hear a cricket!" "I sure do." He listened intently and then walked to the corner. He looked around. Finally, on the corner in a shrub planted in a large cement planter, he dug beneath the low growing branches and found the cricket.

His friend was astonished. But the Cherokee said, "My ears are no different than yours. It simply depends on what you're listening to. Here, let me show you." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins. He dropped them to the sidewalk and every head nearby turned immediately. "You see what I mean? he said as he started picking up the coins. "It all depends on what you are listening for."

Not only must Christians have "ears to hear" (Matthew 13:9), but we must learn what to listen for. Are you listening for the right sounds? Can you confidently confess that you know all your sins have been forgiven on the basis of His death on the cross, or do you still live a life trying to do what you can to be forgiven? Can you confidently declare that the cross has made a pronounced effect upon your relationship to the world, or are you still trying to live up to the expectations of the law? Trust Jesus alone!