

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-24-14 AM NOTES
"THE BOASTING THAT PLEASES GOD"
GALATIANS 6:11-18
#17 (Final) in Series, "Galatians: Living With Roots"

Galatians 5:4b (NKJV) "...you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace."

1 Corinthians 1:23a (NKJV) "but we preach Christ crucified..."

1 Corinthians 2:2 (NKJV) "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

1 Corinthians 1:18a (NKJV) "For the message of the cross..."

Ephesians 2:16a (NKJV) "and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross..."

Philippians 2:8 (NKJV) "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross."

Colossians 1:20b (NKJV) "...having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Colossians 2:14 (ESV) "by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

I. Boasting in the Flesh (vv. 11-13)

A. Boasting in the Flesh Is Motivated by Religious Pride (v. 12a)

"Liturgies, rituals, and other prescribed religious acts and observances not only have no value in opposing the flesh, but are most often produced by the flesh in order to please the flesh. They give the flesh great satisfaction in making displays of religious devotion that require no heart righteousness or reliance on the Holy Spirit. Because they are strictly superficial, the most fleshly and ungodly person can learn to practice them with skill and feigned sincerity."

—John MacArthur

B. Boasting in the Flesh Masks Cowardice (v. 12b)

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV) "but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."

C. Boasting in the Flesh Manifests Hypocrisy (v. 13)

Matthew 23:3b (NKJV) "...for they say, and do not do."

Galatians 3:24 (NIV) "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith."

"The truth is that we cannot boast in ourselves and in the cross simultaneously. If we boast in ourselves and in our ability to save ourselves, we shall never boast in the cross and in the ability of Christ crucified to save us. We have to choose. Only if we have humbled ourselves as hell-deserving sinners shall we give up boasting of ourselves, fly to the cross for salvation and spend the rest of our days glorying in the cross."

—John Stott

II. Boasting in the Cross (vv. 14-16)

A. The Product of the Cross (v. 14)

"[The World is] the set of people with the ambitions, religious or otherwise, that are not identified with the Lord Jesus Christ."
—Oswald Chambers

"The world refers to all the godless values and hopeless pleasures of the present age. It is unredeemed humanity dominated by sin."
—Philip Graham Ryken

Ephesians 2:2 (NIV) "in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Colossians 1:13 (ESV) "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."

Philippians 3:20a (NKJV) "For our citizenship is in heaven..."

B. The Power of the Cross (v. 15)

Galatians 2:20a (NKJV) "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

C. The Peace of the Cross (v. 16)

D. Conclusion (vv. 17-18)

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NKJV) "²³ Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my* own countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

Colossians 1:24b (NKJV) "...the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church."

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Paul’s accomplished goal for this book was to show the members of the churches of Galatia that living under law and living under grace are diametrically opposed to each other. There can be no mixture of law and grace. It is not just a matter of different doctrine; it is two diametrically opposed approaches to life. Those in the churches of the province of Galatia had to make some choices. They had to choose between the bondage of the law and the freedom of grace. They had to choose between walking after the flesh and walking in the Spirit. They had to choose between living for self or living in biblical fellowship with others, and in today’s text, they had to choose between living for the praise of man or for the glory of God.

For the final time, let me give a brief summary of what was happening in the churches that Paul had planted on his first missionary journey in the province of Galatia (see Acts 13-14 on the details of how some of these churches began and what happened to Paul while he was there). After Paul had planted the churches in Galatia, he grounded them in the fundamentals of the faith, appointed Elders to lead them and then he moved on to other unreached areas to plant more churches. After he left, some false teachers probably from Jerusalem (called Judaizers) came in and began to deceive the people. These Judaizers began to confuse these new converts by teaching them that believing in Jesus was fine as far as that went, but they also had to become Jews (through the rite of circumcision) and keep the Jewish law. Some deceived church members who weren’t truly saved listened to these false teachers and followed their false teaching. Many true believers were being confused and lacked discernment as to what they should do. The message of Paul to these confused churches was that law and grace could not mix! His message is summarized in **Galatians 5:4b (NKJV)** “you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” When it comes both to being saved and to living the Christian life, you can either take the law path (legalism), or you can take the grace path (“not I but Christ in me” Galatians 2:20). If you take the grace path, you have fallen from the law path of being saved or pleasing God through human works or rituals. If you take the law path, you have fallen from the grace path of trusting in the work of the cross and the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You must choose either the law path or the grace path.

In the concluding paragraph of Paul’s inspired letter to the Galatians, he **focuses on the cross** and the central place it has in God’s grace saturated plan to call a bride for His Son and build His church. It isn’t just in Galatians that Paul focuses on the cross. Listen to just a few of the multitude of passages in other Pauline epistles that magnify the cross. **1 Corinthians 1:23a (NKJV)** “but we preach Christ crucified...” **1 Corinthians 2:2 (NKJV)** “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” In **1 Corinthians 1:18a (NKJV)** he spoke of “the message of the cross...” **Ephesians 2:16a (NKJV)** “and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross...” **Philippians 2:8 (NKJV)** “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” **Colossians 1:20b (NKJV)** “...having made peace through the blood of His cross.” We see how all our sins were marked “paid in full” in **Colossians 2:14 (ESV)** “by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

Let’s dive into this text that deals with the cross and why the cross must be the object of our boasting.

I. Boasting in the Flesh (V11-13)

What is the significance of the large letters that Paul writes? It is unclear as to whether he is referring to the whole letter or just this last paragraph. I think he is referring to just this last paragraph. It is likely that a scribe was writing the letter as Paul dictated it and as he came to this last paragraph He took the writing instrument and began to write. This could have several meanings and we can’t be dogmatic about which is

correct. It could have been in his own handwriting to authenticate that the letter was from him and not a forgery. I tend to believe that he was emphasizing the importance of this last paragraph in Greek as in English, writing large letters was a form of emphasis. He was saying, “Don’t miss this last paragraph; it ties the whole letter together.” J. B. Lightfoot said that the purpose of the large letters was, “to arrest the eye and rivet the mind”.

A. Boasting in the Flesh Is Motivated by Religious Pride (V12a)

What was behind this obsession of these false teachers to pull the Galatians away from grace to the law by the outward act of circumcision? Paul says that the motive was to make a good showing in the flesh. Their motive was not to win people to Christ or help believers to grow in grace; their chief motive was to win more converts so that they could brag about them. Their work was a work of the flesh not to glorify God or to help people, but for their own glory. The word “compel” speaks of strong persuasion. In other words, they had a great and convincing sales pitch to convince these Galatians to abandon their trust in Christ and go back under the law – a process that was initiated by the rite of circumcision.

The focus of these false teachers was outward religious acts and not inward love for and devotion to God. True Christianity is not based on participation in outward ceremonies and rituals; it is primarily something inward, something in the heart. While there are outward acts such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper, these are simply confessions and visible portrayals of heart realities. John MacArthur gives a good summary of this truth. “Liturgies, rituals, and other prescribed religious acts and observances not only have no value in opposing the flesh but are most often produced by the flesh in order to please the flesh. They give the flesh great satisfaction in making displays of religious devotion that require no heart righteousness or reliance on the Holy Spirit. Because they are strictly superficial, the most fleshly and ungodly person can learn to practice them with skill and feigned sincerity.” [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, page 197]. Listen carefully: religious activity without a trusting, yielded, obedient heart is an abomination to God. It is a way to boast in the flesh.

B. Boasting in the Flesh Masks Cowardice (V12b)

The very early persecution of the church was by Jews before it was the Romans. Those who are identified with the true Jesus and His cross can expect persecution. **2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)** “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” These false teachers were cowards at heart. They tried to make the Christians think that they too were Christians and they tried to make the Jews think that they too advocated circumcision and the keeping of the law. By doing this they were avoiding persecution by the Jews. That is how cowards act.

It is hard for us today to understand a first century view of the cross. Today, musicians and athletes (many of whom live ungodly lives) proudly display a cross around their neck and tattooed on their bodies. The cross is common on earrings and other jewelry. To a first century citizen, a cross was anything but popular. The cross was the lowest, most shameful means of death known to man. The cross was a mark of shame and rejection. NO ONE and I mean NO ONE would have considered wearing a cross as jewelry or even mentioning it in any conversation. It was revolting and a stumbling block to a first century person. **1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV)** “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness”. The cross was identified as a place of death. The message of the cross is that Christ died for us and our old life died with Him. So the message of the Christian is, “Come to Christ and die”. People aren’t lining up to die, and apart from the convincing and drawing work of God, no one would be saved!

The cross rightly proclaimed brings revulsion, rejection, and many times persecution. The cross of Christ is an instrument of death. It is no wonder that cowards want to puff up the flesh and avoid the cross to insure acceptance and not rejection.

C. Boasting in the Flesh Manifests Hypocrisy (V13)

The Judaizers didn’t even live up to their own standards. They were immersed in hypocrisy. Their approach could be summarized by **Matthew 23:3b (NKJV)** “...for they say, and do not do.” The law (as we have stated over and over in this series on Galatians) was not given to make us righteous; it was given to show us our sin and inability to be righteous before a holy God with our own works. **Galatians 3:24**

(NIV) “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.” The false teachers proclaimed the law as a way to be righteous before God, but they themselves didn’t and couldn’t keep it. They were telling others to do what they did not do themselves and that is what hypocrites do. Paul once again gives the motive of these Judaizers – it was to boast in their converts to their bankrupt religious system that they themselves couldn’t even live up to.

Let me summarize what boasting in the flesh (self effort) does with a quote from John Stott. “The truth is that we cannot boast in ourselves and in the cross simultaneously. If we boast in ourselves and in our ability to save ourselves, we shall never boast in the cross and in the ability of Christ crucified to save us. We have to choose. Only if we have humbled ourselves as hell-deserving sinners shall we give up boasting of ourselves, fly to the cross for salvation and spend the rest of our days glorying in the cross.” [John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, page 180].

II. Boasting in the Cross (V14-16)

While the enemies of the cross boasted in human works, Paul boasted in a crucified, risen Savior. Before we dig into the text, let me share some things about the Greek word translated “boast”. The Greek word has no exact equivalent in English. It means to glory in, trust in, and live for. It is the idea of being obsessed with. “Boast in” is not a bad translation, but you get a clearer picture when you hear Paul saying, “But God forbid that I should boast, glory, trust, live for, or be obsessed except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Of course, he is not speaking of the literal pieces of wood that He was nailed to. He is talking about His sacrificial death and all that it accomplished for us and in us when we see that we were crucified with Him. The false teachers boasted in getting converts to their false hypocritical system of religion that centered on outward ritual (primarily circumcision) and keeping the same law that they did not keep themselves. Paul said, “I focus on. I am obsessed with the cross and what Christ accomplished for me and in me there.”

A. The Product of the Cross (V14)

The product of the cross that Paul focuses on in verse 14 is that we are freed from bondage and slavery to this world system. The word “world” as it is used here is not a place; it is an ordered system of values and beliefs. Sometimes it is called “the world system”. Oswald Chambers defines the world as “The set of people with the ambitions, religious or otherwise, that are not identified with the Lord Jesus Christ” [*The Quotable Oswald Chambers*, page 318]. Philip Graham Ryken describes the world this way. “The world refers to all the godless values and hopeless pleasures of the present age. It is unredeemed humanity dominated by sin.” [Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians, Reformed Expository Commentary*, page 277]. The world values material success, prestige, power over others, and acceptance and admiration by others. The world says that your identity is found in what you have accomplished, what you have amassed, and how much you are admired. The world is destitute of true joy and deceptive in its promises. Yet, apart from Christ, **Ephesians 2:2 (NIV)** says “in which you used to live [before you encountered the cross] when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air [Satan], the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient [those who haven’t come to the cross].” Paul is saying in verse 14 that the product of the cross is that you and the world have parted company! **Colossians 1:13 (ESV)** “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness [the world] and transferred us to the kingdom [the domain and rule] of his beloved Son”. When we are united, placed in union with Christ, we are crucified to the world and its hold on us. Satan, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) no longer holds us in his grip. We are dead to the world’s values and the world’s standard of acceptance and success. Oh the freedom of the crucified life! The world has lost its hold on us. We no longer have to march to the drumbeat of the world. We no longer have to look to the world for our identity. We no longer have to have the world’s approval.

While we are still in this world, it is foreign to us. Our citizenship is now in heaven (**Philippians 3:20a (NKJV)** “For our citizenship is in heaven...”), and we are strangers, aliens, and pilgrims here – not home, but headed home. All of this because of the cross!

B. The Power of the Cross (V15)

As it is used in this context, circumcision represents being made right with God through the power of the flesh. Paul clearly says that the cross has the power to accomplish what the flesh could never do! When it comes to being made right with God, standing righteous before God, circumcision or uncircumcision means nothing. Those two terms (circumcision and uncircumcision) represent the world's systems of religion. Circumcision is legalistic Judaism and uncircumcision represents all of man's religions. They are both incapable of bringing salvation. They all rely on flesh and no man is made righteous before God by the works of his flesh. But the power of the cross is that what Jesus accomplished there makes the believer a new creation. The **J. B. Phillips paraphrase** says "For in Christ, it is not circumcision or uncircumcision that counts, but the power of a new birth." The old life cannot be remodeled or reformed; it can only be killed. That is what happens at salvation! **Galatians 2:20a (NKJV)** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." There has to be a new person to replace that crucified old man. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)** "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Oh, the power of the cross! What human religion and human flesh could not do, God has done through the power of the cross!

C. The Peace of the Cross (V16)

The word "rule" here could be translated "principle". "This rule" or "this principle" refers to the principle of becoming a new creation through the power of repenting of sin and believing on what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross. The rule or principle is the principle of grace and not the law. The rule or principle is trusting on what Christ accomplished in the power of the cross and not what we can accomplish in the power of the flesh.

The result of walking according to the rule or principle of grace is that we have peace and mercy. Human works depended on for salvation shut the door to God's peace and mercy. If you are depending on your works, you are saying that you don't need God's mercy, and if you are depending on your flesh, there is no peace because how do you know that what you've done is enough? I can answer that! What is enough is living a perfectly sinless life – not from this point on, but from birth on. There is no peace from walking down that road!

The "Israel of God" is either a reference to Jewish believers who have come by the power of the cross and have not trusted in their own works, or simply a reference to the whole church. I lean toward it being a reference to Jewish believers who have been born again and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. They are physical and spiritual children of Abraham.

CONCLUSION (V17-18)

The Judaizers had their arguments, but Paul had his scars. What is he referring to concerning the scars? I believe that he is talking about the physical scars that were his from being tortured for Christ. Listen to a list of just some of those scars. **2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NKJV)** "²³ Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--*I am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ *in* weariness and toil, *in* sleeplessness often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness-- ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." Because Satan and his world system can no longer attack Christ directly, he has poured out fury on His church. He is indirectly attacking Christ by attacking His body, the church. Paul called these attacks in **Colossians 1:24b (NKJV)** "the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church".

Do you have any scars? I don't mean from surgery or a bike wreck or a car wreck. Do you have any scars from standing on the cross of Christ? In the late 1800's the students at the University of Glasgow were a tough group to talk to. These arrogant students were known to heckle and verbally abuse speakers who came to the university. But there was one guest that quieted them and left them

in silence. It was Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873), the missionary physician to so many countries in Africa. When the Chancellor introduced Dr. Livingstone they saw his hair burned to a crisp by the torrid tropical sun, his body emaciated because of jungle fever, and his right arm that hung limp at his side and rendered useless by a ferocious lion. AS he stood before these skeptical arrogant students they stood in unison in silent awe of God's missionary. It's hard to argue with scars when they are the body marks of Jesus.