

A WALK BOASTING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

GALATIANS 06: 11–18

Introduction

This passage concludes Paul's letter to the Galatians. Paul's heart was pounding with concern over the Galatian believers and their churches. They had allowed false teachers to enter their ranks, and many of them had begun to listen and follow the false teachers. The churches were on the precipice of deserting God and destroying their witness for Christ and world missions. Usually Paul dictated his letters to a scribe, and when he was through dictating the letter, he closed the letter with a brief blessing and his signature. But note what he did as he closed this letter to the Galatians: he took the pen himself and closed the letter, closed it with a strong exhortation and with a defence of his ministry and of the gospel. He declared in no uncertain terms: believers — minister and layman alike — are to walk boasting in nothing but the cross of Christ.

- I. An important section — Paul himself writes (v. 11).
- II. False ministers make a good impression outwardly — in the flesh — seeking popularity (vv. 12-13).
- III. True ministers boast in the cross of Christ (vv. 14-17).
- IV. Conclusion: a benediction of grace (v. 18).

I. *Galatians 06:11 Paul Himself Writes*

This is an important passage of Galatians, so important that Paul took the pen from his scribe and wrote it himself. Why did Paul write with large letters? Several explanations are given.

1. Because Paul wanted to boldly emphasize the points of what he was saying. It should be noted that this is possible, but the scribe could have done this as well as Paul.
2. Because Paul could not write well, so he had to write in bold print in order for it to be read. This too is unlikely, for Paul was a well-educated man.
3. Because Paul had some kind of eye problem or blurred vision. Of all explanations, this seems most likely. (See 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:14-15.)

There is no question that Paul chose to personally write this section because he wanted to emphasize its message and to verify that he was the true author of the letter. Why he wrote in large print is unknown.

The lesson for us is this: the message of this passage is important enough for Paul to take the pen from the scribe and write it himself. Therefore, we need to give utmost attention to what is said.

II. *Galatians 06:12–13 False Teachers*

False ministers seek to make a good impression outwardly — in the flesh. They seek worldly popularity, wanting to be accepted and approved by the world. Remember: false teachers had infiltrated the churches of Galatia (see *False Teachers*, Gal. 1:6-7 for what they taught). They opposed both Paul and the gospel he preached. Their major stress was that a person had to undergo the basic ritual of religion, that of circumcision (baptism, church membership, etc.). They made circumcision necessary for salvation. If a person was circumcised, he was well on his way to being saved. Paul attacked this position and made a strong charge against false teachers. He charged them with being driven by worldly motives. Keep in mind that he was dealing with false teachers and ministers *within the church*. What he had to say is a strong lesson for teachers of every generation.

1. The false teachers sought to gain the approval of their peers and to escape persecution. They sought the favour of men over the favour of God. Many of the earliest ministers of the gospel were priests who saw Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. However, they accepted Him only as an addition to the law. They said that Jesus Christ came primarily to show how God wants us to live; therefore, He only added to the law. The law was still important in approaching God: we were to approach God through both the law and Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was unpopular in the ministry of that day to proclaim that Christ alone was the way to God. The ministers who proclaimed Christ alone were persecuted through ridicule, mockery, abuse and rejection. A minister who preached salvation through the cross of Christ alone was thought to be destroying both the law and established religion. Therefore, the ministers of established religion persecuted the ministers of the cross. As a result, it took real courage to stand up and proclaim the truth. Most chose the easy way out and went along with the established ministry in order to avoid the persecution.

Thought 1. How many go along with the *established and popular religion of the world* instead of proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ and His Word? How many fear the ridicule, rejection and abuse of the cross? How often is a minister tempted to tone down the message of the cross to keep from offending some in the congregation? How many ministers have to fear reaction if they proclaim the simple message of salvation by faith in the cross of Christ *alone*? How many have to fear reaction from their peers and denominational leaders?

2. The false teachers sought to make a good showing by adding to their statistical numbers (v. 13). Note exactly what Scripture says: they wanted to have people circumcised so that they could boast in their numbers. Their interest was not so much in teaching people to obey the Lord and the law as it was in building up their own security. They wanted recognition through the appearance of a growing ministry. They sought the approval and acceptance of people more than the welfare of the people. Of course, keeping the law and leading the people to obey God was important, just as

every man's teaching is important to him. But their primary concern was the appearance of a growing ministry so that they could secure their own livelihood and position with the people.

Thought 1. People are impressed with increased numbers on statistical growth. Everyone knows this, both religious and lay leaders. As a result ministers are often drawn into the temptation to stress growth in baptism, church attendance, Bible study, programs or activities. Increased numbers...

- build image
- convey success
- open doors
- increase opportunity
- point to gifts and abilities
- stress charisma
- secure position
- income
- boost egos
- enlarge reputation
- help to increase
- attract attention

III. *Galatians 06:14–17 True Ministers*

True ministers boast in the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is the *only boast* of a true minister of God, for there is no other approach to God. God accepts a person only if he comes to Him by way of the cross. There is no other way to become acceptable to God. Therefore, the true minister has no other message, no other truth of which to boast. Paul gave four reasons why the cross is the minister's only boast.

1. The cross crucifies the world to men and men to the world. What does this mean?
 - a. First, the cross crucifies the world to men. The world has all kinds of attractions that appeal to men, and men lust after the attractions. There are such attractions as...
 - position
 - acceptance
 - money
 - sex
 - honour
 - possessions
 - power
 - recognition
 - pleasure
 - food

The list could go on and on to include every appealing attraction on earth, but what is the end of it all? Deterioration, decay, death and a sense of judgment. Even man himself ages, dies and decays. There is nothing on earth that lasts and lives eternally. If man wishes to live forever, someone with unlimited power has to restructure this world. Someone has to destroy the world and remake it, everything in it, including the flesh of man. The glorious news is that God has done this very thing. God has shown that He loves this world, and He has demonstrated His love in the most perfect way possible. How?

God sent His Son into the world to *die for men* and to free them from the world. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He bore the penalty of our transgressions. He took the law's condemnation of death against us and bore the condemnation for us.

Therefore, any person who believes that Jesus Christ died for him shall be saved from

this world of death. God declares that he will count that person as having been crucified with Christ. The person never has to die. When the moment comes for the person to pass from this world into the next, God will transfer the person right into His presence to live eternally. It will all happen within the blinking of an eye. The person who believes in Christ will never die, never taste or experience death.

This is what is meant by the world being crucified to the believer. *The believer never has to go the way of the world*, that is, the way of sin, corruption, death and judgment.

=> Jesus Christ died to deliver the believer from the world, all its bondage's including the bondage of death.

=> The Spirit of Jesus Christ (the Holy Spirit) lives within the believer to give him the power to overcome the world in all its corruptible attractions. Through the Spirit of God, the believer has the power to conquer the lusts of the flesh (sinful nature).

b. Second, the cross crucified men (believers) to the world. What does this mean? When the believer dies to the world, he turns away from the attractions and pleasures of the world; therefore, the believer becomes unattractive to the world. Worldly men do not like what they see, for the believer is rejecting the lifestyle and pleasures of the world. Consequently, the worldly want nothing to do with the believer. They want him out of their way. They want him as non-existent, as a dead person to them. Therefore, when a person comes to the cross of Christ, the cross crucifies him to the world and its ways. He is no longer attractive to the world.

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

2 Tim 2:11 *Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him.*

2. The cross creates a new man. Nothing makes a person acceptable to God except God's very own Son, Jesus Christ. No religion, no law, no ritual — nothing can avail anything with God except Jesus Christ. Therefore, if any man wishes to live with God, he has to *believe in Jesus Christ and approach God in the name of Jesus Christ.*

Now a very practical question arises: How does using the name of Jesus Christ make a person live forever? Does a person become acceptable to God by just approaching God and saying, "God, I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ"? No! And there is one good reason. God knows who is really sincere and who is not. God cannot be

deceived. *Words and false profession* — just using the words “in the name of Jesus Christ” — will not save anyone. A person has to be genuinely sincere.

The point is this: when a person is sincere in his belief, God gives the person a new spirit — a recreated spirit. God actually places His divine nature, the presence of His own Spirit, into the person’s life. The person is “born again” spiritually. He becomes what Scripture calls a *new creation*, a *new self* — *the new man*.

John 3:3-6 *In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Gal 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

1 John 4:7 *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who Loves the father loves his child as well.*

3. The cross brings peace and mercy (v. 16). Note who it is that experiences peace and mercy: those who walk by the *rule of the cross and of the new creation*. A person who walks after the cross, seeking to live as a new creation in Christ Jesus will be given...
 - the peace of God (see *Peace*, Gal. 1:3).
 - the mercy of God. He will experience both the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of God. And most wonderfully, he will be given the *perfect assurance* of eternal life and of God’s care. (See *Mercy*, Eph.2:4-5.)

Note that the church and believers are called “the Israel of God.” This simply means that the church and believers are the true Israel of God, the ones in whom God fulfils His promises.

- 4 The cross gives purpose to the scars of life. Christ had suffered for Paul; therefore, Paul was willing to suffer for Christ. And suffer he did. He bore as much as any man has had to bear for Christ (see *Paul, Suffering*, Cor. 1:8-10 for a list of Paul’s sufferings). The word for marks (stigmata) means the branding marks that masters put upon their slaves. The marks identified the slaves as belonging to them.

The point is clear: Paul had subjected his body so much and suffered so much persecution for Christ that his body bore the marks of such subjection and suffering. He could say that the marks upon his body were the branding marks of Christ — the marks that proved his slavery and service to Christ. Therefore, let no man deny his call and ministry for the Lord. He had strong evidence that he was a true minister of the Lord Jesus: the very marks upon his body. The cross of Jesus Christ drove Paul to serve Christ, even to the point of suffering beyond imagination.

Thought 1. The believer who suffers reproach, ridicule, mockery and other persecutions because of his stand for Christ — that believer bears the marks of Christ in his body.

IV. *Galatians 06:18 Conclusion*

Paul ends the letter to the Galatians abruptly. He will have no more attacks upon his ministry nor upon the gospel of Christ. The churches and their people need to repent and get rid of the false teachers. Until then:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen (v. 18) (See *Grace*, Gal. 1:3) ■