

Final words

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[0:00] See what great PowerPoint slides I have. Did you notice the animation?! See how good that is!

! See what large letters I use, Paul says.! As he takes the pen off his scribe who is writing this letter, he says, look at me, look how big my handwriting is.

Look what my hands can do. Why is he doing that? He's illustrating just how silly things have become in Galatia.

If you haven't been with us so far in the Galatian series or need a reminder, let me fill you in.

Paul is writing to Christians who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through Paul and others who are ministering the words to them. But since then, others have come amongst these churches in the area of Galatia and they've been preaching a different gospel.

[1:17] There is no gospel. There is no gospel at all. If you think that gospel, it means good news. There is no good news in what they're telling them because it's not about Jesus.

It's not about saving faith in Jesus alone. And so they're preaching a false gospel which says, turn back to the Jewish law.

Turn back to Old Testament rituals and ceremonies and sacrifices and whatnot. And then you can really save yourselves. Jesus hasn't done enough for you, they're saying.

And really, what they're doing is described to us in verse 12. Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

They're trying to impress you by their outward show. It's all about them sounding wonderfully super spiritual.

[2:24] They're saying we're being circumcised like Abraham was, the father of the Jewish nation. Look at what we're doing. Verse 13, Paul says this of them, not even those who are circumcised keep the law.

Not able to. Yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. These false teachers are boasting.

They're boasting about you. You have joined their side, their circumcision team. You're following their program, their human program of salvation.

They're boasting about your outward change. But what good is it really boasting in what we are on the outside?

This week, I'm hoping I'll go and get a haircut. And that will change how I look on the outside a little bit.

[3:34] And I could come in next Sunday morning and say, look at my hair. But really, what good is that if I'm not dealing with my own sinful heart?

What good is changing ourselves on the outside in some way if our own character isn't wanting to look to the Lord Jesus?

Isn't wanting to follow the Lord? what good is it and so those big letters of Paul in verse 11 they're completely ironic just showing how very silly it is it's all about outward show when really what matters is in the heart as we're going to see because the message the real gospel, the real good news says you can't do it but Jesus says I've done it for you and that's really the big message in this whole book of Galatians you can't do it but it's okay Jesus has done it for you so how is Paul going to come into land with this letter how's it going to conclude what's the big final thing he wants them to be doing we've got two points to help us to understand firstly boast in your saviour's cross boast in your saviour's cross verse 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

Paul says the solution isn't changing yourself on the outside that's not what you need to be boasting in it's by looking to a wooden cross from 2000 years ago on a hill called Calvary just outside of Jerusalem where the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ gave up his life in the place of people who had sinned against him that wooden cross is where God's judgment on our sin fell upon Jesus instead of us that wooden cross is what we boast in but why would we boast in that you might be thinking why would we boast in the death of somebody who lived centuries before us it sounds a bit weak and it sounds a bit foolish doesn't it that's certainly not what Paul's been saying in this letter about the cross chapter 2, 15, 16 some of the key verses in the whole book I think says this chapter 2, verse 15 we who are Jews by birth are not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ so too have we put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law because by the works of the law no one will be justified

Paul in those verses is revealing regardless of whether you're Jewish or Gentile regardless of whether you're trying to obey God's law or not we still find ourselves as sinful lawbreakers we cannot be justified by the works of the law we cannot be made right in God's sight through that the law reveals to us that we're sinners we're sinners who stand before our holy gods but we cannot stand except through the cross that's where things change for us chapter 3, verse 13 Paul writes this Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole if you follow the law the law says you're cursed really you cannot stand before the holy God and according to what Paul is saying you'd be hung on a pole the curse is death but the Lord Jesus has gone through that curse in the place of sinful lawbreakers by going to a pole or going to a tree going to the wooden cross and was hung there bleeding and dying for us the perfect son of God the perfect man able to represent all human beings in his death for us at the cross

[9:27] Jesus dying at the cross might look weak and foolish on the surface but this really was God's solution God's wise plan to save sinful lawbreakers the cross really is where we see you can't do it all you deserve is that death and that judgment but Jesus has done it for you we boast in the cross that's why we sang I will not boast in anything no gifts no power no wisdom but I will boast in Jesus Christ his death and resurrection we boast in the cross and Paul continues to help us see why we boast in the cross in verse 14 he says at the cross the world has been crucified to me and I to the world that's where we die to the world but what we might think die die to the world

I'm living and breathing in this world what does this mean what are we dead to what does Paul mean he's not meaning to the physical globe where we are living in physical bodies but he's really meaning in a spiritual sense the world in this sense is the things that are against God in opposition to him and his ways and there's three ways I think we have died to the world we have firstly died to the world's way of salvation the world that says you can make things right with God yourself we see that in Galatians you can make your own way to heaven you just need to follow this system of rules you just need to make sure you eat the right foods and celebrate the right festivals on the right day you can atone for your sin you can make yourself right with

God you can make yourself inwardly good that's basically the world's way of salvation in any sort of other religion but we have found the solution to our sin the solution to our broken relationship with God the solution to us heading for eternal judgment is found not in ourselves but in this cross we boast in the cross that says we cannot win our own salvation it's been won for us by Jesus we've died to the world's way of salvation secondly we've died to the world's attitude to God a chapter one and verses three and four Paul says this grace and peace to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age this age that we're living in is evil it's in opposition to God who is not evil he is good and abhors evil the evil that's present in our world is because people have turned their backs on God they've said he's not to be listened to I think Paul makes this even clearer in Romans chapter one just worth turning to for a moment Romans chapter one verse 18 we see there in very stark language how the world is so opposed to God the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth the truth about God by their wickedness since what

may be known about

God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse for although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts darkened we could read on a sad set of verses to read the truth about God the truth about a creator God is made plain all around the world and yet people suppress that truth and they have turned their backs on their creator and you could read on and just see how much of a mess the world is in in that passage how messy it gets when life is not lived under the creator trying to glorify him instead trying to glorify ourselves and follow our own sinful hearts but we have died to that attitude to God and we have seen that he has done so much good we have seen his deep love for us expressed at the cross in the savior the

[15:34] Lord Jesus Christ and so our attitude to God is now one that wants to love him wants to obey him wants to glorify him and thirdly we've died to the world's view of sin remember these final two chapters of Galatians help us to see what it means to live in the freedom that Christ brings to us chapter 5 verse 1 it is for freedom that Christ has set us free stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery we're free being set free from the law which holds us in those chains set free from having that identity as sinners not able to stand before God free to love him free to obey his words Paul says in verse 13 of chapter 5 you my brothers and sisters were called to be free but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh that's the sinful nature rather serve one another humbly in love we're free but that doesn't mean we we want to be indulging the flesh indulging the sinful nature the world around us will say do as you please do as you feel if you feel like being wild and reckless just do if you want to say that lie just do it's okay but now we've come to the cross now we boast in the cross for that's where we're saved and we see just what our sin costs our God we see just what our sin costs the

Lord Jesus Christ it crucified him our attitude to sin our view of sin changes when we come to boast in the cross so we die to the world's way of thinking die to the world's way of salvation their attitude to God and view of sin but there's more in this conclusion in this letter secondly second of two points see what really counts see what really counts Paul goes on in verse 15 neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything what counts is the new creation what really counts now and forever is not that outward stuff that Paul keeps talking about not the circumcision or even using uncircumcision saying I think you're wrong on that

I'm going to go this way what really counts is have our hearts been changed are we new creations have we been made new through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus' work of the cross and indeed then in his resurrection his glorious resurrection from the dead something new is inaugurated Jesus rose from the dead and elsewhere in the New Testament he's described as the first fruits of resurrection as in the first bit of the harvest like if you talk about tomato plants don't know why last week talk about them again if you're growing some tomatoes and you get that first juicy red delicious tomato it's a sign of the fruit that's going to come and that was the case with Jesus' resurrection a sign of what's coming many people being raised to new glorious life we're going to be resurrected in new bodies in a new world we might have died we might have died to the world's way of thinking but we are not now dead folks we are the most alive people in this world we're new creations but that doesn't mean we stop and wait for that future new creation to come we sang of the

Lord Jesus' glorious appearing in the future we're not just sitting around and waiting for that to happen a bit like Christmas Day is coming isn't it I don't think any of us are just sitting around and waiting for it to arrive we'll be doing things to get ready we'll be buying presents we'll be decorating the house we'll be buying the turkey whatever it is we don't sit around and just wait for Christmas to happen and so too in the Christian life the new creation in us doesn't begin when Jesus returns it begins now what really counts Paul says is the new creation that God is making us new we're reminded of some of that new work that he's doing when we looked to the fruit of the spirit a couple

of weeks ago in chapter 5 22 the spirit is within the believer and working these wonderful fruits in us working new creation in us the holy spirit is at work continuing to convict us of sin continuing to help us fight against it as we have this new view of sin holy spirit is shaping us to be more loving more gentle more kind more self controlled we're being made new it won't be completed in this life it won't be completed until that glorious return of the

Lord Jesus but it is happening and that's a wonderful thing we're new creations and that's what really counts Paul continues in verse 16 peace and mercy to those who to all those who follow this rule to the Israel of God Paul talks about rules a rule a rule that we find in the Lord Jesus Christ look away from yourself and trust entirely in Jesus work to bring salvation to you trust that he is the one who brings this new creation in us but he talks about the Israel of God what's that about I think we could spend a lot longer talking about what this little phrase means but I think he's mentioning it here because those false teachers remember they're saying you need to be like an

[23:09] Old Testament Jew you need to do these things but in Jesus in the New Testament we see that Jesus comes to do something new we've thought about new things already and one of the new things that he's doing is creating a new humanity people made up of Jewish and Gentile people people from all over the world being one in Christ and so in the Old Testament Israel was known as the people of God now the new people of God are any that come to boast in the Lord Jesus is Christ death and resurrection for them so follow the rule follow the rule of boasting only in Christ and you will be part of this Israel of God and so do we see do we see here this morning what really counts do we see this morning that only boasting in the cross of Jesus to save you that's what counts do you see that finding the life that he offers us now and for eternity is what really counts in this life

Jesus said didn't he those very famous words you could gain the whole world and yet forfeit your soul you could gain all that this world has to afford great riches a wonderful loving family a wonderful home a good reputation you could have it all and yet you'll lose your soul if you don't boast in Jesus only to save you I struck at the Olympic Games last year in Paris just how many athletes seemed to be giving glory to God for what they were doing they'd made it to the Olympic Games they were winning medals why would they be giving glory to God surely giving glory to themselves and their own achievements one of those

Christians was a diver in the synchronized diving British athlete Andrea I'm not going to pronounce her surname and before the game she was interviewed and she said these words I feel like sometimes as athletes our identity depends on whether our competition has been good whether we perform well whereas for me my identity is so is in Christ and it's so total and set in stone that it doesn't matter how my competition goes whatever happens I just give it to God it would mean a lot to win an Olympic medal of course but it wouldn't change who I am it wouldn't change what my core beliefs are not amazing someone who sees what really counts is the work that

God is doing in her that she's a new creation that she boasts in the Lord Jesus Christ and because of that because of that day that good Friday where Jesus died her identity is secure and that's the same for all of us who are boasting only in the cross of Christ that's what really counts our identity is in him and what he's done and what he is doing through us and in us as he makes us new but there is just a very little warning if we're going to be people who boast in Christ who are being made new there's a very little warning in this whole passage really that if you want to live an easy life if you want to be really popular if you want to be free from opposition then don't be a

Christian because the way of the cross is suffering verse 12 those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised so they're preaching another gospel the only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ those false teachers among the Galatians they're deceiving these believers they're saying don't look to Jesus to save you look to yourself that's very popular message and they're doing that and in doing that they're avoiding the opposition of the gospel but Paul says this Paul has a different attitude verse 17 from now on let no one cause me trouble for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus now don't mishear that as some sort of strange mystical event where Jesus marked him but no they are scars from beatings imprisonment stonings all for the sake of making known the cross but Paul says it's okay because what really counts is that I stand as a new creation in Christ and in his work for me at the

cross and I will keep making the cross known and I might be persecuted for it but this is God's way of salvation it might seem weak and foolish to the world around us but this is good news and so I'm going to keep declaring it and keep trusting that

[29:27] God will be at work in people and God will open people's eyes to see the cross as the most wonderful thing event in history that says you can't do it but I have done it for you and then Paul ends the letter with these words verse 18 the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers and sisters amen they had forgotten hadn't they the grace of God but Paul all the way through is reminding them of it and that's where he ends the grace of God has been shown most wonderfully at the cross in which we boast in where sinners who do not deserve any good from God find that God loves them and has taken their place our place has borne the judgment we should face that's wonderful grace and today is still the day of salvation whilst we can call today today people can still be saved people can still come and find that grace and maybe you're here this morning you haven't yet found that grace the Lord

Jesus is still offering that life to you today the solution for your sin for eternal life it cannot be found in you but only in this cross that says God has done it for you and he loves to welcome sinners to himself and we're going to be reminded of this together in this communion meal but first of all let me pray and then we'll sing a song a song Thank you.