

Boast only in the Cross

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome to the service this morning. We serve a faithful God.

I know that I do. This week, Pastor Wayne was scheduled to speak this morning, and so I was not prepared to come up and to share.

And on a Friday afternoon, he gives me a call and shares with the health issues that his father-in-law is going through and that him and Sadie wanted to travel to Edmonton to be there with them.

And so he said, I guess what I'm doing is I'm gearing you up for Sunday, he says. And so, you know, right away, the mind wants to worry about it.

You know, how am I going to get something ready in so short a time? I'm not ready for this, and yet as we submit ourselves to the Lord, he proves his faithfulness.

[1 : 14] And so this morning, I do have some notes ready, and so I'll share what the Lord has given me. Thank you, Jacob, for reading the text for us this morning, and as well as for the songs chosen this morning as well.

So many lines in there speaking about the cross of Christ, and that is what I wanted to share on this morning as we wrap up the book of Galatians.

I've titled the message, Boast Only in the Cross. And so Paul speaks of the cross here and how this is what he boasts in.

And so the portion of Scripture we're looking at here this morning is Paul's closing thoughts in this letter to the Galatians, and he summarizes the letter in these final verses and just kind of gives an overview of what has been the content of the letter.

And so the three things that I'll look at this morning is the legalizers or the false teachers' viewpoint, and secondly, what Paul's stance is, and then lastly, a blessing for believers.

[2 : 52] So looking again at verses 11 through 13, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand. As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. And so Paul begins here by taking the pen in his own hand.

And this is something he was known to do. There's a couple more references throughout some of the letters that he has written of him, in the end, taking the pen in his own hand.

And he would usually have someone else write the letter for him. He would give him the words, and this person would write the letter for him. And then in closing, Paul takes the pen himself, and he makes mention of it as well, that this is in my own hand now that I am speaking to you.

And so with handwritten letters, as these churches receive these letters and they look over it and they would recognize the last portion of that letter to be, oh, this is Paul's handwriting.

[4 : 13] This is Paul writing. And so that is what he does here. And he says, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand.

And so there's a couple different viewpoints on that, either regarding the length of the letters that he writes, how he really digs in and writes these letters to deal with situations in the churches.

Some others say it's maybe, you know, as Paul talks about he had a thorn in the flesh, and some believe it was his eyesight. And so was he, you know, could we tell it was Paul writing because of the size of the letters?

He had to write larger letters so that he himself could see what he was writing. Unsure of the exact point with that, but regardless, Paul just verifying that this letter comes from him and putting his own personal touch on it in the end.

Some other examples of where he does this is in 1 Corinthians 16, 21, Colossians 4, 18, and 2 Thessalonians 3, 17. I thought we'd just return to that one, or turn to that one, and read that one.

[5 : 33] So 2 Thessalonians 3, 17. And so he writes, the salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle, so I write.

And so just a sign is to verify that, yes, it is Paul writing. This is his letter. So continuing on from there, the Judaizers, the false teachers that were pestering the Galatian churches, they were desiring to make a good impression, Paul says.

They desired to make a good showing, and so they wanted to make a good impression, and their motive, they were outward focused.

They were focused on the things of the flesh. They wanted to make a good showing in the flesh. And Paul continues, he says, these would compel you to be circumcised.

And so to compel, it means to drive or to urge with force or irresistibility. And so these false teachers were using force, not physical force, it doesn't mention that, but with their urging and trying to present a case that is irresistible, that these Galatians would turn to what they were teaching.

[7 : 16] And so they were using this force, you know, urging the Galatians to become circumcised. And they do this for two reasons, Paul says.

The first reason, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. They didn't want to suffer persecution.

So, a question that came to my mind, does the cross of Christ bring persecution?

Well, Christ promised it did. If we look at John chapter 15, verse 20. John 15, verse 20.

Jesus speaking, and he says, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

[8 : 27] If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. So in the middle of that verse, if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

So I promise from Christ that there will be persecution in the cross of Christ. If we follow him, there will be persecution. And then as well, Paul spoke about it in Galatians chapter 4.

Chapter 4, verse 29. But as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, even so it is now.

And so, in regards to the, he's referencing the struggle between Isaac and Ishmael. And so it's a reflection of the persecution on believers in the world as well.

And so persecution comes with the cross of Christ. And it shows, that cross, it shows the need for a perfect lamb sacrifice to be the solution to mankind's sin, to man's sin.

- [9 : 45] And so, the cross reveals that man is sinful. And so if man is sinful, his sin brings him under God's curse.
- And Christ bore the weight of that curse on the cross. And finally, that also brings about the fact that man cannot earn salvation.
- And so when these things are revealed to us and we understand it, this knowledge, it humbles man. And therefore, they hate the cross and everyone who would proclaim it.
- Secondly, in the case here of the false teachers in Galatia, they wanted a reason to boast. boast. And it is to boast in numbers in verse 13 of our text. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.
- [11 : 17] Boasting. It is based on pride. and the Judaizers here wanted to glory.
- They wanted to boast in the number of conversions that they were able to do in converting these people to Judaism. Paul's argument here is that even those who are circumcised, which is, is Israel, right?
- It was a command to Israel to be circumcised and they were faithful in doing that. And yet, Paul says even those who are circumcised do not keep the law.
- And so, if we look back into the Old Testament and we read about the children of Israel, you know, how often they failed in keeping the law.
- They could not do it. And so, that's what Paul is telling him to do. He says, look back into history. You know, what good will turning to the law do? No one could keep the law.
- [12 : 30] And so, his question then is, do you think you will keep the law? You won't. Without Christ, you will fail miserably in trying to keep the law.
- You won't. we don't necessarily struggle with circumcision as much as the early church did.
- But a parallel that we can maybe make today and apply to us more so would be the tendency to take pride in counting the number of people that we have led to the Lord.
- It is good to lead people to the Lord. We are called to do it. And, like yet, if the flesh would take over then we would maybe count how many people we have witnessed to and we know that they've made a decision for Christ and we're keeping score.
- And so, the danger of boasting in that. I don't feel that it's an issue here in our midst today and yet it is a present danger with us and so something to be on guard about.
- [14 : 00] As the church of Christ, the body of believers, we are commissioned to spread the gospel. It is what we are called to do.
- And if there's those that come to us and they ask for help in coming to the Lord, we need to be ready and willing to help them.
- But just as I mentioned, the danger, we must take care never to boast in it or even to keep track for that matter, to count, to keep score.
- the number of people that we've been involved with in leading to the Lord. So, the Judaizers, you know, wanting to make a good showing in the flesh, not wanting to suffer persecution for the cross of Christ, and they wanted to boast as well.
- So, it is a habit of mankind to want to boast. So, as believers, what then can we boast in?
- [15 : 25] Paul shares something here that he boasts in. It is the cross of the Lord, of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In verse 14, but God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

The one and only thing Paul says that he will boast in. God forbid that I should boast in anything else, he states. So, another question, why is the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the one thing that Paul boasts in?

Why the cross? Why the cross? And the simple answer to that is what the cross had accomplished in Paul's own personal life.

Paul had been where these Judaizers were. He had compelled people to turn to the law and he had even gone beyond the methods of these legalizers here in Glacia.

He had used force, physical force. And so as Paul reflects on his past where he had been, no wonder he says that of sinners he is chief.

[16 : 56] He had been a chief troublemaker for Christians and yet now he was on the other side. He was one of the Christians.

Before he had despised the cross of Christ and now he was boasting in it for he knew the difference that the cross made.

God because of the Savior who had carried that cross, had hung on that cross, had bled on that cross, and had yielded up the ghost on that cross, Paul was a changed man.

The world now meant nothing to him and he in turn meant nothing to the world. God and that was fine. Each believer here this morning can identify with Paul.

We all have our own story, a past that we're not proud of. Thankfully, it's in the past. We no longer live in the past.

[18 : 10] We look forward. forward. Our story is continuing, but it is a different story today. And as we take a look at our own walk, our own life, our own story, it's evident where the change within us happened.

It happened the day that we came to the foot of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is there that we met the perfect sacrificial lamb and we surrendered our lives to him.

In that moment, the burden of our sin was lifted away from us and left there at that cross. The Holy Spirit entered into our hearts and he resides within us even today and he is teaching us God's ways.

Are we boasting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? We ought to be. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation.

Paul writes very plainly here in verse 15. In Christ Jesus only one thing matters. That is a new creation.

[19 : 49] Being born again. This one verse it is the gospel. It is salvation. Being a new creation. experiencing a new birth. It makes no difference to Jesus if you are circumcised in the flesh or not.

It has nothing to do with your good works outweighing the bad. if you're in Christ the fruit should be evident but at the end of the day what will matter is that you are a new creation.

Have you been to the cross? Did you meet your Savior there and make him Lord of your life?

this is Paul's stand. He boasts in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ not alone.

[21 : 08] And he stands by the fact that salvation is only by faith in Christ. There are no works that are added to the salvation plan.

The fruit of our new birth needs to be evident and yet in order to be born again does not require any works.

It requires faith. Lastly to wrap up the letter Paul closes the letter with a promise of blessing in verse 16.

And as many as walk according to this rule peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Brethren the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. So closing with a blessing he's saying that everyone who believes in and walks in the gospel of Christ will have peace and mercy.

[22 : 31] Salvation consists of one thing believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting the free gift that he offers. When we accept that free gift we become a new creation.

We have a new nature and with that new nature we have a changed mindset as well. We desire to live for the Lord to do his will and so we walk accordingly and the fruit of the spirit that Paul mentions in chapter 5 is the evidence of the change within us.

We must bear fruit in our walk. As we journey on in this life God's peace and mercy goes with us and it is upon us.

The assurance we have that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us and he is coming back to take us home gives us a peace that the world does not know.

We also know all of our shortcomings. Do we deserve mercy? mercy? No, we do not.

[24 : 06] And yet God sees us through his son and his mercy upon us is new every morning and we are blessed by it.

So the blessing from God upon us, peace and mercy, it goes with us. In verse 17, it seems Paul takes a shot at the false teachers.

Actually backing up to the last part of verse 16 already. The final words there, and upon the Israel of God. The Israel of God.

Who is the real Israel of God? Is it the physical descendants of Abraham who fell in the wilderness, who were time and again taken into captivity for rebelling against God and continually failed to keep the law?

No, they are not the Israel of God. The Israel of God are all those who, like Abraham, have faith in the Lord and believe Him.

[25 : 34] Circumcision of the flesh does not put you into this camp. Circumcision of the heart does. In verse 17, Paul touches on the attack of his apostleship.

He started his letter with that by addressing that, how his apostleship had been attacked, and he defended himself, and he circles back to that here as well.

And he's saying, you know, you want proof of my apostleship? My body bears the marks of the persecution that I've endured, all because of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul lists many of the persecutions that he has endured. 2 Corinthians 11, and verses 23 through 30.

Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am more. In labors, more abundant.

[26 : 51] In stripes, above measure. In prisons, more frequently. In deaths, often. From the Jews, five times I received 40 stripes minus one. 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. 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. In weariness and toil. In sleeplessness often. In hunger and thirst. In fastings often.

In cold and nakedness. Besides the other things what comes upon me daily. My deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak and am I not weak?

[27 : 49] Who is made to stumble and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. Many things that Paul had gone through and yet if I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.

Where did these persecutions come from? From coming to that cross of Christ and to identify with that and to identify with Christ.

That is what brought on the persecution and so therefore he would boast and boast in nothing but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally in verse 18 of our text, brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen. Amen. He finishes with brethren. the stress that they have caused, you know, the hearing, the reports of what's going on and the fact that many of them are thinking of turning to Judaism.

Still, Paul's love for them shines through and he calls them brethren. Along with the peace and mercy that you are blessed with, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

[29 : 27] Amen. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, we bow before you this morning. Lord, we are thankful for your peace and your mercy and your grace.

And Lord, we are thankful that you loved us so much to send your son. You sent him for one purpose, to give his life upon the cross.

Lord, we just thank you for the symbol of that cross and for what Christ did upon that cross that he paid for the sin of the world.

Lord, and that when we come to the foot of that cross and we meet Jesus there, we are confident of our salvation.

Our life has been bought back and we are righteous and holy in your eyes. And so, Lord, as we continue living on here in our earthly bodies, we know we fall short and yet your spirit indwells us and it teaches us and leads us in all truth.

[30 : 56] And we have work to do. We are to share the gospel with others. We are to bear fruit, to give evidence of the change within us.

And so, Lord, help us to, like Paul, boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.