

What was one of the first things that you did as a kid on Christmas morning after you opened your presents? You probably spent some time playing with all the new toys that you got, but then what were you itching to do? If you're like me, you probably wanted to go and do some **boasting** with your friends: "Let me tell you what I got for Christmas..." You probably couldn't wait to wear that new outfit and **show it off**. While we probably didn't think about this as children, isn't it true that what you boast about often reveals what you treasure in life?

Transition: Our text today is the last passage in Galatians where Paul summarizes the main themes of the letter and challenges the Galatians to stay true to the gospel. Specifically, he calls them to imitate his example of boasting exclusively in the cross of Christ.

The Point: Reject legalistic Christianity by embracing and boasting in the cross of Christ.

Let Galatians 6:11 set the tone for our time today:

- 6:11 is the place in Galatians where Paul takes the stylus from his secretary's hand (a common practice) and finishes off the letter himself. Paul specifically draws attention to the large size of his letters. Why? He wanted to emphasize and highlight what he wanted to say in his conclusion, namely, his recap of the central message of the letter and his personal investment in it. You do the very same thing to do when you want to get your message across (ALL CAPS, boldface type, etc.).
- We should read these concluding verses with a heightened sense for understanding Paul's message that he so strongly wanted the Galatians to receive.

I. Avoid the Self-Centered Boasting of the Judaizers (6:12-13).

Read 6:12-13

Paul's Main Opponent: the Judaizers

- It is fitting for Paul to revisit his concerns with the Judaizers because this was the main stimulus for writing this letter.

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7).

Their Error:

- They require circumcision for salvation. Paul's issue isn't with circumcision per se but with the salvific ramifications that the Judaizers attached to this act. They believed that unless you were circumcised according to the law of Moses, you cannot be saved (Acts 15:1).
- Paul has spent the majority of Galatians defeating this proposal:

"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal. 2:21).

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them'" (Gal. 3:10).

"Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made" (Gal. 3:19).

“Is the law contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law,” (Gal. 3:21).

“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith,” (Gal. 3:24).

- The law is now obsolete because that to which it had pointed has come, Christ. The shadow is no longer needed now that the real substance has arrived, namely, Christ. Justification is by faith alone in Christ alone.

Their Motivation:

- First, they want to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ (6:12)

“But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed,” (Gal. 5:11).

- The offense of the cross is that there is nothing you can do to make yourself right before God. The message of the cross is, “Look at what God has done in Christ and believe.” Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Jesus + Nothing. But, if Paul was still preaching that people had to be circumcised, then the offense of the cross would be removed and human pride in human effort would return.
- Second, in order to avoid persecution, they boast in their Gentile converts (6:13).
 - They wanted to brag about how many Gentile Christians they had converted into Jewish proselytes.
 - Their boasting was turned inwardly on themselves and self-serving. They were only concerned for their own safety and well-being. They craved praise and attention.

Their Hypocrisy:

- Not only is their doctrine heretical, their practice is hypocritical. They do not keep the very thing they require of their converts.

Personal Application

- Theology Matters. Watch out for false doctrine. Know the Word.
- The Praise of Others is Alluring: it’s so tempting to do ministry for the praise of others. This is a warning to ministers of the gospel today. Is your boasting in your ministries self-centered and self-serving or is it Christ-exalting?
 - It’s tempting to change the message in order to attract more people.
 - It’s tempting to change the message in order to avoid public scolding today.
 - The only way to escape the temptation of pride is to daily crucify your flesh with its passions and desires (5:24).
- Guard against hypocrisy: God is after genuine and authentic followers of Christ.

II. Boast Exclusively in the Cross of Christ (6:14-18).

Read 6:14-18

- Contrary to the Judaizer’s boasting, Paul’s singular passion is to boast only in the cross of Christ.

The Exclusivity of his Boasting

- Paul says he will *only* boast in the cross of Christ.
- All other boasting should be a boasting in the cross.
- Everything good and everything bad that God turns for God was purchased for you in the death of Christ.

The Content of his Boasting

- This statement is shocking because it's like saying: "Boast only in the electric chair. Only exult in the gas chamber. Only rejoice in the lethal injection. Let your one boast and one joy and one exultation be the lynching rope" (Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life*, 49-50).
- The cross is one of the central messages to the Galatians:

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Gal. 1:3-5).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13-14).

The Gospel Prohibits Boasting

- The message of the cross is that you can't save yourself and you can't do anything to be righteous before God. Jesus alone is righteous and he is your perfect sacrifice paying the penalty for your sins. The cross destroys self-centered boasting!!!

"God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God," (1 Cor. 1:28-29).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast," (Eph. 2:8-9).

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord," (2 Cor. 10:17).

"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness," (2 Cor. 11:30).

The only way to boast in the cross is to live on the cross

- Until we are crucified, our boast will be in ourselves.

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

- When Christ saves us, his death ". . . becomes the death of our self-exulting life. We are raised to newness of life. What lives is a new creature whose single passion is to exalt Christ and his cross" (Piper, 56-57).
- Paul was crucified with Christ, the world was crucified to him, and he was crucified to the world.
- To be crucified to the world means to walk in the light, bear the fruit of the Spirit, and live in the freedom of Christ.
- It is our job to live and speak in such a way that others see the worth of "Christ crucified" and they savor it as we do.

As you boast, cherish the benefits of the gospel

You are a new creation (15).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come," (2 Cor. 5:17).

- God didn't just revive you and bring you back to life; he completely re-created you with a new nature and a new system of desires, affections, and habits.

- This new creation is not the result of some external spiritual rite; it is an internal work of the Spirit of God when you believe.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love,” (Gal. 5:6).

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’” (Gal. 5:13-14).

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law,” (Gal. 5:22-23).

You are part of the new Israel (16).

- “Israel of God” is found only here in the NT.
- This is Paul’s last shot at the Judaizer’s and he implies that “. . . what the Judaizers were claiming to offer his converts they already have ‘in Christ’ by faith: that they are truly children of Abraham together with all Jews who believe, and so properly can be called ‘the Israel of God’ together with all Jews who believe” (Longenecker, 299).

“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (Gal. 3:7-8).

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:28-29).

“But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4-5).

Paul’s Concluding Remarks:

- 6:17: Paul’s own life bears witness that he has been crucified with Christ. He has been branded. He’s no fair weather Christian (2 Cor. 11:23-27). To follow Jesus faithfully is to embrace persecution.
- 6:18: Grace (mercy and peace) be with you, brothers. He still considered them brothers in Christ.

Conclusion: Christmas morning will be here before you know it and there will be many things to boast in: presents, friends, family, chocolate covered pretzels, cherries, cookies, and cakes. Will you say and practice with Paul, “I will only boast in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ!” Everything, and I mean everything good in your life and everything bad that God uses for God, was bought for you on the cross. Boast in Him! Praise Him! Exult in Him! If this is going to happen, you must die!

- Have you been crucified with Christ? Are you a new creation?
- How will you daily live on the cross by faith in Christ?