

Galatians #22

February 02, 2025

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace**Today's Message: Rejoicing in the Cross of Christ; Galatians 6:14-18**

As Paul wraps up his letter to the Galatian churches, he finishes by contrasting distinct religious views. The first religious world view is that of human achievement and the second being that of divine accomplishment. The first world view, which found its formation at the fall of Adam and is still present today, was summarized in our last sermon from Galatians 6:11-13 where Paul concludes by exposing the motives of those Judaizers who desired to draw people away from the sufficiency of Christ and His work for our justification. It seems clear to me that Paul was certain that this drawing away from faith alone in Christ alone for justification was not merely an accident or incidental mistake. He went for the spiritual heart of the Judaizers and went so far as to accuse them of seeking the conversion of Gentile Christians to some form of Judaism. Of course, as he wrote in 6:13 they did this for the purpose of boasting in the *marks of conversion*, namely, circumcision.

Our text today the Spirit of Jesus working through Paul provides a pithy rebuttal to anyone who argues that human achievement will somehow bring us to God. Paul makes clear the distinction between the futility of human achievement and the divine accomplishment of our justification which comes to us as a gift from God the Father through Jesus Christ according to His divine accomplishment on His cross for our justification. Paul rests upon the work of Christ and the transforming power of His cross and not on the works or efforts of mankind.

With one last effort in 6:11-18 Paul aims to persuade them to reject any notion of the value of human achievement and to instead embrace the perfection of God's divine accomplishment in Christ. The former is empty, useless and vain, boasting in a conversion that rests on cutting the body by human hands. The latter, a divine work of spiritual cutting on the inner man by the holy Spirit.¹

In our text today we will consider 1) Why we boast in the cross of Christ alone; 2) The origin and significance of the new creation; 3) The marks that count; and 4) Paul's meaningful blessing upon the Galatians believers.

I) **(6:14) Why we boast in the cross of Christ alone.**

- A) It is Christ's cross and Christ's accomplishment on the cross.
 - 1) Paul has been arguing that boasting in human achievement means nothing. It is empty, vain.
 - 2) Yet here, he repels against the notion that he would ever even for a moment boast in himself or his accomplishments.
 - (a) Remember Philippians 3:7-10
 - (i) He took no comfort in his former accomplishments. Powerful, but worked in the flesh.
 - (ii) He took comfort in the perfect and complete person of Christ and His performance!
- B) It is the cross of Christ which demonstrates God's power and wisdom.
 - 1) Read 1 Corinthians 1:22-24
 - (a) It is through Christ's death that His people are justified through faith.
 - (i) Romans 3:21-25a
- C) It is at the cross that the great exchange took place. Our sins imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed to all who believe.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 5:21
- D) It is the cross of Christ where we see the most vivid demonstration of the love of God!
 - 1) Romans 5:8

¹ Of course, I'm alluding to circumcision, which involves cutting. One is physical and outward; the other is internal and spiritual. One is done by human hands, the other by the Spirit. See Romans 2:28-29

- 2) 1 John 4:10: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the propitiation for our sins.”
 - (a) At the cross Christ suffered the complete wrath of God on our behalf and at the same time satisfied God’s justice on our behalf. (See also Romans 3:25-26)
- E) The cross was Paul’s boast because as he said in Galatians 5:11, that if even a smidgen of human achievement is entertained as a reason for acceptance before God, then the offense of the cross has been abolished!
 - 1) The offense of the message of the cross is that “God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness” comes through faith in the divine accomplishment of Christ on the cross.

(Please read Rms 5:15-19)
- F) In the cross of Christ the believer dies to the world and the world dies to the believer.
 - 1) Simply put, the cross of Christ, by faith, separates the believer from the damning influence of the world, the flesh and the devil!
- II) **(6:15-16) The origin and significance of the new creation.**
 - A) “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; the only thing that counts is a new creation.”
 - 1) The new creation is a divine work through the Holy Spirit. (See John 3:5-8)
 - 2) Human achievement counts for nothing. You can mark your body, beat your body, cut your body but it is ineffectual for gaining any eternal benefit.
 - (a) Self-improvement means nothing apart from faith in Christ alone!
 - 3) The New Creation is a completely a divine accomplishment. Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again! (Jn. 3:3)”
 - (a) There is nothing good in the flesh (Rms. 7:18). No amount of human effort, resolve or works can provide a suitable foundation upon which to build a new life.
 - (i) People need an entirely new life, a new birth, an new creation!
 - (a) “Therefore, if any man ins in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). This new creation is perfectly fit for fellowship with God the Father and for citizenship in heaven!
 - 4) The New Creation is pleasing to God: “the aroma of Christ to God (1 Cor. 2:15a)
 - 5) The New Creation “lives by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25a)”
 - (a) Therefore, we are to keep in step with the Spirit. And we can through dependence on Him!
- III) **(6:17) The marks that count in a believer’s life.**
 - A) The marks of Christ!
 - 1) Not the marks cut into a man’s body, or disciplines beat into the body.
 - 2) The marks that accompany a believer who follows Christ even at the expense of suffering.
 - 3) For Paul these marks were literal scars on his body; evidence of faithful service to Christ.
 - (a) Scars, wounds from beatings, from being stoned, whipped, and shackled all b/c he gloried in Christ and Him crucified!
 - (i) Whenever a believer is persecuted for his faith, it is truly Christ they are persecuting!
 - (a) Remember Acts 9:4, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”
- IV) **(6:18) Paul’s meaningful blessing upon the Galatian believers.**
 - A) In this letter Paul has held nothing back that would be beneficial to them.
 - 1) He presented Christ to them.
 - 2) He pleaded with them.
 - 3) He reprovved them in hopes of bringing the Gospel of Christ into clear focus for them.
 - B) In this loving blessing Paul was placing these Galatian believers under the watchfulness, and gracious tender care of the Lord Jesus who bought them with His own blood, loved them by becoming their sin sacrifice, and keeps them from falling!
 - C) Our faith must be in Christ alone. For no one will be justified by observing the law! (Gal. 2:16)