

Date: 4 June 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 6:11-18

Title: Boasting In The Cross

Introduction

- We come to the last passage of Galatians. Remember that the Galatian churches were planted by the apostle Paul. The churches in Galatia had been troubled by false teachers. They taught that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone was not sufficient, but instead you must also keep to the rituals of the laws of Moses. Paul was very upset with such wrong teaching because when you're wrong on the gospel, then you are wrong on the core of the Christian faith. And we have seen in the past few weeks that all other religions of this world are work based. We have to stand firm. Make sure that the gospel is not perverted. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone.
- We come to the very last part of the epistle to Galatians. In this last part, the apostle Paul wants to round up by asking his readers to make a stand for the gospel. **We have to make a stand for the gospel!** Justification is by faith in Christ alone, not by your works. The death of Christ alone save. There's no other way to be saved except the death by the death of Jesus Christ. Be convinced of that truth. Stand firm in the liberty of the gospel, live a Spirit-led life of holiness, show forth practical love. Be convinced that the death of Christ alone saves.
- So as Paul closes this epistle, how does he summarize things? He reminds us of three things. Three things that he had already covered in the earlier parts of the epistle, but he wants to reemphasize them as he closes out. Let us consider these three things.

I. Three reminders (11-15).

- The perversion of the gospel is a serious matter (11). The first thing that Paul wants to remind us of is that is that the perversion of the gospel is a serious matter. **Read v11.** Many have debated what Paul actually means in saying this. It was the practice of people in those days to have a personal secretary, often called the amanuensis, e.g. in 1 Cor. 16:21, Col. 4:18. Some say that it was because of problems with his eye that he wrote large letters. And we see that he indicated he had an eye problem in 4:15. But the main reason which no one disputes is that the large letters provided emphasis! Paul is saying that he writes this letter with his own hands because of the seriousness of the things he has written about. From the start, we saw how serious the matter was when he wrote. **Read Gal 1:9.** Paul wrote as an apostle and he wrote also as a spiritual father who was concerned for his spiritual children. He was concerned over the seriousness of the gospel. The importance of defending the true gospel. And what is that true gospel. It is that Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Not by works, less anyone should boast. It is the perversion of this gospel that Paul was so concerned about. We ought to take this seriously as well.
- Do not be drawn away by the false teachers (12-13). Secondly, Paul emphasizes to not be drawn away by these false teachers. Consider what they are like in v 12 and 13. **Read v12-13.** At least three things can be said about these false teachers.
 - (i) they compel others to keep to rituals (12 cf. 4:9-10; 5:2);

In other words, the false teachers compel you to pervert the true gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone. How we are we justified? Not by our words, not by our effort. We are unable to save ourselves by our efforts. The only way of salvation is to repent and have faith in Christ who died on the cross to pay for the sins of his people. That is the only way. Even today we have false teachers are saying that that is not good enough. You must keep the rituals of Moses such as circumcision. **Read 5:2.** This outward signs count for nothing. Resist that. Don't allow them to compel you. You are not justified by any works. Whether is by raising your hand, or walking up the aisle, or saying a specific prayer. None of that saves you. It is only by trusting in Christ finish work on the cross that you become a Christian.
 - (ii) they avoid the persecution for the gospel despite not being able to keep the law perfectly (12b, 13a cf. 5:11; 2:16; 3:10-11);

When you keep to the true gospel of justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone, it will lead you into persecution. The Christian life is not going to be a bed of roses. When the Lord Jesus Christ was alive on this earth, he already warned his disciples that if they do so to the master, they will do the same to the disciples. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12 “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”. If you are a true Christian, you will be persecuted. The false teachers were avoiding persecution for the true gospel, and that is why they pervert the gospel. They themselves are not able to keep the law perfectly, but yet they teach others that keeping the law necessary for salvation.

(iii) they boast of how many converts made (13b cf. Matt. 23:15).

Paul is saying is that the reason why they want to get you circumcised is because they want to use you as their trophies. These false teachers want to show that they have won you over to their point of view. That they have so many converts. Beware of them. We know from Matt 23:15, that the Jews were known for going around the world, making proselytes converting people. And parade them as a matter of pride. A true Christian will desire to win souls to Christ. It is not to parade ourselves as successful missionaries or pastors. No! We don't go to MIT to parade ourselves. Our concern is for the souls of those people. If they are not converted, they will be condemned in the eternal fires of hell. It is because of our desire to be faithful to our God, to fulfill the Great Commission. It is to God's glory and for the good of souls that we preach the gospel, not to prove to the world that we are good preachers. We don't use numbers to show our success. In fact, we would like to keep a low profile and be faithful. May use us as vessels of his. If there are people who come to faith, glory be to god.

- Hold on to the only way of salvation (14-15). Unlike the false teachers, Paul would boast only in the gospel, i.e. “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (14). So, what then must you do? You must hold on to the only way of salvation. **Read v14- 15.** Paul is saying to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Boast in the gospel that salvation is not by our own effort. Salvation is all by the grace of God, freely given to us. God shows his mercy on undeserving people, that he sent His only begotten son to die in this world. That whosoever believes and have faith in Christ Jesus, shall not perish but have everlasting life. Therefore, if I'm saved, it is not because of any good in me, it is because God has shown His mercy upon a sinner like me. And in return, I want to boast in Jesus Christ. He has done it all. I will want to talk more about him and what he has accomplished by his death on the cross of calvary. Boasting of the worldly kind is excluded because it has been put to death when one is united by faith to Christ in His death.
- To those who are “in Christ Jesus”, i.e. united to Him by faith, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any value, but new life in Him (4:4-6; 5:16, 16). And what is the effect of Christ death upon us? Paul says “The world has been crucified to me. And I to the world”. When he died on the cross, he died for us because we have trusted in him. It is as though Christ has died in our place. That means our life on this earth, with all its sin is dead. We are set free from the bondage of sin. It does not mean that we become perfect overnight, but we grow in sanctification. All of us who profess faith in Christ has to live more and more life that is separated from the values of this world. When we are saved, we are to imitate Christ. To live in a life that is in the world, but not of the world. It is in that way that we can be light of the world and salt of the Earth. If you're a worldly person, you need to examine your soul. Because if you're worldly, that means you're still in love with the world and with the flesh. And you haven't allowed the world to be crucified.

Paul speaks throughout his epistles, he's talking about the Union that we have with Christ. “The world has been crucified to me and I to the world”. In the whole process of Old Testament thoughts and faith and theology. There was this idea of the Fellowship of believers in the household of God. If you're a Christian, Christ is in you and you are in Christ. What does that mean? Somehow I am related spiritually to another human being who lived 2000 years ago. That I am in Christ and he is in me. That's not like we're saying that that Jesus lives in my heart, like in my memory. No! There is a transcendental spiritual reality that God speaks

about, that Jesus Christ dwells in your heart. And that I am not just covenantally related to Jesus, but there is a real spiritual union between me and Christ. And that's why we have the doctrine of the communion of Saints. Because if I'm in Christ and you're in Christ; and Christ is in me and Christ is in you. And what does that say about our relationship? We have this solidarity. A special spiritual communion that transcends the flesh and transcends the world.

Paul goes on to say “for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything”. That's what he's been saying throughout the whole Epistle. The Galatians wanted to make everything hinge on do's and don'ts. And what Paul is saying here, you've missed the whole point of the gospel. You're not saved by circumcision. You're not saved by not being circumcised, and the final judgment is not going to matter whether you're circumcised or uncircumcised. But what matters is there is a new creation. We regard no one according to the flesh. If anyone is in Christ. He's a new creature. He is free from the bondage of the law. :Therefore, hold on to the way of salvation!

II. Final benediction (16-18).

- May the gospel blessing of peace & mercy be upon all true believers (16). Peace is reconciliation with God (cf. 1:3). Mercy refers to forgiveness in Christ (3:13-14, 26, 29). We come to the final benediction. May the gospel blessing of peace & mercy be upon all true believers. **Read v16.** The Israel of God is not a reference to the Jews who are by physical descent. Throughout this epistle, Paul has been referring to the true believers as the true Israel. In Gal 3:7 we are told “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” And in v9, it says “so then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham”. So who are the descendants of Abraham? All those who have faith in Jesus Christ are spiritual descendants of Abraham. And the true Christians are the ones that make up the true Israel. And Paul is saying ‘may the gospel blessing of peace & mercy be upon all true believers’. They are “the Israel of God” (3:7, 9, 26, 29; 4:30-31).
- From now on, let those who are stubbornly in error bear their own guilt (17). And Paul concludes this epistle by saying in v17. Paul is not asking the Galatians to stop bothering him or that they were a trouble to him. He is saying don't focus attention on me. All this while my purpose is to serve the Lord. And that is why the marks of Christ are upon me. Focus on Christ and preaching the true gospel, rather than on me.
- May the grace of Jesus Christ be with all who contend for the faith (18). Then the most tense final benediction that we find in the Epistles of Paul comes at the end. Read v18. See that grace of God will keep you also in the faith. Justification is by faith, not by works. Salvation is by grace, not by your effort. That same grace keeps us in the faith, helping us to live holy & useful lives for Christ. And Amen means “may it be so”. When we say Amen at the end of the prayer, we are saying “God, please let this be so”.

Summary & Application

- Do not add, subtract, or distort the gospel of Jesus Christ & Him crucified. Boast in the cross! Do not allow the true gospel to be added, do not allow the true gospel to be subtracted from, do not allow the true gospel to be distorted. Keep the gospel of Jesus Christ & Him crucified as it is. It's such a serious matter. When the gospel is perverted, it affects not only yourself, it affects those at the church, it affects the faith. Lean on to the true gospel. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. God declares you're not guilty not because of your works, but because of faith in Christ. There simply is no other way of salvation. Boast in the cross. Don't boast in yourself. Don't try to win converts just to make a name. But rather have a true heart of believer that we are saved by grace and therefore we would like to see others similarly saved. When people are saved, we praise God that his mercy is abundant to undeserving sinners.
- Two ways seen in the world, justification by faith, or bondage by works. Trust in Christ crucified! There are only two ways of salvation that are found in the world. And the vast majority teach you to do good by your own effort. They enter the broad gate and easy road. That leads to destruction. It is the way of human effort. It is the way of do's and don'ts. But the narrow way is the way of Jesus Christ. You come as you are. Don't try to

make yourself better, but just come humbly acknowledging your sin before God. Come and cling to Jesus Christ. Trust in him because his death on the cross alone saves sinners. Come to him, because salvation truly is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone. May God deal mercifully with us all.