

## **“Glorying in the Cross”**

July 3, 2011

Text: Galatians

**The story is told of a Russian farmer who, on a tour of American farms, came to one in Texas.**

The Texas farmer bragged to his guest that he was able to grow 160 bushels of corn per acre on his farm.

Not to be outdone, the Russian claimed that he got 165 bushels per acre on his land.

The Texan: “My harvester is equipped with air conditioning.”

The Russian came right back=> “The climate where I live is so mild all year round, we don’t even use air conditioners.”

The Texan: “I can get in my truck in the morning, drive all day, and still not reach the end of my property before sunset.”

The Russian: “Yeah, I once had a truck that ran like that.”

**At the end of our Scripture text last Sunday, Paul said that the Judaizers circumcising Gentile Xns in Galatia did so=> “That they may boast in your flesh” [Gal 6:13].**

The Bible uses the word “boast” in 2 different ways=>

\* It says that boasting can be evil, when it’s based on pride.

E.g. the Judaizers’ boasting in the Galatians’ flesh meant they were proudly implying they had saved the Galatians’ souls by persuading them to become circumcised as Jewish proselytes.

But Eph 2:9 says that salvation is=> “*not as a result of works, that **no one should boast.***”

\* On the other hand, boasting in the works of God is good.

But in that case it takes on a whole different nature/character.

There it means to exult in the Lord, to find one’s confidence in Him, and to rejoice in His grace and goodness.

In today’s text, that is how Paul will use the word “boast” in the closing remarks of his letter to the Galatians.

Some lexicons translate “boast” as “glory in.”

**Paul is going to conclude this epistle with 4 postscripts...**

**\* 1<sup>st</sup>, I glory in the cross because, although religious deeds can’t save anyone, it can.**

[Galatians 6:14]=> “*But may it never be that I should **boast**, except in the **cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which **the world** has been crucified to me, and I to **the world.**”*

I.e., the Judaizers boast in your flesh, but “*may it never be*” (an emphatically negative statement) that I should ever sinfully boast like that.

**The Judaizers’ boasting was typical of “the world”—Satan’s evil system of values/beliefs by which he rules mankind.**

It includes all manmade institutions/cultures, values/perspectives, designed by Satan to get man to pull away from God, and to trust-in/focus-on himself, instead.

This evil system interprets life for man thru the lens of pride.

At its core is Satan’s own rebellious hatred of God.

The “world” holds out rewards for those who will live according to its dictates, & it has punishments for those who won’t.

So the spiritually dead walk according to the course of this world (Eph 2:1-2), & will be condemned along w/ it (I Cor 11:32).

But Jesus has told believers that we no longer belong to the world any more than He does (Jn 17:16).

So we shouldn't walk according to the world.

In fact, 1 Jn 5:4 adds—“*Whatever is born of God **overcomes the world**; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our **faith**.*”

**The world has its own religious systems—in fact, all religious systems except Xnity derive their nature from the world and belong to the world.**

They are designed to accommodate human-pride/the-flesh.

People in worldly religions have to ask themselves, “How do I stack up, spiritually? How well am I doing?”

To feel secure in a worldly religion, one must keep checking himself to see if he is working at it hard enough.

That's how Paul thought, while he was still part of Judaism (which, by his time, had become a worldly religion).

E.g. in Gal 1:14 he wrote=> “*I was **advancing** in Judaism [working so hard at it that I was getting ahead] **beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.**”*

As a Jew, Paul had real bragging rights.

In Phil 3:5, he describes himself as=> “*Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; / as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless*” (5-6).

**But when X saved Paul's soul, he abandoned worldly religion.**

He stopped trying to earn his salvation with religious enthusiasm and religious deeds, & simply believed Jesus for it, as a gracious/unearned gift.

So in the very next verse (Phil 3:7) Paul wrote=> “*But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss [disadvantage] for the sake of Christ. / More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, / and may be found in Him, **not** having a righteousness of **my own** derived from the **Law**, but that which is through **faith** in Christ, the righteousness which comes **from God** on the basis of **faith**” (7-9).*

Suddenly Paul was catapulted into a whole new perspective, in which good works meant absolutely nothing, and God's grace meant everything for his salvation.

He gloried/reveled in the fact that Jesus had saved his soul for no other reason than undeserved grace/love.

There was/is no place for anyone's boasting in his own religious merits/assets, advantages/accomplishments.

Paul lost his worldly taste for religious pride/boasting when he was converted, as if it too had been crucified w/ X on the cross.

And all the rest of the world's values died along with it in his heart.

His faith in the atoning death of Jesus X on the cross had completely changed his way of thinking and the nature/object of his boasting.

**Not only did Paul abandon worldly religion, he began to glory and exult in the cross of “our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Every word of that title sets forth the majesty of our Savior=>

- \* He is Lord—so He deserves our obedience/worship.
- \* He is Jesus the Savior—so let us trust/love Him for saving us.
- \* He is X the Messiah—so we must loyally reverence Him.
- \* He is “ours”, if we’ve been led by the HS to believe-in & trust Him.

Despite His sinlessness, the world crucified Jesus as a felon.

And yet God has used His death to bring us eternal life, and so we (like Paul) glory in that extraordinary truth.

- \* We glory in the Cross because it has justified us from our sin, through X’s sacrificial/atoning/substitutionary death.  
*“[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21).*
- \* We glory too in the Cross because it has become our hope/confidence, our rest/peace, our joy.  
It relieves our conscience, lifts our spirits, ennobles our lives/aspirations, gives us a whole new outlook/direction in life, & inspires our love for X.
- \* Another reason we glory in the Cross=> It excites our wonder at the wisdom/genius of God, as He showed us mercy without violating the justice of His own nature.  
Jesus was subjected to divine wrath that was due us, so that God might be both  
*“just & the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26).*  
As a result, He has mercifully removed our sins far from us, while remaining just, Himself.
- \* We glory in the Cross, because by it we have experienced God’s love in a wonderfully personal way.  
One minute we felt the unbearable weight of our sin/guilt.  
The next minute, He lifted that burden off our hearts, & renewed our souls out of His love for us.
- \* And we glory in the Cross because it is the greatest moral power in the universe.
  - \* It makes immoral people morally upright, as philosophy never could.
  - \* It tames human depravity/savagery, as science never could.
  - \* It humbles the haughty, lifts up the fallen, gives the hopeless new hope, & melts our fear of death.

**The world was crucified to us when we became saved, and now, what we once saw as its charm, is dead to us.**

It is such a corrupt system that it crucified the most righteous/beloved Man who ever lived—the Lord of glory—so we and the world have nothing and want nothing more to do with one another.

Just as Paul did, we’ve come to view it as a felon, deserving to die, condemned for its evil character.

Its pleasures are defiled, and it is a rotting carcass nailed to a cross, whose final death will be a blessing to mankind.

Can you imagine Paul going to the Coliseum, watching as the corrupt world of his day entertained itself with the gruesome tragedy of gladiators killing one another?

It would have grieved him deeply, & made him sick.

He must also have loathed the sexual immorality for which cities like Rome/Pompeii/Corinth were famous.

How do you suppose Paul would have feel about the R-rated entertainments broadcast daily in our media today?

And yet by that means, many of us Xns indulge in the things of the world because inwardly we love it.

**Does the world no longer have any influence over a Xn?**

No—when we are walking according to the flesh, we do place ourselves under its influence once again.

But its constant dominion over us has been broken at the cross.

We are to keep on crucifying the world to ourselves, just as we are to continually crucify the flesh.

The Bible tells us to come out from the world, creating enough intellectual/emotional separation between ourselves/it to limit its influence over us.

I Jn 2:15=> *“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

We are to set our minds on things above, not on the things of the earth (the world—Col 3:2).

**Paul adds that, just as the world had become crucified to him, he had become crucified to the world.**

The people around him who lived according to the world’s principles/values viewed Paul’s life as one not worth living.

He/they were as good as dead to one another, since their perspectives/values were such opposites from his own.

He was an object of contempt for those who treasured the things of the world, and as far as they were concerned, his was a useless, even offensive, life, that no longer deserved a place on this planet.

The cross of X should so change a believer’s perspective that what the world views as treasures, he views as worthless trash.

What it views as worthless, he considers eternal treasure.

Many of the world’s CD’s/movies that celebrate its corrupt values should become really foreign/offensive to him, causing him to reject them and separate himself from their world, because light can have no fellowship with darkness.

**Now Paul provides a specific contrast between Xnity and the worldly religion of Judaism=>**

It (like all worldly religion) deals only w/ external formalities, while Xnity achieves actual regeneration/transformation of man’s heart through the H.S.’s power.

**[Galatians 6:15]=>** *“For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”*

**The religions of the world can only deal in externals.**

In Judaism, one of those externals was circumcision—which is an act of man, a religious work.

By contrast, true Xnity transforms man’s nature by making him a new creature, through a miracle of the H.S.

This is a divine, inward work of grace that was only made possible by the finished work of X on the cross.

Paul and the world's religions (illustrated by Judaism) were dead to one another, because those religions considered outward works of the flesh (such as circumcision) very important. But Paul had learned the truth=> they were a meaningless waste of time.

The only thing that has any real significance is what God alone can do in man's heart, making him a new creation.

2 Cor 5:17=> *"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

In terms of salvation, that's all that really means anything.

Circumcision doesn't matter, baptism doesn't matter, confirmation doesn't matter, last rights don't matter.

No outward act that a person does in his own flesh makes any difference at all, for the salvation of his soul.

Only man's becoming a new creature can change his sinful heart, as the H.S. enables him to cry out by faith to Jesus for forgiveness, and new birth.

Gal 5:6=> *"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."*

Paul gloried in the cross because it alone has the power of the HS to do what all the other religions of the world cannot do=> regenerate a person, making him/her a new creature, with a new nature, and new righteous standing before God.

Only the crucifixion of X on the cross has the power to accomplish this spiritual miracle, as it's described in Titus 3:5=> *"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration & renewing by the Holy Spirit"* (a spiritual miracle).

This is the essence of true Xnity, & it leaves us glorying/rejoicing in the cross, the world having been crucified to us, and us to the world.

**Again, Paul is adding final thoughts at the end of this epistle:**

**\* 2nd, I glory in the cross because only it brings peace/mercy.**

[Galatians 6:16]=> *"And those who [lit. "as many as"] will walk by this rule [live their lives, glorying in the Cross], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."*

**Paul says that anyone (whether circumcised/uncircumcised) who continually glories in the cross of X (as he does)**

**will revel in God's goodness/blessings—His peace and mercy.**

There is no main verb in verse 16, so we can't be sure whether Paul is wishing for peace/mercy to be upon those who glory in the cross;

Or declaring that they definitely *will* have peace/mercy.

I believe he means both, and in the broadest possible sense.

When Paul says, Peace/mercy be on those who walk by this rule, *"and upon the Israel of God,"* he's not talking about 2 different groups, but 1 group, which he describes in 2 different ways.

Those who glory and trust in the cross are the Israel of God.

"Rule" lit. means a surveyor's measure, but it is used metaphorically in Scripture of a principle.

So Paul is saying, those who conform their lives to living by God's rule/standard of faith in X's cross—to them be peace/mercy.

And he's also saying that they are the true Israel of God.

"The Israel of God" would usually refer to the Israel of the OT.

But in this dispensation, believers (both Jewish/Gentile) have become the Israel of God, and will remain so, until we are taken out of the world by the Rapture.

God has not abandoned Israel, but believers (whose heart He has circumcised) have become recipients of Israel's spiritual blessings.

Phil 3:3=> *"We are the true circumcision [the true Jews, the true Israel of God], who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."*

"Peace and mercy" always alluded to times of blessing in Israel.

The Israelites longed for those times when God would mercifully give their nation peace, and bless them w/ prosperity/abundance.

E.g. you hear that in the closing words of Psa 128=> *"The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. / Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!"* (128:5-6).

I.e., may God protect you from your enemies, so that you can live and flourish in peace.

When the Church temporarily took Israel's place in God's redemptive plan, it gloried in the peace/mercy of God it had received through X's cross, in which it flourished spiritually.

So "peace and mercy" became part of a Xn greeting.

E.g. 1 Tim 1:2=> *"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."*

2 Jn 1:3=> *"Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father & from Jesus Christ."*

Jude 1:2=> *"May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you."*

Mercy/peace form the sense of wellbeing that is ours because of what X accomplished on the cross.

It is God's spiritual protection/salvation, prosperity/wholeness, graciously given to believers.

In our own text, Paul is wishing for and predicting these blessings on all those who fall back on God's grace, seeking His favor through faith in X's cross, & not thru circumcision (or any other humanly good work).

This holds true for Xn Jews/Gentiles alike, because, as Paul said in Gal 3:28=> *"There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

### Review

Paul has said, "I glory in the cross because..."

\* It saves souls (unlike religious deeds)

\* It brings mercy/peace to people's souls.

**Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> postscript as he closes this epistle=>**

**\* Don't make me say all this to you again.**

**[Galatians 6:17]=>** *"From now on let no one cause trouble [burdens/hardships] for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."*

**This is Paul turning back to the Galatians in all his apostolic authority, and setting them straight once/for-all.**

\* He is telling the Judaizers to leave him, his-ministry, and his Galatian converts alone.

\* He's also telling those converts to stop departing from the truth, *"deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel"* (as he said back in Gal 1:6).

Paul had many other churches that needed his help, so he didn't want to have to keep rebuilding the doctrinal foundation in Galatia, because of the Galatian Xn's inconstancy.

### **Why should the Galatians stop causing Paul trouble?**

**The answer=> Because he bore Jesus' landmarks on his body.**

The region of Galatia was the center of Cybele worship—a pagan goddess, whose temple had slaves attached to it, on whose bodies her name had been branded.

Paul says, "I have Jesus' landmarks on my body," and by that he was prob. referring to the scars of wounds inflicted on him for preaching the gospel.

Undoubtedly, some of those scars resulted from the Galatian Jews having tried to stone him to death.

So Paul is warning both the Judaizers & the true Galatian believers, "When you cause me trouble, you cause trouble for the Lord Himself, because I'm His slave, and I have the landmarks to prove it."

**Paul's 4<sup>th</sup>/last final postscript=>**

**\* You are my brothers, so I wish you the best.**

[Galatians 6:18]=> "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen*" (not your "spirits" but your joint "spirit" as a church that should be doctrinally unified).

**Back at the beginning, in verse 14, Paul had used this exact same phrase—"our Lord Jesus Christ"—to emphasize the full majesty of our glorious Savior—Jesus Christ.**

He is our Master, who owns us, & deserves our service.

He is "*Jesus*", our Savior.

He is "*Christ*", our Mediator/King/Messiah.

It is an immeasurable blessing to be an object of the kind regards (the grace) of One so excellent/mighty, but yet so loving/kind/tender.

As Paul uses X's full title again, the word "*our*" reminds the Galatians that he truly believes both he/they share the same saving relationship-with/loyalty-to, Jesus (at least, most of them do).

Moreover, he addresses them as "*Brethren*," a term of endearment Paul reserves for believers. Here it allows him to tenderly restate what he has assumed from the beginning=> that they, like he, truly are members, by grace, of God's family.

In Gk, the first/last positions in a sentence receive the stress.

"*Brethren*" is the last word before the "*Amen*," so Paul has saved that position to emphasize the fact that he is writing to people he considers to be his brothers in X.

Paul has just lowered the apostolic boom on them, commanding them not to make him confront them again like this.

Now, in his final benediction, he reassures them of his love.

**As in most of his letters, Paul wishes for X's grace to be with them, but not simply with them—w/ their *spirit* (their innermost person).**

This whole epistle has been designed to persuade the Galatians to shift their thinking from external things (like circumcision) to the internal realities of the spirit/heart.

So as Paul is concluding, he takes one last opportunity to remind them of that.

**Paul began our text=> "*May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"**

There is intensity—even indignation—in those words, that anyone might seek to rob Jesus X of the honor/glory due Him, for having died on the cross to redeem us from sin.

Paul can't stand the thought that someone might actually try to substitute circumcision or any other manmade, flesh-driven, worldly religious activity—in place of X's death on the cross.

His heart grew hot, and his mind flashed at such audacious and intolerable presumption. The cross we celebrate around the Lord's Table is the center of all our hopes & holy affections, & the place to which we always gravitate for peace when our hearts are troubled.

**[Communion]**

## ***“Glorying in the Cross”***

July 3, 2011

Text: Galatians

1. The Bible uses the word “boast” in two different ways: Boasting can be evil when it is based on pride; on the other hand, boasting in the works of [8 God] is good.

Gal 6:13; Eph 2:9

**Paul is going to conclude his epistle with four thoughts...**

**\* First, I glory in the cross because, although religious deeds can't save anyone, it can.**

**[Galatians 6:14]**

2. The Judaizers' boasting was typical of “the world”—Satan's evil system of values and beliefs by which he [12 rules] mankind.

Eph 2:1-2; I Cor 11:32; Jn 17:16; I Jn 5:4

3. All religious systems except Christianity derive their nature from the [12 world].

Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5-6; Phil 3:7-9

4. When Christ saved Paul's soul, he abandoned [16 worldly] religion.

5. Not only did Paul abandon worldly religion, he began to [12 glory] and exult in the cross.

II Cor 5:21; Rom 3:26

6. The world was crucified to us when we became saved, and now, what we once saw as its charm, is [10 dead] to us.

Col 3:2

7. Paul adds that, just as the world had become crucified to him, [6 he] had become crucified to the world.

**[Galatians 6:15]**

8. The religions of the world can only deal in externals; true Christianity transforms man's nature by making him a [8 new] creature through a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

II Cor 5:17; Gal 5:6; Titus 3:5

\* **Second, I glory in the cross because only it brings peace and mercy.**

**[Galatians 6:16]**

9. Anyone who continually glories in the cross of Christ will revel in God's goodness—His [12 peace] and mercy.

Phil 3:3; Psa 128:5-6; I Tim 1:2; II Jn 1:3; Jude 1:2

10. Mercy and peace form the sense of wellbeing that is ours because of what [14 Christ] accomplished on the cross.

Gal 2:28

\* **Third, don't make me say all this to you again.**

**[Galatians 6:17]**

11. This is Paul turning back to the Galatians in all his [22 apostolic] authority and setting them straight once and for all.

Gal 1:6

12. Paul is warning both the Judaizers and the true Galatian believers, When you cause me trouble, you cause trouble for the Lord Himself because I am His [12 slave].

\* **Fourth, you are my brothers, so I wish the best for you.**

**[Galatians 6:18]**

13. Paul has just lowered the apostolic boom on them; now in his final benediction he reassures them of his [10 love].

14. The cross we celebrate around the Lord's Table is the center of all Paul and our hopes and holy affections, and the place to which we always gravitate for [12 peace] when our hearts are troubled.