

Boasting in the Cross

Galatians 6:11-15





Galatians 6:11

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.



John Hancock

Paul's "Autograph"

It was common in letter writing of the period that a secretary or amanuensis would prepare the main body of a letter, while the sender would append his signature and perhaps a few closing words of benediction as a way of attesting to the validity of the epistle.



Common in Paul's Letters

- **1 Corinthians 16:21 –**

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.”

- **2 Thessalonians 3:17 –**

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.”

- **Colossians 4:18a –**

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.”



Who Was Paul's Amanuensis?

- In 1:2 he mentions “all the brothers who are with me.”
 - I date Galatians to A.D. 49.
 - Written in Antioch between Acts 14:28 & 15:1
 - Eliminates Silas, Timothy, Luke, Sosthenes
- My two cents:
 - Of the brothers we know, the most likely candidate is Barnabas.



But Why “large letters?”

- Paul’s poor eyesight (4:15)
- Permanent injuries from persecution
- Paul’s humble description of his penmanship
- Hebrew-style letters
- An exclamation point to the letter, as Lightfoot contends, “the boldness of the handwriting answers to the force of the apostle’s convictions. The size of the characters will arrest the attention of his readers in spite of themselves.”



Galatians 6:12

12 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.



The Judaizer Platform

Gentile believers must submit themselves to circumcision as a necessary prerequisite for belonging to the covenant people of God.

For Paul, the issue at stake was not circumcision per se (i.e., Timothy in Acts 16:3), but the salvific significance attached to it by the circumcision faction.



Remember Galatians 5:2-4?

2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. **3** I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. **4** You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.



Paul's Two-Fold Accusation

1. Dangerous False Teaching

2. Deceitful and

Dishonorable Motivation



The Charge

- Not only have they vigorously sought to “compel” Gentile converts to undergo circumcision...
 - **In Acts 26:11, in Paul’s testimony he uses the same word to describe his efforts to “force” believers to renounce Christ.**
- They did so by denigrating Paul and his ministry and dishonest appeals to the church in Jerusalem.



Ties to Jerusalem

- Acts 15:1 – “But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’”
- In Acts 21, Paul is seized in the Temple because it is believed that he teaches “all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.”
- Even Peter “separated himself, fearing the circumcision party” (2:12) when Jewish believers from Jerusalem arrived in Antioch.



Revolutionary Idea in the NT:

Gentiles could
come to God as
Gentiles.

Turn to
Luke
4:16-30





Modern Parallel

The Church has always been called to unity
in diversity.

And there has seldom been a time in
history that the church did not struggle
with living out that truth.



Turn to

Philippians 3:2-11



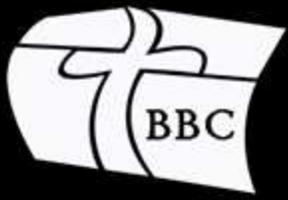
In the Same Vein...

Paul accuses them of resorting to these underhanded tactics “to make a good showing”

The Greek for “make a good showing” is *euprosōpein*, used only here in the NT.

The question is:

Who are they making “a good showing” for?



The Jewish World. Why?

“only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ”

To Paul, this was the greatest offense.



Galatians 5:11-12

11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. **12** I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!



In Acts 9:22, Luke Writes:

“Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.”

Then Acts 9:23 says: “When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill” Paul.



Simply Put:

To follow Jesus Christ faithfully and to proclaim His gospel unflinchingly is to invite persecution.

And according to Galatians 3:4, the church in Galatia had experienced suffering for Christ.

They should know better.



Galatians 6:13

13 For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

“do not themselves keep the Law”



- **John 7:19** –

“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?”

- **Acts 7:53** –

“you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it”

- **James 2:10** –

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”



Acts 15:7-11

7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”



A Second Motivation

“they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”

They want numbers, and these “ecclesiastical statistics” become something to be boasted about.



We Must Be Careful

Not only must our gospel message be sound, but our motives must be pure.

This is a message to preachers of the gospel, for sure, but it is also a message to every believer commissioned to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It often sounds like this: “I’ve led (insert number) people to the Lord.”



Galatians 6:14

14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.



“far be it from me”

μη γένοιτο
me genoito

KJV: “God forbid”

NASB: “may it never be”

Paul uses this term 12 times in his epistles.



“to boast”

καυχάομαι

kauchaomai

“to glory”

• **1 Chronicles 16:35 (LXX) –**

“Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and **glory** in your praise.”



The False Teachers...

“boast (glory) in your flesh”

Paul develops the theme of “boasting” frequently in the NT (35 times), because the practice of it so flies in the face of saving grace.



“boasting” in the Greco-Roman World

- Was valued as a badge of excellence, strength, and virtue.
 - The Latin *virtus* means, “manliness” or “worth”
- These “virtues” included physical prowess, military feats, oratorical skill, intellect, political power, financial success, and social status.







The Cross in the 1st Century

- Our English word “excruciating” comes from the Latin *excruciat*, meaning “out of the cross.”
- The Latin word *crux* was regarded as an expression so crude that no polite Roman would utter it in public.
- Their euphemism for crucifixion translates as, “hang him on the unlucky tree.”



Even in the Church...

There have always been those who seek to minimize the cross in a Christian context.

They set out to defend God from a reality that they deem unjust or offensive.



1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-23a

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... **22** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified



Understanding the Cross

What the world regards as too shameful to whisper in polite company, we exult as the means of the once for all sacrifice of our sinless Savior.

This is our boast in life and death and for all eternity.



Turn to

Romans 3:21-28



Our Mindset

When confronted with the infinitely amazing grace of God, the thought of self-glorification disappears.

On the other hand, Christians have good reason to boast...

In the cross!



Furthermore:

“the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

One commentator refers to this text as a “triple crucifixion” – “the crucified Christ, the crucified world, and the crucified Christian.”



The Crucifixion

- Was the decisive event of human redemptive history.
- **But also on that day:**
 1. The world was crucified to believers in their regeneration through Jesus' sacrifice (1 Cor. 6:11)
 2. **Believers were crucified to the world, in that they were set apart to mortify sin, walk in the light, bear the fruit of the Spirit, and to live in the freedom provided by Christ.**



Galatians 6:15

15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.



Keep the Main Thing
the MAIN THING!



Paul's Thesis

If I am indeed saved by faith in what was accomplished at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, then external rituals are meaningless.

The question is: Are you “a new creation?”



2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if
anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation.



So, I Must Ask:

**Have you Trusted Christ Alone for
Salvation?**

**Have you been Regenerated by the Holy
Spirit?**

**Is there Evidence in your Life that you are
being Conformed to the Image of Christ?**

THE

CROSS

IS ENOUGH