



“The ‘Pride’ in the Gospel”

Galatians 6:14-18

Theme: *Peace with God is a gift of God’s mercy through the work of Christ alone.*

Introduction: So much energy often goes into projecting a façade of righteousness as we attempt to persuade ourselves and others that we are truly righteous. The cauldron of guilt and shame that remains constantly churning despite the assertions that “all is well.” It isn’t until one discovers the grace of God whereby we are freed to admit our guilt and bring it forward before the Lord so that He cleanses it that we can know peace. It is the joy of the mercy of God in our lives despite our guilt before Him that draws us to Him for the refreshing cleansing through the work of Christ. It is Jesus who cleanses us – not we; it is Jesus who gives us righteousness – not we; and it is Jesus who makes us new creatures – not we. Our great delight is in the joys that Jesus loves us. When we understand what He did for us, we will stop trying to do for ourselves as we will be overwhelmed by the magnitude of His work. What He has already accomplished will so greatly outdo anything that we could ever do for ourselves that we will fall before Him in adoration and delight that we know Him. He becomes our Lord and Savior, the boast of our lives – the one we worship, adore, and serve. It is Jesus that Paul desires to point us to ... unlike the false teachers being excoriated through this epistle who have sought to promote their own significance while minimizing the accomplishments of Christ alone. Paul closes Galatians with the emphasis that *Peace with God is a gift of God’s mercy through the work of Christ alone ...*

I. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE GOSPEL – 6:14-15

A. The Termination through the Gospel – v. 14

1. Paul now provides a very practical reason that the Gospels is so very precious to him – the “*cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*” is that “*through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”
2. “*the cross*” [σταυρός] – literally refers to a pole to be placed in the ground and used for capital punishment, *cross*¹. – but serves at a metonymy for the accomplishment of Christ in paying for the sins of mankind.
3. The impact of the sacrifice of Christ has caused two things to die for the Apostle ...
 - a) First, “*the world has been crucified to me ...*” – a description of how

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 941.

the former domination a believer suffered under that system of hostility against God and love of self-gratification through fleshly indulgences once so inescapable has been terminated – cp.

Ephesians 2:2-3; Galatians 5:24.

b) Second, “... *and I to the world*” – Paul’s old man died with Christ on the cross and he no longer belongs to the world, nor does he desire to “fit in” – cp. ***Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:19-20.***

4. Essentially Paul declares that there is nothing left of the world, of his flesh, of his sense of worthiness left – upon the cross of Christ everything once valued by him was put to death – cp. ***Philippians 3:7-11.***

B. The Transformation through the Gospel – v. 15

1. He moves from generalities to specifics in this verse – “*For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*”
2. Essentially, he declares that you can be circumcision and you will still go to hell, just like there are those who are uncircumcised who will go to hell.
3. So many people have the diabolical notion that if they are “good enough,” they will be able to go the Heaven when the standard for entrance is nothing short of absolute perfection, total conformity to the absolute holiness of God – without flaw in performance, failure in compliance or frustration of God’s expectations.
4. Paul states that unless a person dies “with Christ” or “in Christ” on the cross – relying completely on His work as a substitution for them under the wrath of God, they cannot become a “*new creation.*”
5. We cannot think that becoming a “better version” of ourselves is going to impress God – we must become something completely different than what we were – we must become a “*new creation*” – cp. ***John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17.***

II. THE AVAILABILITY IN THE GOSPEL – 6:16

A. The Power of Grace – “*And those who will walk by this rule ...*”

1. Using this conjunction “*and ...*” Paul provides the universal characteristic of those who are the new creatures – they are “*those who will walk by this rule ...*”
2. “*this rule*” [κανών] – refers to the standard (canon) of our faith – the complete reliance upon the work of Jesus Christ and not on our own righteousness at all.
3. Their daily practice is to be relying on the righteousness of Christ Jesus – to yearn after conformity to Him, and a deliberately abandon the world and its lures upon them.
4. This is only possible by means of God’s enabling grace by which we are born again and in which we stand – cp. ***Romans 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:1,***

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B. The Provisions of Grace – “... *peace and mercy be upon them ...*”

1. This grace which causes the believer to become a “new creature” in Christ Jesus causes the constant experience of “*peace and mercy.*”
2. If one were to rely upon circumcision (which stands for the meritorious keeping of a legalistic standard of any kind), or church attendance, or serving in a ministry, or giving faithfully in the offering, or baptism, or “evangelizing” the lost, or avoiding alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, cigars, adultery, or any other efforts to merit a righteous standing before God, then “*peace and mercy*” are elusive and mysterious aspirations never quite attained.
3. “*peace*” describes the positive side of relying on the work of Christ for one’s standing in the eyes of God.
 - a) *It is a settled calm resulting from all hostility by God toward the sinner being resolved in and through Jesus Christ – cp. Romans 5:1.*
 - b) *It replaces the hostility that continues from God toward the sinner who continues to reject the righteousness of Christ and asserts their own merit – cp. **Romans 8:7-8.***
4. “*mercy*” describes the negative side resulting from God’s grace whereby we rely upon the work of Christ – the forgiving of all our sins enabling God to deal with us unlike what is deserved, but in a way in which His own Son deserves – cp. **2 Corinthians 5:21.**
5. It is the “*mercy*” of God extended toward us in the forgiving our sins that enable us to be at “*peace*” with Him.
6. Paul’s statement here is that those who rely on Christ and thereby become new creatures, “*peace and mercy*” remain a covering over their souls enabling them to worship God and walk in grace.

C. The Participation in Grace – “... *those who will walk ... and upon the Israel of God.*”

1. There is an openness from our viewpoint that would be an invitation for any sinner from anywhere at any time to enter this reliance upon Christ alone.
2. This is the universal call of God for all men everywhere to come and be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.
3. But it requires the abandonment self-reliance and an embrace of the reliance on Christ alone.
4. Throughout this epistle, Paul has been very harsh toward the Judaizers – the party of the circumcision that has called for not only the Jews to

remain under the Law, but also for the Gentiles to convert and come under Judaism in addition to their faith in Jesus as the Christ.

5. Paul here appeals to them as well – as those for whom this invitation is extended – that they, upon relying on the work of Christ alone would become *“the Israel of God.”*
6. This is not a reference to Jews and Gentiles alike (which most modern commentators assert due to the errors of spiritualized interpretations), but a reference to the actual Jews who believe² – [Romans 2:28-29](#).
7. Essentially, Paul is saying that even those he is denouncing in this epistle can be saved if they turn to faith in Christ alone.
8. Nevertheless, those who persist in relying on the Law are not *“the Israel of God,”* but are Israel left desolate.
9. Anyone can be saved and become part of the people of God in this age – Jew or Gentiles alike.

III. THE ASPIRATION FOR THE GOSPEL – **6:17-18**

A. **The Sacrifices for the Gospel will Be Fruitful** – v. 17

1. Having clearly commented on what is expected in the lives of those who are truly born again – the reliance on Christ alone, the influence of the Holy Spirit producing the “fruit of the Spirit,” and the desire to be helpful to others who are in the Body of Christ, Paul now expresses his aspiration concerning the responses to the truth by the Galatian believers.
2. He says, *“From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.”*
3. His desire is that the Galatian believers repudiate the perversions of the Gospel advocated by the false teachers – since their teachings cause *“trouble”* [κόπος] - a state of discomfort, distress, or difficulty – cp. [2 Corinthians 11:27-28](#).
4. *“... for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus”* - the struggle that Paul has had for the sake of the Gospel has extended beyond mere emotion turmoil and has caused actual scars from being stoned, scourged, and beaten – cp. [Acts 14:19](#); [2 Corinthians 11:25](#).
5. These are scars that Paul felt belonged to Christ as He suffered in Christ’s name – cp. [Acts 9:4](#); [2 Corinthians 1:5](#); [Colossians 1:24](#).
6. Paul’s desire is that all that effort would not be undone by the false teachers, but rather the Gospel would be fruitful.

B. **The Supply from God will Be Formative** – v. 18

1. Paul realizes that he could accomplish nothing in them – that the work needed in the lives of sinners and saints alike is met by grace alone –

² Israel in Scripture always means Israel and is not to be convoluted with the Church.

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“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.”

2. This is a common benediction to Paul’s epistles.
3. Several aspects of this farewell are particularly applicable to the Galatians given their confusion regarding their putting confidence in the Law to accomplish what only grace can do.
 - a) *First, Paul assures them that they are the objects of God’s grace in three ways:*
 - (1) He refers to Jesus as *“our Lord Jesus Christ”* – collectively referring to the unique role of Jesus in the lives of believers as *“Lord and Christ”* through the pronoun *“our.”*
 - (2) He refers to them as *“brethren.”*
 - (3) He refers to *“your spirit”* – an indication that they had been made alive or regenerated and the grace that quickened them will need to perfect them as they relied on *“grace.”*
 - b) *Second, Paul directs their attention to “our Lord Jesus Christ” – indicating the entirety of Jesus’ roles on behalf of sinners:*
 - (1) He is *“Lord”* [κύριος] – the Master to whom we are slaves who serve Him and rely on Him for instruction on how it is we are to live – not bound to the Law, but to Him and “the law of Christ.”
 - (2) He is *“Jesus”* [Ἰησοῦς] – the incarnate Son of God made flesh who alone kept the Law, perfectly fulfilling it and doing what each of us constantly fail to do – literally meaning: *“salvation is of the Lord.”*
 - (3) He is *“Christ”* [Χριστός] – the one anointed by God and who died to pay the price for all our failures in sin.
4. Paul closes his epistle by this Christo-centric emphasis on our need for grace – not an external, legalistic adherence to the Law that none of us can keep, and what Jesus alone met.
5. His final word is *“amen”* – a strong affirmation essentially saying, “let it be so!”

So What?

1. If you have been made a new creation through faith in Christ, the greatest ingredient in your “self-image” will be what [Jesus](#) did for you – your “boast.”



2. **Grace will not cause you to feel free to sin, it will cause you to straighten up and “walk by this rule” - reliance on Christ for deliverance from the bondage to the world.**
3. **Our lives must be focused on the righteousness we are given through the grace of God found in Christ alone, only then will we know peace.**

Peace with God is a gift of God’s mercy through the work of Christ alone.