

*A jarring TV commercial didn't say a word. It simply shows a series of people who have one thing in common—a nasty injury or scar. There's a cowboy with a huge scar around his eye, and something wrong with the eye itself; a fellow with a disfigured cauliflower ear; another with horribly callused feet. There's no explanation at all, simply the Nike swoosh and "Just Do It."*

*The ad has been analyzed and criticized widely as being incomprehensible and extreme. But the key to the controversial commercial lies in the background music. Joe Cocker sings, "You are so beautiful . . . to me."*

*To these athletes—the wrestler with the cauliflower ear, the surfer with a shark bite, the bull rider blind in one eye—their injuries are beauty marks. And to their fans, these athletes are beautiful because of their scars. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," says Mike Folino, the ad's creator.*

*God's grace is just as jarring and controversial. Our beauty is found not in us, but in Him, and God looks down at us—injured, blind, and scarred—and sings, "You are so beautiful . . . to me."*

God's grace – the letter to the Galatians begins with grace and it ends with grace. We have spent 13 weeks in the book of Galatians – a letter from Paul to these new congregations in the region of Galatia, and if you recall, in this letter, Paul confirmed his own authority as an apostle because false teachers tried to discredit him, and he defended the true gospel of grace. If you remember, the Judaizers had come to these churches to spread their false legalistic teaching we called the “Jesus + something = salvation gospel” which wasn't a gospel at all. Gospel means “good news” and there was nothing good about the news they were spreading. Paul defended the gospel of grace, throwing everything at his readers but the kitchen sink – explaining that salvation was not the result of any human merit, or religious works, or self-effort on our part, but solely based on the completed work of Jesus Christ. We cannot earn God's favor. Our righteousness is not based on what we do but rather on what Christ has already done for us. As believers, we are in Christ, and that should change us from the inside out. As believers, we are to walk by the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, compelled to love and serve one another because God loves us – thus fulfilling the law of Christ.

This morning we are going to look at the last portion of this letter written by Paul to the Galatians. So, let's read **Galatians 6:11-18**.

**<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. <sup>12</sup> Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.**

**<sup>13</sup> For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup> But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. <sup>17</sup> From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. <sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.**

When most of us come to the end of these New Testament letters, we might just glance through the last portion because we think we have already read all of the important stuff, and true, this last portion of Galatians does read just like a summary; however, it must be very important because of what Paul tells us in **verse 11**. He says:

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

It was the practice of Paul to dictate his letters to a secretary or a scribe as many Bible scholars believe that Paul suffered from some type of problem with his eye sight, maybe stemming from his Damascus road experience with the Lord. And toward the end of these letters, on occasion, Paul would sign his name to the end of a letter to give his stamp of approval – as you might do in a letter or a document that you had dictated. For example, he did this in 1 Corinthians, he did it in Colossians, and he did it in 2 Thessalonians. But in this case, in Galatians, Paul has taken the pen from his secretary and is writing the final paragraph of the letter in his own hand. He wants to write this last portion himself. So, this must be important and we need to take special notice.

Now also remember that in his day, there were no typewriters or word processors. When we type and wish to emphasize a word or make a point, we simply boldface the words, highlight them, or underline what has been typed. Paul did the same thing by taking the pen from his secretary and writing what follows with large letters. The effect is to inform the reader of the importance of what is written as well as to remind us of who is actually writing it. So, it's worth paying special attention to what he has to say here. Paul continues in **verse 12-13**.

**<sup>12</sup> Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.**

From **verses 12 to 17**, Paul fires a parting shot at the Judaizers whose false teaching prompted this letter in the first place because they taught that Jesus was not enough to secure salvation, and somehow, somehow, we had to do for ourselves what Jesus could not do on our behalf. The Judaizers taught that we had to accomplish, through our own self-effort, what Jesus did not finish. The Judaizers were demanding that to be truly accepted by God they must follow their religious rules and rituals, namely circumcision, to complete their salvation. But Paul makes it clear that the Judaizers were not really interested in the salvation of others or even pleasing God for that matter – that’s not their motivation, rather they did what they did for their own selfish interests.

Paul explains that the Judaizers were motivated by their own pride. They wanted to make a **good showing** so they could brag about the number of converts they made toward their legalistic way of earning God’s favor through the Law – but behind closed doors, these Judaizers really didn’t keep the Law themselves. They were hypocrites. It was a sham display of “*do as I say, not as I do.*” Their work was not done for the good of the church nor for the glory of God; it was done to stroke their own egos and pride. They wanted to be popular and were seeking trophies to make themselves look good. But that’s not all.

If you noticed, Paul also tells us about a second motivation for their false teaching – fear. They didn’t want to be **persecuted**. If these Judaizers taught the gospel truth and said, “*We are saved only by the finished work of Christ on the cross, not by our obedience to the law or self-effort,*” they would have been persecuted just like Paul. If the Judaizers had disavowed the requirement for circumcision because of the cross, they would have been ostracized by the Jewish communities. They would have been forced out of the synagogues, exploited financially, and most likely physically harmed. The Judaizers knew this, and as a result, they were afraid to take a stand for the cross – **but how can you tell the story of Jesus without the cross?** It seems impossible to me.

Paul didn’t have anything good to say about the Judaizers, but before we start throwing stones at them, we need to consider our own motives as well. **Why do we do what we do?**

**Are we trying to look spiritual with our religious busyness to impress others? Are we seeking the praise and respect of others rather than seeking to please God? Are we afraid to stand on the word of God for fear of persecution? Are we afraid to say, “But the Bible says…”?** We can just as easily find ourselves serving or whatever we do with the wrong motives. A good work is spoiled by a bad motive. **That’s something we need to be mindful of, isn’t it? Why do we do what we do?**

**<sup>14</sup>But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

Paul's motive was not to brag about himself or his merits. This is what the Judaizers did. Paul's motive was to boast about the cross of Christ. The word "boast" can be translated to "exult in" or to "rejoice in." The cross of Christ had become everything to Paul because he knew, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that there is no other way by which man may be saved. And, I think it's important to distinguish the cross from the cross of Christ – because not any cross will do. The cross of Christ is to be exalted only because the King of kings and the Lord of lords willingly placed Himself there on our behalf.

*Isaac Watts wrote:*

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of CHRIST, my GOD;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.  
See, from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?  
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

The Judaizers were ashamed of the cross. The cross was one of the most horrific torture instruments ever created by man. It was an instrument used to torture criminals in a slow, agonizing, and public death. The cross was a symbol of scorn, and shame and disgust, but instead, God used it as a divine instrument to deliver sinners from death and eternal separation from God. To us, the cross of Christ is a symbol of love, and joy, and peace, and forgiveness, and grace. **On the old rugged cross, man did his very worst, but God did His very best** and that's why Paul glories in it. To him, nothing else mattered. The cross points to God's grace and His chosen way of salvation – through the finished work of Jesus Christ His

Son, and for that reason, it was an offense to the Judaizers and a death blow to the religions of self-effort and human works.

If you think about it, the Galatians, these new believers, learned a lot about the cross of Christ. Back in **Chapter 3, verse 1**, Paul reminded them that Jesus was crucified on a cross. In **Chapter 2, verse 20**, Paul says that believers were crucified with Him. We are so connected and united with Jesus that His experiences become our experiences. When Jesus died, we spiritually died. When He came to life, we came to life because we are in Him. And then in **Chapter 5, verse 24**, we learned that our flesh was crucified as well. In other words, the dominant, unbreakable power of our old sinful nature was broken, it's now just a dead flopping chicken that lingers around us, and we who were servants of sin have now become children of righteousness.

Paul also goes on to tell us in **verse 14** that the world has been crucified to him, and he to the world. He essentially said the same thing in **Philippians 3:8-9**. He said,

*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 so 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.*

Paul cared nothing for the glory that came from fame. He cared nothing about riches. He cared nothing about status and power. He cared nothing about a worldly system with its ungodly enticements, and he cared nothing about schemes of men with their self-serving agendas. He looked at the world as if it was good as dead – and the world looked at Paul as though he was as good as dead as well. The world had lost its charm to Paul. He only cared about the glory of the cross which offered salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

Like Paul, we are corpses to this world, and this world is a corpse to us, or to put it in a positive light, according to our next verse, we are a “**new creation.**” The old “you” is dead. A new “you” is alive. Paul says beginning in **verse 15**:

**<sup>15</sup>For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup>And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God.**

The cross of Christ not only has caused Paul to die to the world and the world to Paul – but now he is separated from a religious system and has entered into a relationship with God.

It's so easy to get caught up in the external trappings of religion, but Paul says that in reality, what counts is a new identity produced by our spiritual birth. Christ died that we might live through Him and for Him, and that we might live in Him. He died that we might live and share in a new relationship with Him – no longer controlled by our old sinful natures – we are free, no longer under a religious system of legalistic rules and rituals – we are free, and no longer looking at life and people the way we used to. What counts is God changing us from the inside out. It's not about turning over a new leaf in life or getting your act together – it's something He does in us, and it's experienced to the fullest as we surrender and yield ourselves to Him. Our old nature no longer has a death grip on us, instead God gives us a new heart with a new purpose and new passions. We are new creatures in Christ, that's who we are, and those who walk with this understanding of their new identity – Paul says peace and mercy will follow them.

Paul continues and in the last two verses he says:

**<sup>17</sup>From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.**

The Judaizers wanted to mark the flesh of the Galatians with circumcision so they could brag, but Paul says, *“Let me tell you about marks and scars. **You want to see my marks and scars I have because of Christ?**”* Paul had been beaten with rods, he was whipped by Roman soldiers, he was stoned by Jews, dragged out of the city and left for dead, and he was thrown into prison shackled to guards for the sake of Christ. And to Paul, every blow that he received was a blow against Jesus – his Lord and Savior. They were considered badges of honor for preaching the true gospel of grace regardless of the consequences. When asked, his marks and scars told the truth about the cross of Christ and the grace of God, and Paul's conviction to carry out his calling from his Savior and Lord no matter what.

Paul gladly carried his marks and scars because they told a story. They openly identified him with Jesus. Our marks and scars tell a story as well, and maybe some of you bear marks and scars because you identify with Christ, you stand on the principles of God's Word, and you exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in a world that entices you to do just the opposite. You want to love on people in a world that tells

you to hate them because they are not like you. You are different, you stand out, you aren't like the rest, and there may be a price to pay for that. And need I remind you that not all marks and scars are physical – some are mental and some are emotional – marks and scars from people you care about. Those may be the worst kind. And although they may hurt, like Paul, you can glory in them because they remind you that Christ was marked and scared on your behalf because He loves you.

*Some years ago, on a hot summer day in South Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He flew into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore. His mother, in the house and looking out the window, saw the two as they got closer and closer together. In utter fear, she ran toward the water, yelling to her son as loudly as she could. Hearing her voice, the little boy became alarmed and made a U-turn to swim to his mother. It was too late. Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began an incredible tug of war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the mother, but the mother was much too passionate to let go. A farmer happened to drive by, heard her screams, raced from his truck, took aim and shot the alligator.*

*After weeks and weeks in the hospital the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal. On his arms, were deep scratches from where his mother's fingernails dug into his flesh in her effort to hang on to the son she loved. The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy after the trauma asked if he would show him his scars. The boy lifted his pants legs. And then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, "But, look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms too. I have them because my Mom wouldn't let go." Just like a mother who loves her child, so God loves each of you. The scars on the hands and feet of Jesus remind us that God, in His great love for us, could not let us go. And that love for us should compel us to live for Him.*

Source Material:

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