

**"Boasting in the Cross of Christ"
(Galatians 6:11-18)
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¹² Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

¹³ Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. ¹⁴ May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. ¹⁶ Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Core Issue: Believing in the Gospel leads us to boast in the cross of Christ. We boast only in the cross because it exposes us of our sins and points us to our Savior.

Opposing Value: We boast in everything else other than Christ because of our fear of persecution.

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon church. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Galatians 6 and we'll read from verse 11 to the end – Galatians 6:11-18. Today, we'll be concluding our short series on Galatians with this passage that I think captures the essence of this letter. It begins like this in verse 11: "*See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*" Let's stop here for a moment. Up until this point, Paul likely dictated his letter. He spoke and somebody else wrote them down. But in this last section, Paul decides to pick up a pen to write it himself because **he wanted to emphasize the importance of this message**. If I could modernize it, he was increasing the font size, bolding it, and underlining it to say that, "You *need* to hear this!" If Paul thinks it's important, then we better listen carefully to what he's about to say. Verse 12:

12 Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. 14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which¹ the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to² the Israel of God. 17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

¹ Or whom

² Or rule and to

When Paul wrote this letter, there were as many non-Jews as there were Jewish people who identified themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ. Historically, of course, the covenant people of God focused on one ethnic group: Israel. And they were set apart from others by their practices commanded in the Torah. So in response to this exponential growth of the Gentile followers, some Jewish Christians began to believe that for all of these non-Jews to truly become a part of God's family, they needed to follow the laws of the Torah – to be more precise, *become circumcised*. When Paul heard this, he was shocked, dumbfounded, angry, but most importantly, heartbroken that they embraced a different Gospel and were led astray from the truth. **Hence, this letter was written to show the beauty of the true Gospel.** Paul reminded the people that we're not saved by believing in Jesus *and* being circumcised; but rather, **we are saved by believing in Jesus Christ, period.** Nothing else. No addition. This, of course, applies to us too. We don't contribute anything. It's God's free gift to us. In other words, our salvation is not depended on our own work but it has been established by Christ's work on the cross. If I could summarize this whole letter in one phrase, it would be something like this: **we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.** This is what the letter to the Galatians is all about. If you haven't read through this book, I strongly encourage you to slowly and reflectively do so because it's going to blow your mind.

Now, in response to this glorious and exciting truth, Paul aims to answer these questions: **“How should this truth impact and transform our lives? How should we respond? What does this mean for us practically?”** It's not enough just to *know*; **truth must lead to transformation of life.** That being said, brothers and sisters, is this truth making a difference – at school, as you attend classes, spend countless hours finishing up assignments, or study at the library; at work, as you finish up your paper work, make drinks for your customers, or finish your teaching plan; at home, as you cook for your family, change diapers for your baby, or do endless chores around the house? Is the truth shaping us in all aspects of our lives or have we mastered the art of compartmentalizing our faith from everything else? Is there a clear disconnect between *the truth you know* and *the life that you live*? If this describes you today, my prayer is that this message will move you to experience not just some superficial changes to your life but something that is much more profound, deep, and wholesome. In verse 14, Paul tells us what it means to rightly respond to this truth: *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* That's his answer. That's how we are to respond to the truth. **To Paul, being justified by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone must lead to boasting in the cross of Christ alone.** Then I want to take the rest of this time to examine this truth.

We'll do this by looking at three things:

- The **reason** for boasting in the cross
- The **way** of boasting in the cross
- The **result** of boasting in the cross

1) THE REASON FOR BOASTING IN THE CROSS

Let's go back to verse 14: *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Although it was translated as “boast” here, this word has much broader definition in Greek. **It also means to glory in it, rejoice in it, be consumed by it, be obsessed with, and to put our lives in it. It refers to what gives you meaning, dignity, and significance to your identity.** If you consider all this, the implication of Paul's words becomes absolutely mind-boggling.

Think with me. We of course know that people are obsessed with many things. Some are consumed by money, sex, or power; some put their whole lives in accomplishing great things at school or work; some pride in their spouse or children; and they feel good about themselves *because* of these things, but Paul tells us that **he considers all those things garbage compare to knowing and gaining Christ and his desire is to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ.**

Brothers and sisters, do you desire this too? If your answer is “yes,” let me ask you, “Why?” **Why do you want to boast in the cross?** I ask this because the response of the people in Paul’s days would’ve been so different from yours. Paul’s confession would’ve made these people absolutely uncomfortable and disgusted. Too many of us are so used to this kind of language that the impact of these words is diminished but it would’ve made the original readers sick to their stomach and angry at the mention of the cross. **This is true because the cross was a horrible means of execution and torture designed and devised by the Romans, not just to kill, but to give the worst kind of humiliation.** They had no human rights. They took the criminals, stripped them naked, put them on a tree, put stakes in their hands and feet, held them up for everybody to walk by on the street and spit on them, curse them, mock them, and leave them there until they die out of suffocation or dehydration from sweating and bleeding. **The cross was a place of cruel and agonizing pain and death.** And here’s Paul saying, “I boast in the cross.” These people would’ve said, “You’re crazy. Why *would* you want to boast in the cross?”

Then what was it about the cross that led Paul to consider it far more important than fame, status, job, education, money, family, or anything of this world? And why should we do the same? Here’s the answer: **it’s because the cross exposes us of our sins and points us to the Savior.** You’re probably like, “Huh? Why would that make me *want* to boast in the cross?” Let me explain.

The cross confronts us with the reality of our sin – that we are slaves to sin. The cross reminds us that we are by nature sinful and we deserve nothing but the wrath and judgment of God. We deserved to receive that worst kind of humiliation and die on the cross. There’s no way to escape this and there’s nothing we can do to change that. We are left hopeless and helpless. **The message of the cross is actually very offensive.** It’s devastating and discouraging. No one wants to hear this, **but this is the reality of all of us here as well without any exception. We are all slaves to sin and destined for death.** Sometimes we take our sins lightly but not God. He takes it seriously and will condemn us for it. I know this hurts; but *it’s better than being disillusioned or deceived.* To be deceived is to be in a place where we believe we’re right when we’re wrong. And to believe you’re right about *eternal* matters and be wrong is a scary thing. So to believe that we’re okay when we’re not is a scary thing. What awaits us is death. **The cross opens our eyes to see the reality of who we are.**

But, the beautiful thing about the cross is that it not only exposes us of our sins, but it also points us to the Savior. When there was no way, He made a way for us. This is incredibly liberating because the pressure is off of us. We don’t have to find ways to solve this problem. To be more precise, we were unable to do so. But the cross points us to Jesus Christ who rescued us from God’s holy wrath. How did He accomplish this? **He did this by taking our place on the cross.** When it should’ve been us (our blood), He was put on the cross to be humiliated and condemned until He paid for our sins with His own life. We didn’t do anything. We couldn’t add anything. But what He did on the cross changed the course of our destiny. We’re *forgiven* because He was *forsaken*. We’re *accepted* because He was *condemned*. We’re *invited* to be His children, because God’s own Son was *rejected*. We have *life* and everything to enjoy because Christ *died* for us. **We boast in the cross; we fix our eyes on the cross; we remain at the foot of the cross, because it’s the only solution to our ultimate problem.** Friends, do you recognize that you are a sinner destined for death? Are you grieving every day because of your sins? But at the same time, do you recognize that you’re saved by the work of Christ on the cross? Are you rejoicing every day because of Him? This is why it makes sense for us to boast in the cross.

2) THE WAY OF BOASTING IN THE CROSS

Then what does it mean to boast in the cross? The answer is found in the latter half of verse 14: *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, **through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**”* Let’s unpack this together. When Paul says that the world has been crucified to him through the cross, **he means that through Christ’s work on the cross, the world has now become dead to him because there’s nothing in this world that he desires.** He’s not hungry for the things of this world. **At the same time, he considers himself dead to the world because there’s nothing in him that the world finds it attractive.** As far as the world is concerned, Paul’s devoted life to crucified Christ is a “wasted” life. Paul describes how the world perceives him in 1 Corinthians 4:13: *“We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world.”*

We Christians, of course, believe that it’s not a waste to live for Christ. This is how Pastor John Piper describes a wasted life. In his book, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, he shares a story that he calls it a tragedy. This is what he writes: “Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now, they live in Florida, where they cruise on their 30 foot fishing boat, play softball, and collect shells. They collect shells. Come to the end of your life – your one and only life – and let the last great work before you give an account to your Creator be, ‘I collected shells. See my shells, God?’ That is a tragedy. And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. I want to plead with you, don’t buy it.” After reading this, what I concluded was this, two things: **boasting in the cross means that the world will call our lives “wasted.” Boasting in the cross also means that everything the world cherishes becomes nothing to us compare to knowing Christ.** The world is no longer our treasure. It’s not the source of our life or our satisfaction or our joy. Christ is. **This world has nothing for us because Christ is everything to us. Brothers and sisters, are we ready to live a “wasted” life from this world’s perspective?** What does this mean? It means that we choose to give to the poor and serve the marginalized. It means that we choose to protect our sexual purity as single or married people. It means that we don’t cheat to save more money. It means that we pray and intercede for those around us. It means that we give up time and money to either go to a mission field or support those who go. It means that we choose to forgive our offenders and enemies. It means that we choose to sacrifice everything for the glory of God even though the world will call that a “wasted” life. **Are you ready to live this way or as these Jews did, are you living to impress others?**

To Paul, it was no brainer to give up all things because there was something else that absolutely shadowed everything else. Imagine this with me. You’re in a dark room. You light up a candle, and it brightens up the room. Now, when the sun rises and the light enters the room, it outshines all other light source. In other words, you won’t be needing a candle anymore. Another example. When you find that someone you want to marry, everyone else goes off your radar because you have found the perfect person for you. He/she literally becomes everything to you and you’re completely satisfied in this person. Brothers and sisters, in the same way, **Jesus is all that you need. This world has nothing for us; Christ is everything to us.** At the cross our old self died and we’ve become new creations in Christ. Now, let this truth sink in your minds and think about how this, just on a practical level, changes the way we live. *Students*, we don’t run after all the pursuits and pleasures this world offers us looking for satisfaction and joy and fulfillment. *Working people*, we don’t compromise in our holiness to be successful in this world. *Singles*, we don’t idolize marriage. *Married people*, we don’t idolize our spouse. *Parents*, we don’t idolize our children. We’re free from those. **In Christ, we have found satisfaction that supersedes all the stuff this world is offering us put together.**

Now, this is not easy to live it out. I know. **But we are called to live this way not because it's easy but because it's right, because it's pleasing to God, and because it's what will satisfy our hearts.** And this is going to require you to fight. It's going to require you to die to yourself. Pastor John Stott says it this way: "You cannot cherish the Christ of Calvary without joining Him on the Calvary road." Or to put it differently, **boasting in the cross happens when you are on the cross – choosing to crucify your flesh and keep in steps with the Holy Spirit.** We fight to find joy, hope, security, and identity only in Jesus Christ. This is how we practically boast in the cross of Christ.

3) THE RESULT OF BOASTING IN THE CROSS

Let's read verse 12: "*Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*" Paul tells us that the reason why these Jews desired to impress people not God was so that they can avoid being persecuted – *which implies that when we boast in the cross of Christ, we will face persecution.* **The result of boasting in the cross is persecution.** I know; that doesn't sound very exciting. Why would anyone want that?

But, persecution is inevitable because as I mentioned before the cross is offensive to people. This is the reality we must face. Think about it. The message of the cross goes against everything that many of these Jews believed their whole lives – namely, that circumcision is necessary for your salvation. Paul just crushed their belief. No wonder he was hated by so many Jews. But this is also evident today. Like I said, the world perceives our devoted life to Christ as a "wasted" life. Why *wouldn't* they reject and persecute us if we tried to convince them to embrace the way of the cross? Another thing to consider is that **the Gospel is not only offensive but also hard to believe.** What would you say to someone who says, "How in the world is this random Jewish guy able to save me by dying on the cross 2000 years ago? You really believe these things?" So the friend laughs at you and turns around. What can you say to this person? **The Gospel just doesn't make sense to a lot of people.** The fact that it makes sense to us is by grace – the work of the Holy Spirit in us. **So when people hear the Gospel, they will resist. And they will do everything in their power to suppress and destroy this.** The Jews will say, "Jesus is good. But you also need circumcision." Others will say, "Jesus is good. But you also need other things like money, education, job, marriage, and so on." Some places in the world will not be so gentle; they do this physically by torturing and persecuting Christians. Some places, they do so by destroying churches and hurting their loved ones. Some places do so by humiliating and mocking Christians as you might have experienced it in your own lives. In modern days, another threat is **the prosperity gospel – minimizing the cross in order to maximize our comforts and prosperity in this world.** They create Christianity, which of course is no Christianity at all, where it's okay to avoid any pain and suffering; and in the process, they completely miss the cross and what it represents because the truth is that Jesus Himself suffered to save us. This is the reality we're living in.

Recently, I was listening to Francis Chan's testimony and I came across a story of believers in China. Francis Chan visited this underground church where a lot of young people were present. They said they were being trained to be sent out to the Middle East. They themselves were already under many threats yet they were willing to go to places where it's going to be even more dangerous. Being inspired by their faith, Francis wanted to hear more of their stories. He said to them, "Tell me about the persecution." And they gave him this weird look that said, "What are you talking about?" So he said, "Persecution. Don't you guys get persecuted?" And they went, "Well of course, but everyone does." Francis responded, "No. Not everyone does." And with this confusion on their faces, they started quoting scriptures and said, "But that's what Jesus said would happen. Why do you want to hear about something that's so common?" Francis felt embarrassed but he said, "Just tell me some stories please." So this girl stood up and shared. She shared that as they were worshiping one day, the government officials rushed into the place. Everyone found their way out but because she couldn't run as fast as others, she ended up hiding between these two boards until they left. She said, "For the first time in my life, I thanked God for being so skinny." Christians there explained that this is common in China – not being sure of who will enter that door. Francis was shocked and shared, "You know, where I come from it's not like that. Where I come from we have these buildings called churches, and we attend them, and we have so many that if you're not satisfied there, you just switch." And they laughed and said, "Don't lie to us." Francis explained, "No. Seriously, this is true. A lot of people will jump from place to place." And they had this shocked faces and said, "**That doesn't make sense. How do you read the Bible and come up with that?**"

How do you read the Bible and come up with that? I don't know about you but I was cut to the heart when I heard these words. Brothers and sisters, we are **not** the norm. What we have here at COAH is a gift and a privilege that not many people have around the world. **The normal Christian life includes suffering because this world hates the way of the cross.** Think about it. Jesus Himself suffered in order to save us. Then how can we stand beside the cross and say, "God I don't want to go through suffering. Until you remove them from my life, I'm not ready to obey." How selfish can we be? Let us not walk away from boasting in the cross because of the suffering that awaits us. **Let us remember that just as Christ suffered for us, we now have the privilege to suffer for Christ in order to make His name known.** Brothers and sisters, *how far are you willing to go?* In Acts 5:41, it says that the Apostles faced their first beating and they came out of the court "*rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*" Are you ready to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Jesus and rejoice? This is part of what it means to boast in the cross.

Thankfully, this is not the only result of boasting in the cross. In verses 16-18, Paul says that these three things will be given to those who are faithful to God: **peace, mercy, and grace.** This is what's promised to those who choose to boast in the cross of Christ. **We will have peace with God because of His mercy for us. And we will always be recipients of His grace.** We *begin* by grace, being justified by faith in what Christ has done. We *continue* by grace, being strengthened to work and grow in our holiness. We will *finish* by grace, enjoying the eternal life with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Though we may suffer for His Name now, what is reserved for us is this life that cannot be taken away. **Brothers and sisters, don't live for the pleasures of this temporary world. I invite you to live for eternity by boasting in the cross today.**

CONCLUSION

Boasting in the cross means that **we are to rejoice in Jesus Christ** *because He is the solution to our ultimate problem.* It means that **we are consumed by and obsessed with Jesus Christ and being used by Him** *because He is the greatest treasure of our hearts.* It means **that the presence of Jesus becomes central and more pervasive in every aspect of our lives.** It means that **we have our whole life orbit around Jesus Christ even when it gets difficult to follow Him** *because He is worth fighting for.* And ultimately, this is good for us. Let me explain. We know that the cosmic universe is in perfect order. We are part of a system where the sun is at the center while the planets orbit around it. There is balance and there is structure. But imagine that all of sudden the system began to revolve around Mars. There would be absolute chaos – and the whole system will begin to crumble down. And so it is with our lives. **Our lives are in complete order as we revolve around God because that's how we were designed to do.** But when we attempt to bring all of life (including God) to revolve around us, we will begin to experience absolute chaos in our lives.

If you haven't given your life to Jesus yet, maybe you understand what it means to live in this chaos. You may feel empty. You may be tired of aimlessly doing life. You may feel hopeless and helpless. Then consider the cross, which tells you that you are a sinner deserving of God's judgment yet there's a Savior, who willingly died for you so that you may be set free. All you need to do is believe and begin to boast in the message of the cross. If you desire this peace, mercy, and grace, I invite you to give your life to Jesus today. In Him, you'll find complete satisfaction.

Brothers and sisters, the Bible tells us that **we have been justified by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.** The only appropriate response to this truth is **to boast in the cross of Christ alone.** Let this be true in your life today.

Let's pray.