

Text: Gal. 6:11-18

Title: "The glory of the justified"

Time: 11/10/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: One of the surprises my daughter encountered after getting married and establishing her own household was that her car insurance was a good deal more expensive than her husband's. Kara is paying the penalty for her driving record, a bill that I once paid for her but no longer do.

In the same way, it often comes as a devastating surprise to sinners when they finally realize what their record truly looks like when it comes to the law of God. They find that the record of their life shows that they are lawbreakers, and they see that a just penalty is now required in payment for their sin. That penalty is higher than they ever imagined before.

We have come to the end of this wonderful epistle of Paul to the Galatian churches. Galatians is about the true gospel, and the true gospel is the good news that law-breaking penalized sinners can have their criminal record changed. That is called justification, and it happens when the record of the righteousness of Christ becomes our own. That is called the doctrine of imputation.

These churches were being troubled by a false gospel, and Paul wrote to them about the true gospel. The true gospel says that repentant sinners are justified by faith, not works. When we see our need for Christ as our Savior and believe that He took our sin on Himself at the cross and rose again, God, in response to that faith, imputes Christ's righteousness to our record before God's law. He took our penalty, and through His sacrifice we justly stand acquitted before God's law in spite of our sins.

The true gospel also teaches that this freedom from condemnation allows us to love one another, rather than to serve our flesh. Our flesh is that part of us that makes constant war against God's Spirit. But if we walk in the Spirit, we will in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Rather than proudly provoking one another and envying one another, we will restore in love, share in love, and persevere in love.

Now as Paul closes this great letter, he challenges these local churches of Galatia to see a glory in the true gospel, rather than in the false gospels that troubled them. Note some related phrases with me in the passage (v. 12, "make a fair shew"; v. 12, "lest they should suffer persecution"; v. 13, "that they may glory"; v. 14, "that I should glory"). The reason the false gospels are popular with sinners is that they offer a false glory. The reason the true gospel is rejected by many is that its glory is very hard for a sinner to see.

This morning, our message title is "The glory of the justified," and Paul emphasizes two simple truths about the glory of the true gospel for us this morning.

I. The glory of the justified is not about the flesh (vv. 11-13).

Illustration: I am not sure where or when I learned this, but my email correspondence has always been guided by the rule that you do not want to use all capital letters when you type out an email. The reason you do not want to do that is that you will come across as shouting to the person who is reading, which is kind of negative. And that then would violate another email rule, which is to never put anything negative in an email. Those conversations are best left to person-to-person conversation. In our world of Instagram and Twitter, these rules have been largely ignored by our society.

Application: Paul begins his conclusion of this letter by noting how big the letters he was writing were. Later, Paul would

use an amanuensis, someone who would take his dictation of a letter, but he does not here. This time Paul wrote the document himself, and he did so with big Greek letters.

Why did Paul do that? Why did Paul refer explicitly to his having done that? He does not tell us clearly, does he? Some say that he is being more emphatic in this part of the epistle, and that explains why he used big letters. But it seems that if that were the case, he would have just used them without then also referring to their size. In addition, it is likely correct to conclude that Paul is speaking of all of his letters in this Epistle, not just the ones starting in 6:11. He certainly uses great emphasis throughout the Epistle, but not everywhere.

No, instead, I think he makes the point about the size of his letters as a way of introducing a contrast that comes in verse 12 - "those who desire to make a fair show in the flesh." When you write script that is unusually large, it is less than a fair show of intellectual capability. Children write big letters because they do not know how to write small ones. It may be that Paul wrote big letters because either his eyes or his hands could only do so, and that was anything but a "fair showing" for his correspondence.

Paul had not avoided the persecution that those who had made a fair show in the flesh had avoided (v. 12b). One of the Galatian churches he founded was in Lystra. Let's take a moment to read about Paul's experience there (Acts 14:18-20). You take a stoning like that, and you probably come away with some eye damage or a broken hand or two that does not heal correctly, and if that happens, it can be difficult to make your letters a standard size to make a good showing of intellectual competence. These injuries are likely the marks of Jesus in Paul's body referred to in v. 17. His point seems to be that his glory was not in the flesh's ability to make nice letters, but in its injuries that prevented him from doing so. The glory of the justified has nothing to do with the flesh.

The glory of the flesh is very tempting to our sinful human hearts, and Paul says it was true with the troublers of these churches for one simple reason – every Christian has a simple choice: (1) persecution or (2) popularity. It was the goal of these false teachers to avoid persecution and to gain a following that would make them look more glorious in their own eyes and the eyes of those they desired to impress (vv. 12-13). Obedience to God’s law was not their concern. Having a larger following was.

And so there is a glory even in religion that is not the glory of the justified. When religion is less concerned about keeping God’s law and more concerned about avoiding persecution and creating a huge following, that religion knows nothing of the true glory of justification. Paul next offers his corrective to this temptation – the cross.

II. The glory of the justified is all about the cross (vv. 14-18).

Illustration: Some of you know that I am an Ohio State Buckeye football fan. One of the unique things about our team this year is that we have a defensive player that has been spoken of as a candidate for the Heisman Trophy. That award almost always goes to quarterbacks or running backs, but some think our defensive end is the best player in the country and may win the Heisman.

I saw an interview this player gave after the Wisconsin game a couple of weeks ago, and it was good to hear him endeavor to give God glory for his talents and abilities. I have a pastor friend whose son is on the football team and who roomed with this player, and I have heard that the player may be a true believer.

I mention all this, however, because I noticed that during the interview, the player wore two earrings that were golden crosses. As I saw that, I could not help but reflect on how dif-

ferent our view of the cross is today compared to how it was viewed when Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul did not have a set of golden cross earrings. He was not a candidate for a sports trophy. No one wanted his autograph. He was not swamped by an admiring media.

Application: When Paul said he gloried in the cross of Christ, he spoke of a brutally torturous mode of execution that was so feared in the first century world that the word *cross* was never used in polite Roman society (Bruce, 271). No one in that society gloried in the cross the way many in our society today do. The symbolism has changed.

How can we do what Paul did in our day of golden cross earrings? We could begin by asking a slightly different but related question. What is it that embarrasses people in our society about being a church member of New Boston Baptist Church, and are we willing to glory in that? Today, it is easy to say that we glory in the cross. Pretty much everyone does, or at least everyone welcomes cross-glorying if that is what you want to do. We have a beautiful cross in the front of our room, and no one in our neighborhood refuses to come here because of it.

But what about being a member here is difficult to glory in in our society? Maybe it is that we want to be disciple-makers and bold witnesses, that we proclaim Jesus as the only way, truth, and life in a pluralistic society. Maybe it is that we want to be holy in a world dominated by worldliness. Maybe it is our emphasis on the Bible in a world of scientific advancements. Maybe it is the way we hold one another accountable as members in a world that never wants to commit to anything anymore. Maybe it is what our statement of faith says about human sexuality and marriage in a world that promotes homosexuality and gender dysphoria. Maybe it is something as simple as the word *fundamental* on our front

sign. Could that word keep people away? Have you ever seen a golden earring on TV that had that word on it?

Just as it is difficult to glory in some aspects of biblical Christianity today in our society, so it was difficult for Paul to glory in the cross in his day. What is clear is that a people of the cross must bear a certain reproach in every age. But those who are willing to glory in the cross and all that comes with it are also in possession of some wonderful blessings as Paul was in his day:

1. The people of the cross no longer belong to this world (v. 14). Would it not be a terrible thing to belong to this world? It is a sinful world, a cruel world, a decaying world, and it is a hopeless world. Jesus said, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). We sang "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" by Isaac Watts this morning. A verse of that song missing in our hymnal goes this way:

"His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;
"Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me." (Bruce, 272).

2. The people of the cross are a new creation that has nothing to do with religious ceremony or good works (v. 15). Only God is the Creator. Only He can work creation. He made the old creation, and He makes the new one in Christ. Salvation is a miracle that makes us new. Have you experienced that change, or is your hope some religious practice or ceremony? Religion will not make you a new creation. Only the Creator can. He will if you ask Him too, for He died for you on the cross. This new creation is a blessing for people of the cross.

3. The people of the cross are a blessed brotherhood (vv. 16-18). The blessings of peace, mercy, and grace are incomparable blessings. Even our suffering is sanctified as the marks of

the Lord Jesus (v. 17). And as brothers and sisters sharing this blessing of eternal life, we have a common Spirit, what Paul calls elsewhere the fellowship of the indwelling Spirit of God (2 Cor. 13:14). We must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for it is ours together (Eph. 4:3).

Conclusion: And so, we come to the last word of the Galatian Epistle – *Amen*. Will you and I join Paul in that affirmation this morning? “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Can we say *Amen* to that?

As we close our study of the Epistle of Galatians, I want to remind us of two commands it contains that summarize its message for us:

1. “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage” (5:1). Justification is by faith and not by works. Do not go back to trusting in your works.

2. “Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (5:13). This we can do through the power of God’s Spirit. Walk in Him, and we shall in no way fulfill the lust of the flesh.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching