Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Rejoicing in the Cross
Scripture: Galatians 6:11-16
Code: 1292

Take your Bible if you will and let's look at the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, Galatians 6. I want to share with you from the Word of God in verses 11 through 16. You listen as I read in preparation for our message.

"You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised only less they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ for neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and as many as walk according to this rule peace be on them and mercy even upon the Israel of God."

You will notice at the end of verse 13 phrase "Glory in your flesh" and then in verse 14, "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are only two religions in the world. That's all. Just two. In spite of the myriad of claims, there are only two. One is God's, one is Satan's. One is called the religion of human achievement, that is Satan's religion and it is based upon man's own effort and ability. The other is the religion of divine accomplishment, that is God's and it's based solely and only on God's sovereign ability. One, you see, depends on what man can do and the other depends on what God did. One is earned, the other is a gift. One is by human effort; the other is by divine grace. One is by works, one is without works, and sadly but clearly, most people on the face of the earth in human history have banked their time and eternal destiny on the religion of human achievement that says I'm good enough if I just behave myself and carry out certain religious functions, God will accept me.

Now the religion of human achievement comes in many, many forms and packages, but it is all really the same religion. It is all the satanic counterfeit and if God says that men are saved by grace through faith apart from anything they can do. Satan will say men are saved by what they can do and all religion falls into those two conflicting categories.

Whether you're talking about the Mighty I Am movement, Mormonism, Islam, Eurancha, the One World Family, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Spiritualism, the Association for Research and Enlightenment, the Divine Light Mission, OASPE, Worldwide Church of God, Great White

Brotherhood, Ascera Unification Church, the Way International, Scientology, the Roman Catholic system or whatever other system of religion you're talking about in the world; they all fall into the category of the religions of human achievement. And they all say that through certain means you can better yourself. You can become pleasing to God or gods that be, you can attain salvation, you can take yourself to a better world because you have within you the ability to do that.

It's interesting, if you analyze all those religions that I mentioned to you, what their sources are. The Mighty I Am movement was dictated by a spirit being, Mormonism came from supposedly an angel delivering golden plates. Islam was dictated by the angel Gabriel, they say. Eurancha came from 23 extra-terrestrials who dictated a 2,100 page book through automatic writing. The One World Family came from extra-terrestrials. Jehovah's Witness's information was given by angels of different rank who controlled the primary witnesses. The Association for Research and Enlightenment came from psychic forces through automatic writing. The Divine Light Mission was given by a spirit voice. The Great White Brotherhood came from a spirit named Azareel through a medium. OASPE came from many spirits in automatic writing. Armstrong angelic revelations to Mrs. Armstrong, that's the Worldwide Church of God. Ascera came from telephonic inspiration from a source spirit. The Unification church information was dictated by supernatural spirits, Christian Science by special revelation to Mary Baker Eddy and on and on and on; clearly all from the same Satanic, demonic source.

There's only, I say it again, a choice between two religions: the religion of human achievement which comes under many labels and the religion of divine accomplishment which is revealed in the sacred pages in the Word of God. That is the Word of God, the rest is the word of Satan who according to 2 Corinthians 11 "disguises himself as an angel of light and his ministers do the same and they come to perpetrate a deception on humanity, and it is successful." So no matter what the name of the system, no matter what the name of the particular religion or cult might be, other than biblical Christianity it is nothing other than the religion of human achievement spawned by Satan.

And over against that you have the religion of divine accomplishment, the one glories in the flesh, the other glories in the cross. The Apostle Paul had spent all of his life in the religion of human achievement -- for him it was Judaism. And he had thought that by being circumcised the eighth day and by heritage from the tribe of Benjamin and by being a Pharisee of the Pharisees that is getting into the most legalistic religious core within that framework of Judaism by being more zealous for the law than any other of his contemporaries and by being blameless as he says in Philippians 3, he would attain that which would please God and allow him to enter God's kingdom forever, and when he stacked it all up against the religion of divine accomplishment he said it made nothing but a pile of manure, and he embraced the cross the only choice.

Now Paul came preaching this message to the Galatians because you see the Galatians had been the victims of preachers who had come after Paul to preach the religion of human achievement. Paul

had established the churches known in the area as Galatia and he had established them on the truth of divine accomplishment. He had given them the Gospel of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his perfect work of bearing sin on the cross and he had established that in their hearts and minds and the churches were born and behind him then came those who said, no that's not enough, there must be human achievement. You must have circumcision and you must maintain the Mosaic Law or you cannot please God. You have to get involved in saving yourself. And so he has dealt with this issue in the Galatian epistle and I believe as we come to verse 11 he sums it all up and he makes a comparison between the religions of human achievement and divine accomplishment: one glories in the flesh, the other glories in the cross. And this is helpful, I hope, to you to understand if you're confused about the many religions of the world that there really aren't that many, there's just God's and Satan's. God's is the truth, Satan's is a lie and it is an accommodating lie for it finds enough forms to please almost all godless, christless people.

Let's look then at two major points in the text, the first one is glorying in the flesh, verses 11 to 13, and then glorying in the cross, verses 14 to 16. Let's begin at verse 11. "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand." Says the authorized text, literally the rendering is this: you see with what large letters I write to you in my own hand. Paul is remarking about the size of the letters in his penmanship. Now many commentators and students have found it very difficult to deal with this verse because he's talking about great spiritual realities up to this point in Galatians. In fact in the beginning of chapter six just marvelous, marvelous spiritual truth and then in verse 12 he's talking about great, comprehensive spiritual truth as he compares the glory of the flesh with the glory of the cross and they asked the question so often, what in the world is he doing dropping this thing in here about writing large letters? Who cares? What does that have to do with anything? And I confess to you that it took a rather long time for me to try to figure out just exactly what he was doing.

Let me see if I can help you to understand it. The size of the letters with which Paul wrote seemed to be an issue to him. He was in the habit, you see, of dictating his epistles and having a secretary or an amanuensis write them down and then at the end of the epistle or near the end he would pick the pen up himself and he would write a few closing words and sign his own signature to authenticate the letter. You can be sure that because of the wide influence of Paul and the tremendous impact of his ministry and the great respect that he had from the early church that there were many people who would've wanted to foist off on the church forgeries under the name of Paul. In order to prevent such forgeries most frequently Paul would sign off the end of his letter himself and very often he would refer to people that he knew very well so that there would be a connection with people that they also would know and then he would sign his own name.

In this case that verse seems to indicate that he wrote the whole letter, and it may well be that he did because it seems as though Galatia was suffering from such a disastrous problem as the religion of human achievement was endeavoring to superimpose itself on the religion of divine accomplishment that Paul was writing with great passion and great zeal and a great heated heart, if you will, and in the

midst of that he picks the pen up himself, not seeking a secretary, and begins under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to let flow what flows.

And so it's likely that he actually wrote the thing himself, as over against such as his comment as the end of 1 Corinthians 16:21 where he says, "The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand." It seems as though he's writing it all here, and this certainly would guarantee it against being thought to be a forgery. You might want to note that when Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians in chapter 2, verses one and two, he warns the Thessalonians not to be deceived by someone who writes them a letter as if it was from him. So we know this was a common problem and would be prevented by his own handwriting. In this case they would recognize it as his perhaps in total.

But what does that have to do with the size of the letters? Paul was not a professional scribe. He was not one who meticulously copied manuscript upon manuscript upon manuscript and whose penmanship needed to be near perfection. Not only that, it's very likely that he had a problem with his eyes and in order to see what he was writing, he had to write it very large. And so as he looks at what he is writing and he's writing in zeal and passion and there's a certain righteous fury in his heart and there's a certain concern in his heart that restrains the normal exactness and then the eyesight problem and what he sees when he's done is a lot of large, scrawly, scratchy, squiggly letters on the papyrus or whatever he's writing on, and he can't resist a comment about it. And in fact as he looks at it, it seems to him to be a parable. It seems to him to be a parable.

Some people care only about the penmanship and not the content and some of you, he may assume, are going to get a little bit sort of negative about me because you're going to see the way I write and it's going to be a good excuse for those of you who don't like me to criticize this letter because of its sloppy, scrawly form and that triggers his thought in verse 12.

"There are plenty of people who desire to make a fair show in the flesh." Maybe he looked at those letters and they became for him a kind of parable from which he drew the thoughts that followed, that to some people it was the outward display that was everything. For some people it was the letter, not the spirit, and as he sees in the finale of his letter those large letters before him and knows that they are not the careful, exact kind of things that a trained and prepared and careful scribe would produce, he sees in that the illustration that he needs to trigger his thought. And now he's going to talk about those who follow the religion of the letter, the religion of the outward, not the inward. The religion of the flesh. The religion of human achievement.

And he says in verse 12, "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised only less they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ for neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh." Well some people who are hung up on fleshly glory, there are some people who are hung up on external things and he gives us three reasons why people follow the religion of human

achievement.

Reason number one, three reasons why people glory in the flesh; to show off spirituality, to show off spirituality, notice verse 12. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised." The people who are coming along saying you can please God by religious rights, circumcision being one of them. You can please God by outward religious activities and duties. These people do that because they want to put on a fine outward display, that's what fair show is, they want to make a big impression about their piousity. They want to demonstrate that in and of themselves they are good and righteous people, and so they mask the reality of their evil hearts with external goodness, they modify their behavior to conform to a certain ethical code, a certain moral code, a certain religious code and they do that to demonstrate that in and of themselves they can really put on a religious display.

Now I believe that is really the core of the evil of man's heart. It isn't that man is a sinner that marks out his evil, it is that he is a sinner, but wants everyone to believe he's really righteous and so he not only is sinful, but he is hypocritical. But the ego of man finds it very difficult to overcome that and so men desire to parade a spirituality, to parade a goodness that they really don't have and the religions of the world are filled with people who want to be philanthropic and they want to be ethical and they want to be moral and they want to demonstrate that they're good people and they're honorable people and they want to put on a display of godliness to some extent or another depending on the parameters of their system; the truth of the matter is they do it only because they're putting on a display, not because they're real on the inside.

And what Paul is saying is this is the religion of human achievement. These people are coming to you displaying a kind of attitude that simply reflects the pride and ego and conceit of their own heart. They are unwilling to come to the cross of Christ, they are unwilling to confess their sin, they are unwilling to remark about their wretchedness, they are unwilling to recognize their nothingness. They are unwilling to see their unworthiness, but instead they parade as if they were really spiritual. They want to appear holy. I've seen them crawling on their knees for a quarter of a mile in Guadalajara, Mexico. I've seen them crawling up hundreds and hundreds of stairs in Montreal on their knees, wanting so desperately to be pious, so desperately to be religious and you've seen them in all kinds of religious things and all kinds of moral and ethical behavior wanting God to accept them because of their outward show and wanting people to think how religious and spiritual they are when the fact of the matter is it's nothing but an outward show.

There's a second reason people follow the religion of human achievement and it's in verse 12 also, the end of the verse, "Lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." They really don't want to attach themselves to the cross because the cross has been despised and mocked and the adherence to the cross of Christ have been rejected by society. Society in many places and cases and times in history is hostile to those who are identified with the cross of Christ. It is an offense to

the Jews, Paul says the cross to the Jews is a stumbling block and it is to the Gentiles foolishness. The doctrine of saving grace, the sinfulness of man, the irredeemability of man apart from God strikes a blow in the face of man's ego. He does not want to admit that he's wretched. He does not want to admit that he can't save himself. He does not want to admit his sin and so he doesn't come to the cross. And then secondly he doesn't come because he doesn't want to get the heat from the people around him who reject the cross.

There are many people who stay in the religions of human achievement because they don't want to pay the price of persecution when they come to Christ, and there is persecution because when you step into the religion of divine accomplishment and you embrace the Savior at the cross, Satan and all of his hosts are set against you. Some people aren't willing to pay that price. The doctrine of saving grace in the cross creates resentment, there's no question about that. It creates hostility, it creates persecution. So to keep from being persecuted, particularly these Jews who didn't want to get unsynogogued and ostracized and put out of their families just didn't come near it. They didn't want to lose their good standing in the community.

So the first reason they don't embrace the cross, the first reason people stay in their religion of human achievement is a very self centered one; they are very anxious to parade the fact that they're good people. The second is a socially centered one; they don't want people turning around and being hostile toward them. And may I suggest to you that the cross does bring about hostility. There's no question about that because it literally cuts everything out from under the religions of human achievement. It devastates man at the very core of his ego. It tells him he can't do it on his own. He's unacceptable to God. That's why you have the very, very most religious people gathered in Jerusalem. In Acts 5 the Sanhedrin and they are facing Peter and the other apostles and they are letting them know that they are no longer to preach. They don't want to hear their message. They hate their message. They are to close their mouths about their message and so when Peter comes there he says in verse 29 of Acts 5, "We ought to obey God rather than men." And then he goes ahead and gives the message they didn't ever want to hear; "the God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." He doesn't just say Jesus died, he says you killed him. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a savior to give repentance to Israel, forgiveness of sins, and we are his witnesses of these things and so is also the Holy Spirit whom God had given to them that obey him." And he preached the cross to the Sanhedrin and when they heard that they were cut to the heart and they took council to slay them. There is a reaction to the preaching of the cross; it causes rejection, hostility, resentment. Sad to say in many cases the church has become the enemy of the cross in the sense that because it gets its persecution from preaching the cross has mitigated the message, and that's tragic. And as someone said Christianity has been wounded in the house of its friends. We cannot back off the message of the cross because there is a reaction to it.

So Paul is saying then that people reject the glory of the cross for personal reasons, for social reasons and there's a third thing that I see here in verse 13 and we're just touching these briefly. The third reason that people glory in the flesh is to cover up their sin and you'll notice verse 13 says, "For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law." You know the people who advocate religion by works don't keep all the law they know to be right. I don't care what religious system they're in, I don't care what the ethics are, the morality, the standards are. I don't care how people want to say "Well I'm a good person," if they look at their own life they're going to find that they don't even keep true to the things they know to be right. They can't even keep the law they affirm to be the source of their redemption. The source of their acceptance with God, their ticket to heaven, they don't even keep it themselves. And that could be a very heavy problem to deal with. To know that you, or at least to believe in your mind, that you had to please God by your works and know you weren't going to be able to do that and so verse 13 says, "In an effort to sort of cover up the inability that they have they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh." It's almost as if they're saying to themselves, "If we can just gather enough converts into our human achievement system, we can sort of smother ourselves in the reality that 50,000 Frenchman can't be wrong. And even though we may be struggling in our own lives with the reality of the thing we believe, if we can just mass up enough people it must be right."

And so there are religions all across the world and cults and isms and chisms and spasms and everything else that are basically committed to converting people as fast as they can, not because they really in their heart believe that they have been converted and brought to God, but because they're trying to cover up their guilt and their insecurity with a mass of people being committed to it so they can ride in on the supposed experience of someone else who on the outside is portraying the thing as if it were real.

And so the religion of human achievement and they keep pretending and they reject the cross because the cross tells the truth, it really tells the truth. The cross cuts men down. The cross bursts the balloon of inflated ego; the cross shrinks us to true size because the cross says "You can't come to God on your own. Your ethics and your morals and your religion don't get you there. You need a savior." Somebody has to die for your sin. You can't do it on your own.

And so Paul looks at the large, scrawly letters and they remind him of those who come only for the outward show, the religion of human achievement. As over against that and for our focus is glorying in the cross, divine accomplishment, verses 14 to 16. "But God forbid, no, no, no," he says, "may it never be. I wouldn't even give it a thought. Absolutely impossible. In no way would I ever glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word glory is a synonym for praise, for rejoicing, for honor, for worship, for adoration. He's saying, "Look I'm not going to praise the flesh, I'm going to praise the cross. I'm not going to honor the human flesh; I'm going to honor the cross because it is the cross that can redeem and the cross alone."

There's a wonderful comfort here beloved in this sense, I've always wondered how people ever get the sense of having arrived in a religious system because it seems as if you're in a system of works it would take you so long to sort of get up to speed with whatever level you're supposed to be at. So much to learn and so much to absorb and everybody sort of in process trying to get to God and everybody feeling inadequate on the inside, what a debilitating sort of self-defeating kind of chase that would be, and the wonderful simplicity of the cross is that it isn't some long process of learning, it isn't some long training thing, it is that you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and in a moment of time the miracle of redemption happens. How wonderful.

And so Paul says, "I would never glory in anything but the cross." The insignia of the Christian faith is not two tables of stone containing Ten Commandments. The insignia of the Christian faith is not a sword. The insignia of the Christian faith is not an angel. The insignia of the Christian faith is a cross and we are the only group of people on God's earth who ever took a torture instrument as the symbol of our faith and I've asked people that when I see sometimes a cross around their neck and I know they don't know the Savior, what does that mean? And more often than any other answer I have heard, why it means love. And then I remind them that it was the most heinous torture instrument of the ancient world, how could it mean love? And they don't seem to have understood that the only reason it means love is because it is the symbol of a loving Savior who died for the sins of men who could not in any other way be brought to God. Christianity's symbol is a cross because it was the act of divine accomplishment, God became man and went to the cross to pay the price for our sins and that is the only way, that is the only way that a man is made right with God, that a woman is made right with God; that's the only way. All the other religions of the world are satanically spawned, demonically energized efforts at human achievement and they damn people under the deception and the illusion that they're alright. They must be alright, look at the outside show. They must be alright, look how many people are joining us. They must be alright, nobody's persecuting us, we're popular. We don't offend. And so people look at the Bible and reject it, say no that isn't right.

But think of it this way; God is God and God set the standard and God says he's holy and he wants men to come into his presence and he wants men to be saved from death and hell. He wants men to come to him forever and enjoy eternal life, but he says in order to do that their sin has to be eliminated and the only way their sin can be eliminated is for the penalty to be paid which is death and so Christ comes into the world, dies, pays the penalty for those that accept that, sin is eliminated as a barrier between them and God and they enter into eternal life with God; that's the way God ordained that if you're to come into God's presence you have to get rid of your sin. Now folks, no one can do that on his own. No one. There is none, Romans 3 says righteous no, not, what? One. God's justice demands absolute righteousness, demands a holy standard and yet the whole world is lying in the lap of the wicked one. The whole world is in sin. All have come short of God's glory and so God says here's the standard. You can't do it for yourself, I'm doing it for you in Christ, but people find it difficult to understand that God sets the rules, that God is the one who lays down the standards,

and so they come along and this is the epitome of ego and say, "Well I know about that Bible thing, but this is how I think it is."

You know that would be like saying you're going to go to a football game and you go up to the guy at the gate to buy a ticket and the little sign says, "Admission $10.00" and you stand there and you say to the guy, "Look no way am I paying $10.00 to get into this game. Now I've seen these teams play, maximum $6.00 would I pay to watch them. There's no way I'm paying $10.00 to see these teams play. I'll give you $3.00 for each team, $6.00." You could be erudite, you could be very convincing, the guy's going to look at you like you're out of your mind and say, "Listen fella, the price is $10.00. You can take it or you can leave it, but you can't modify it. You don't set the price; I don't even set the price. You want to come in, you pay it. You don't want to pay it, you stay out. That's your choice." And that's how it is in redemption. God established the price. You don't negotiate it. You don't bargain with him. It is not debatable. You take it, come in or leave it, stay out. You don't negotiate it. It is absolute and the price is this: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for sin. It is God's heaven, not yours. He lays down the terms of admittance and you come in on his terms or you stay out and all the religions of the world are people outside the gate trying to renegotiate the price of the ticket. Idiocy. You can't make up rules for your own salvation, it's in the cross of Jesus Christ and that cross alone, but Satan wants you to believe you can make up your own. That way he can capture you in hell forever because misery loves company. That's his big lie.

And can't you see as you look at the cross why Paul would glory in the cross? It is such a magnanimous loving act that God should die for you, is it not? And if you just look at the cross in the Bible, there's nothing else you can conclude. For example, let's imagine one day I go down here to the coast and I go out on the pier and I'm just sitting on the bench on the pier, and I'm just, just having a wonderful time, it's a lovely sunny day and the waves are rolling in and all of the sudden a guy walks up and says to me, "I want to show my love to you" and dives in and drowns. And as he's in the water he's going "I love you." Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, gurgle. See I'm saying what does that mean? That is not a revelation of love. That is a revelation of stupidity. That is a stupid thing to do. I'm not drowning; you don't need to do that. But if on the other hand I'm in there in the surf and I'm drowning and a guy jumps in and says, "I love you, I want to rescue you." And drags me out of the water, then that is an act of love.

Now if you look at the cross of Jesus Christ and you say, "Nice act of love, I'm just not drowning, but I do appreciate your love." That's not an act of love, that is an act of stupidity. The point is this: if men are not damned apart from the death of Jesus Christ then God played the fool. I mean he did us a foolish thing and we're all standing here saying "So sorry you're going through all of that, we're okay." So don't come to the Bible with any of that patronizing nonsense that Jesus dying on the cross is a nice gesture of love for a whole lot of folks who really didn't need it, but are certainly wanting to express their gratitude. That would make God to appear stupid.

When Jesus went to the cross it was because, my dear friend, we were so desperate that if it hadn't happened we'd have been damned to hell forever, there is no other alternative and you can't patronize the cross of Jesus Christ with some whimsical feelings about a loving martyr. Jesus died for our sins because there was no other way. Because all the religions of human achievement in the world are going to do is convince people in a deception that they're okay when they're not and hell will be filled with such religious people. No wonder Paul says "We preach Christ crucified." No wonder he says, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." No wonder he glories only in the cross, that is the majestic simple message of the Christian faith and it was Paul's fundamental conviction that apart from the cross of Jesus Christ no one could ever be right with God. Not before the cross and not even after the cross, for the cross stretches its saving lines to the reaches of history before and after. Only hope is in the cross.

And why should we choose the cross? Why do men choose the religion of human achievement? To show off their spirituality, to avoid persecution, to cover up their sin. Why should we choose the cross? Why should we choose to glory in the cross? Three reasons for that too: reason number one, I love this, it frees us from the world's bondage. It frees us from the world's bondage. Verse 14, "I glory in the cross by whom the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world." And he uses the word crucified here because it's literary, it's in the flow, it has to do with death. He says, "When I embraced Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and I saw the meaning of his death and resurrection and I understood that I had to have faith in him, that I could never save myself, and that my sin had put him there and that I received him as Lord and Savior; when that happened I realized in that moment the world and I parted company." You get that? The world and I parted company.

You say what world? Cosmos, what's that? The human system. The human system, whatever elements of it be it irreligious or religious. The human system which is flowing down like a fast moving stream of sewage into eternal hell, that whole human system, I was in it, I was going along with it, I was floating in it, but when I embraced the cross of Jesus Christ I was taken out of that human system. I was passed out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, from death to life, from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty. I parted company with the world.

John puts it this way in 1 John he says that our faith has overcome the world and then he says in his first epistle if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not what? In him. So when you came to Jesus Christ you severed your affections for the world though once in a while it has its alluring voices for us, but our delight is in the law of God and in that law do we meditate. Our love is toward the things of God even though sometimes our flesh is weak we don't love that world. We've been separated from that world, we've been pulled out of the bondage of that world, that satanic system plunging men into despair and distress and ultimate destruction.

"The world," Paul says, "by wisdom knows not God." The world is corrupt. The world will be judged, the whole satanic system. And he says that when I embraced the cross, the world and I parted company. It's a wonderful, wonderful truth and that was, for Paul, Judaism. That was the world for him. He was bound up in a religious system that could not save.

But what happened when he believed? Paul in Romans 6 says he died. He died with Christ; he rose in newness of life. In Romans 7 he was married prior to one husband, but there was a death and now he's remarried to another one, Christ. It's a whole new life. All old relationships are gone, dead to the world, alive to God. Marvelous truth.

There's a second reason to glory in the cross and that is because the cross will do what your flesh can't do. Verse 15, "for in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything or uncircumcision, but a new creature." Oh, that's so good. So profound. He's saying to those Galatians, "Look, being circumcised or not being circumcised frankly has nothing to do with Jesus Christ or salvation." They actually believed, and the Talmud even says this, circumcision saves. They actually believed that by the surgery of cutting off the male foreskin, they gained redemption. That's how external their religion was. It's not much different from people today who believe that baptism saves, it's also external or any other external thing. But what he is saying is when it comes to Jesus Christ and being in Him, whether you've been circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. Worldly systems of salvation are meaningless, they are inconsequential, they accomplish absolutely nothing. Nothing.

I always think of the fighter that goes in the ring and crosses himself before he fights. It's meaningless. Somebody said, "Does it help?" Somebody else said, "It does if he can punch. In and of itself, it's meaningless." Nothing helps. Circumcision, uncircumcision, religion, non-religion, it doesn't matter. Nothing, but verse 15, a new creation. It doesn't do any good to deal with the outside. It doesn't do any good to try to clean up the act on the outside; the only thing that'll do any good is the new creation.

Behold if any man be in Christ he is a, what? New creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17. And there Paul is simply saying that you can't change the outside, you have to change the inside. A new creation. Jesus said you must be born again. What a glorious truth.

The frustration of a self effort system completely incapacitated. The guilt, the failure, the remorse, the sense of never having arrived, all that bondage from externalism can be broken in the new creation. So Paul glories in the cross because it changed his bondage to the world and his frustrating sinful flesh was transformed into a new creature.

The third reason, he glories in the cross because it brings salvation's benefits. The full benefit of salvation. Verse 16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy and

upon the Israel of God." Oh, this is such a great verse. Look how he says, if anybody walks according to this rule, canon in the Greek, this standard, this principle. What principle? Well there's only two principles of religion; the religion of human achievement, the religion of divine accomplishment. So as many as walk according to this principle, this canon, this rule, this standard of divine accomplishment, what do they receive first of all? Peace. Isn't that what every heart longs for? Peace. A settled confidence in life and death and eternity. Peace and mercy extended for sin to as many as walk according to this principle. So if you'll glory in the cross and embrace the cross and come to the foot of the cross and acknowledge the Savior dying for your sin there and know that you can never save yourself and your sin can never be dealt with any other way than substitutionary in the death of Jesus Christ. When you come to the cross if you walk that way peace and mercy, great truths. Who's it for? As many as walk according to this rule. This is an open invitation to every person: Jew, Gentile. He died for all. The word whosoever, by the way, is used 110 times in the New Testament and it always has an unrestricted meaning and the spirit of the whosoever is in this verse.

So Christ died so that men might be delivered from the world, so they might be delivered from the inability of their weak flesh to become new creations, and so that they might be the recipients of the peace and the mercy of eternal God.

And then he adds this interesting note at the end of verse 16, "Even upon the Israel of God." What does that mean? True Jews, true Jews. You know there is an Israel that is not the Israel of God, is that right? Sure. There are Jews who are not true Jews who are circumcised on the outside, but not circumcised in the heart. There are Jews by heritage who are not true Jews by faith in the Savior and I believe what you have here is a very beautiful invitation where Paul is saying as many as walk by this standard, in other words whoever, and then in a very poignant appeal to the Judaizers themselves, and those whom they affected with their religion of human achievement, he says even upon the true Israel he sorts the true from the untrue, but I believe he gives an invitation to those who are still outside. If you'll walk this way, you'll receive peace and mercy and you'll be a true Jew, a real Jew by faith not just race.

So men follow the religion of human achievement. They do it to satisfy their own ego, to maintain their social relationships, and to cover up their sin. And others follow the cross in order to be separated from the world that is doomed and damned, in order to experience the new creation which alone can give victory over the weak flesh, and in order to inherit the eternal benefits of salvation. You have a choice, everyone has a choice. Listen to this.

Reason cries, if God were good he could not look on the sin and misery of man and live. His heart would break. The Christian points to the cross and says, "His heart did break." Reason says born and reared in sin and pain as we are, how can we keep from sinning? It is the Creator who is responsible; it is God who deserves to be punished. The Christian kneels at the foot of the cross and whispers, "God was punished." Reason says who is God? And what is God? And the name stands

for the unknown. It is blasphemy to say we know Him. The Christian kisses the feet of the dying Savior and says, "We will worship the majesty we see." True reason along with revelation glorifies the cross.

I close with this. A letter written to the Melbourne, Australia daily newspaper: "After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on TV, and reading reports and letters concerning him and his mission, I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul and everyone else's needs saving, whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin although repetitive preaching insists that I do. Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance; that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed, but remembers the agent and teaches children about goodness and not sin. If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned. Sincerely yours."

Well that's every man's choice. Let's pray.

I would encourage you to look in your own heart this morning; do you glory in the flesh? Do you think that in your own strength, on your own merit, by your own credentials and religious efforts and activities and ethics and morality you're going to enter God's kingdom and his eternal heaven? Are you outside the gate negotiating your own price or have you come realizing God has established the way in Jesus Christ? And kneeling at the foot of the cross do you confess your sin and embrace the Savior? It's your choice. Empowered by the Spirit of God may you make the right choice? Father we pray that you'll do your work in every heart, make those who know you thankful for what you've done. Those who have not yet met you, may this be that great day when they embrace the Savior for His glory, Amen.

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