

Boasting Is Blessed

(Galatians 6:6-10)

(preached 10/9/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

At recess one day, a group of fourth graders were standing around and starting to brag about what they had...

The conversation eventually turned to whose family had to most money, and one of the boys told the others...

Well, my dad is rich...

All he does is scribble down a few words on a piece of paper, a man comes and takes it, calls it a newspaper article and gives him \$50...

The second boy boasts, "Well, that is nothing. My dad comes in, writes a few words on a piece of paper, a man comes and gets it, calls it a song, and leaves him \$200..

The third boys speaks up, "Your family doesn't even compare to mine. My dad writes a few words on paper, steps up to a mic, calls it a sermon and it takes 8 men to collect all the money for him."

Kids don't have to be taught how to brag and boast.

It truly comes natural to them and it comes very early in their lives...

Now, I ask you...

What do you boast about today?

What do you talk about most?

Is it your job or your hobbies or your house or your grandkids or your accomplishments?

If I listened in to every conversation, what would you be boasting in most often?

You may say, “well, Bud I am a Christian, I gave up boasting a long time ago.”

I only now listen to other’s boasts...

First, I wouldn't believe you, but second, the Bible would say that there is a time for boasting....

In fact, we are going to look at the time for boasting this morning in Galatians 6:11-18...

Paul is going to finish out his letter to the Galatians this morning with a reminder of the only thing worth boasting about in the world...

Let me read this passage to set the tone for this morning and then we will go back and look at all the parts of it...

Galatians 6:11-18

11 See with what large letters I [c]am writing to you with my own hand. 12 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 [d]for the cross of Christ. 13 For those who [e]are circumcised do not even keep [f]the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through [g]which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new [h]creation. 16 And those who will [i]walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

As Paul ends his letter, he ends by highlighting a final problem with the gospel of works...

It leads to boasting in the wrong thing...

We have been with Paul for 6 chapters now as he writes to churches in Galatia, which was a region north of the Mediterranean Sea about the size of the state of Georgia...

The churches in that region had been founded by Paul on the basis of the true gospel of faith, which says that man is saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, apart from any works of his own...

The true gospel says that the works of Christ are the only works that will ever save a man, woman, boy or girl..

Because we can never do enough good works to overcome our bad works of sin against God.

And Paul had preached that gospel there and the people of Galatia had believed it, yet once Paul had departed, trouble had come to those churches in the form of false teachers known as Judaizers...

These men didn't attack Jesus directly, they simply added good works to faith in Jesus as a requirement of salvation...

And the people in Galatia were listening to them and were going back to following the Jewish law, and were going back to a lifestyle that said rules were more important than faith in Christ...

And that angered Paul, and so he wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia to convince to turn back to a gospel of faith...

Now, many people would argue...

What's the big deal?

These false teachers aren't hurting Jesus; they are simply adding good works to Him...

They would say, what is the big deal really?

And the big deal is this...

When you add to Jesus, he gets smaller and smaller, and eventually the gospel becomes Jesus + all you can do...

To the point that Jesus' life, death and resurrection is swallowed up by man's accomplishments...

To make Jesus smaller is to make God smaller and to steal some of his Glory for Himself...

And God will share His glory with no Other...

So, Paul has spent 6 chapters trying to convince the Galatians to repent of going back to this works based gospel and to simply cling to faith alone in Christ alone...

And he has tried to convince them by showing that the gospel he preached to them was the true gospel....

He has tried to convince them that the Bible never teaches or taught a gospel of works...

And for the final two chapters, he has tried to show them that a gospel of works leads to problem in how to live in the world..

It restricts freedom.

It leads to spiritual pride and accomplishment.

It makes you greedy..

And there is one final problem with the gospel of works...

It leads people to boasting in the wrong thing...

Let me read you Ephesians 2:8-9....

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and [h]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Do you know what happens when people don't believe in a gospel of faith alone in Christ alone?

They end up boasting in their accomplishments that led them to their salvation...

Look, people want to see themselves as important in their salvation...

They want to see themselves as worthy of salvation based upon what they have done..

That is why they get obsessed with their works...

Think of it this way...

If salvation were a result of what you could do for God, it would be a never ending bragging festival at church...

With everyone pointing to all they had done for the Lord...

Instead, church is a never ending bragging festival on what Jesus has done for us..

With all of us pointing at what Jesus has done for us...

Or at least, that is what church should be...

You see as the Galatians were falling back into a gospel of works, their heads were getting bigger at all the special things they were doing to secure their salvation...

And that is what happens when works become the focus of salvation...

People begin to brag about what they have done, and the Galatians were beginning to boast in their good works as well....

So Paul sets out to close this letter with a reminder to the Galatians and to us that there is but one kind of boasting that is acceptable before God...

And it is boasting in what he has accomplished in the cross of Jesus Christ...

Now before he gets to that in this final section of his letter, he is going to take one more shot at the gospel of works in verses 11-13 to show why it is unacceptable to God...

Now, as we end this book, one great way to remember the theme of this book is by seeing the battle that has been fought on the pages of this letter...

And the battle is on a gospel of works versus a gospel of faith, but maybe a better way to describe it is this...

There are two religions in the world...

There is a religion of human achievement...

And a religion of divine accomplishment...

In the first option, man says “Look at what I have done to be right with God.”

In the second option, man says, “Look at what God has done to make a way for me to be right with Him.”

And all throughout the letter, Paul has been pointing people to the religion of divine accomplishment...

But before we get there, let’s get one more look at...

I. The Religion of Human Achievement (11-13)

Now, the religion of human achievement has a certain number of characteristics....

And we see a number of these is verses 11-13...

The first characteristic is found in verse 11 and the first part of verse 12...

11 See with what large letters I [c]am writing to you with my own hand. 12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh...

Stop with there...

Here is the first characteristic of a religion of human achievement...

#1- The religion of human achievement is showy.

In other words, it is only concerned with outward appearance...

Look, I went to look at cars when I went to college, and there was nice Honda accord that had less miles, better tires, a nicer interior, and a lower price than the Jeep Cherokee that was sitting right beside it...

But I was a gut headed to college...

I couldn't take an Accord to college; it was a no brainer...

Buy the Jeep and look good even though it may break down on the side of the road, which it did on the way home from Clemson one day...

We are people that are concerned with image over content..

And so are the people who follow a religion of human achievement...

They are concerned with the exterior of a person and not the interior....

Jesus said they were clean on the outside but full of dead men's bones on the inside...

In the Galatian churches, the false teachers were obsessed with believers being circumcised because they wanted an outward sign of salvation...

They wanted them to go back under the Sabbath laws so that they would look good in the world..

They wanted them keeping the Jewish festivals because that made a good impression in their towns...

False religion is obsessed with outward appearance...

Now Paul makes an interesting statement in verse 11 when he says that he write this letter to the Galatians in large script...

You see the professional way to write was with cursive letters in Greek, but Paul apparently wrote this in large block letters of manuscript..

And the point of him pointing to this is simple...

Content is more important than style or outward appearance....

Because God looks on the heart and not the works of the hands...

And Paul is telling them even in the way that he wrote the letter that outward appearance is useless.

It is the content of the heart that matters...

And he simply says describes the Judaizers as those who want to make a good showing...

So, first of all, the religion of human achievement focuses on externals...

The second trait of the religion of human achievement is found in the second half of verse 12....

(The false teachers) “*to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted [d]for the cross of Christ.*”

#2 - The religion of human achievement tries to force its rules on you.

When people value works over faith, they want you to fall in line with what they believe as well..

In Galatia, the false teachers were forcing circumcision on the people to try and make themselves feel and look better...

It is the oldest trick in the book...

If I do something bad, I will feel better if somebody joins me in my evil...

For the false teachers, they felt better if they could force other to join in their works based salvation by compelling them to be circumcised...

Characteristic #3 is seen in verse 13...

13 For those who [e]are circumcised do not even keep [f]the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

#3 - The religion of human achievement is hypocritical.

It is a religion that says you must do what they say but not what they do.

False teachers are those who say one thing but do another...

And the false teachers in Galatia were no different.

They were telling the Galatians to keep the law, yet they themselves were law breakers...

How often do you see legalistic preachers and teachers who fall into sin?

That is no accident...

Those who say they love the law and force you to live by it often break it behind closed doors...

The final characteristic of the religion of human achievement is this...

#4 - The religion of human achievement is filled with pride and power.

Paul tells the Galatians at the end of verse 13 that the false teachers only wanted to force the law of circumcision on them in order to boast of their influence over the people in the Galatian churches.

In other words, the Judaizers had no concern for the people under their teaching; they only wanted to brag about how influential they were in their teaching.

They loved the power that they had over the weak minded Galatians to lead them away from the true gospel...

And they loved the prestige that it brought them...

The false teachers you see today have no concern for the people under their ministries...

Their only concern is the power it gives them and the fame it leads to..

Now, let's leave the religion of human achievement and turn our attention to...

II. The Religion of Divine Accomplishment (14-18)

In verse 14, Paul contrasts the attitude and characteristics of people who were teaching a religion of human achievement with his attitude toward the religion of divine accomplishment...

Look at verse 14....

14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,...

Stop right there for a minute...

The first characteristic of the religion of divine accomplishment is this...

#1 - The religion of divine accomplishment is centered in Christ and the cross.

Unlike the false teachers of Galatia, Paul wasn't boasting in anything that he had done regarding his salvation.

He simply boasting in what God and done on his behalf by sending his own Son to die in the place of guilty sinners...

Christianity is so different from all the religions of the world because the message of Christianity is not man striving and working to get to God, but God reaching down to man...

How is Christianity different than Islam or Judaism or Mormonism or Buddhism or Hindusim?

What sets us apart from all the religions of the world?

Our way of salvation says that there is nothing a man or woman can do to be saved...

He or she must simply believe what God has done for them in the death of Christ...

And that leaves no man with a reason to boast in how good he is or how much he deserves to be saved...

Instead, it causes us to close our mouth about what we have done and simply boast about what God has done for us in the cross of Jesus Christ...

Characteristic #2 of a religion of divine accomplishment is found in the second half of verse 14...

14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through [g]which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

#2 - The religion of divine accomplishment sees no value in the world.

Paul essentially writes that after salvation, he is dead to the world...

And that should make sense to us...

People who are focused on human accomplishment are focused on what they can do in the world to earn their way into heaven...

People who are focused on what God has accomplished in the cross are focused on heaven because that is where the One who earned their salvation lives..

The false teachers had their eyes on the world and they were trying to focus the Galatians eyes back on the world by telling them that good works were earning their salvation...

Paul is simply saying that the world has nothing for him because his help and his salvation came from heaven...

For those of you in here who are focused on this world, I would remind you that this world will burn up and so will you if you love the world more than you love the God of heaven...

The religion of divine accomplishment sees no value in this world...

Though they live in the world, they are not of the world because the world does not give us any hope...

Our hope is in heaven where our Savior lives..

Characteristic #3 of the religion of divine accomplishment is found in verse 15...

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new [h]creation.

#3 - The religion of divine accomplishment works from the inside out.

Religions of human achievement say this...

We are going to make you right with God by changing you from the outside in....

Start giving money to church and God will be happy with you...

Start giving up your bad habits and God will accept you..

Start singing in the choir and serving God and God will save you...

For the Galatians, it was get circumcised and God will be pleased with you...

Paul simply writes that circumcision or no circumcision is nothing nothing in the eyes of God...

Because God is not pleased by externals...

Because God always looks on the heart...

God is concerned with the inside first...

God desires to see trust and belief and him...

God desires to see a heart of repentance before the acts of repentance...

So, Paul writes that a new creation on the inside is what is important to God....

The outside will follow when the inside is made new, but the outside can never create a new inside...

You see, the religion of human achievement claims that if you clean up the outside, your inside will follow...

But that simply isn't the case...

Salvation happens on the inside first as your repent and believe in your heart, and God takes that inward change and brings outward change...

Think of a seed in the ground....

You plant it in good soil out of sight, you add water, and then something happens in the inside of that seed to cause it to grow...

The plant is simply proof that the seed has already been changed into something new....

The religion of divine accomplishment says that man can only be re-created from the inside out.

Therefore, human achievement that works on the outside cannot cause a person to be made new on the inside...

Now, we are out of time, but I want us to not miss these final 3 verses...

We will handle them quickly, but we need to see finally...

III. The Blessings of the Religion of Divine Accomplishment (16-18)

The first blessing of the religion of divine accomplishment is this...

#1 - The religion of divine accomplishment brings peace into your life.

Verse 16...

16 And those who will [i]walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

I have said this before but it bears repeating....

A gospel of good works and the religion of human accomplishment offers no peace and mercy to the one who is in it....

Think of it this way....

If you think that God saves based upon what you did or didn't do today, you never have peace....

There is always more to do...

Ladies, you will understand this....

If you find your value as a wife or mother in how clean your house is, you will never have peace....

Because a house is never perfectly clean...

Even when it looks clean on the outside, you open your cabinets and closets and realize you could die when something falls out...

Or you look under a bed and find a mess or you look at the baseboards...

There is always something to do...

You could literally work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and never be finished with all that needs to be done....

The same could be said for us men and the maintenance we could do on our homes on the outside or on our cars...

In a very real sense, we can't see our worth in what needs to be done because there is always something that needs to be done...

The same is true for the person working his way to God...

He can never rest...

He is always needing another good deed to cover up his constant sin....

For the Christian, he finds peace as he rests in the religion of divine accomplishment...

Though he constantly works to put off sin and pursue holiness, he knows that nothing he can do can secure his salvation one inch beyond what Jesus has accomplished for him on the cross...

And that helps him sleep even on days when things aren't going all that good...

The second blessing of the religion of divine accomplishment is found in verse 17...

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

#2 - The religion of divine accomplishment puts this life in proper perspective.

For those who belong to the religion of human achievement, there is a great need to keep their lives clean and looking good to the world on the outside...

Because in their mind, a clean and sparkling outside is a sure ticket to heaven...

Paul had a body that had been beaten and tortured and scarred by his attempts to share the gospel in the world...

Because Paul realized that this life is simply preparation of the life to come...

His worn out body and his persecution from others were of no concern to him...

Because this life did not matter to Paul...

The life to come is what mattered to Paul....

Think of it this way you NASCAR fans....

You can keep your car real shiny on Sunday and out of danger, but you may finish last...

If you want to win the race, you may have to put a few tire marks on the side and rub the wall to get to the lead...

People who value this life and this body more than the the life and body to come will never do much of the Lord's Kingdom...

It is only those who see what God accomplished by allowing his Son's body to be tortured and killed who then see their bodies as instruments to be used by God to spread the gospel in the world...

Luke 9:24

Jesus said, ***24 For whoever wishes to save his [n]life will lose it, but whoever loses his [o]life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.***

Those who believe in a religion of divine accomplishment understand that this life is simply a preparation for the life to come...

Therefore, these bodies should be offered up to God in the same way that he offered up the body of His Son as our Substitute...

Final blessing of the religion of divine accomplishment...

Verse 18...

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

#3 - The religion of divine accomplishment is a religion of grace.

Let me very clear, if you believe that your good works and your human achievement earn you points with God, you have no appreciation of grace...

Because grace says this....

I can do nothing to earn God's salvation, blessing or favor....

It is all a work of God that I am what I am....

However, that is not the view of people who value good works over grace....

They say that they are what they because of what they have done in this world...

That is not grace...that is arrogance and pride...

A final blessing of the religion of divine accomplishment is this...

We know grace because we have received it from God...

God's unmerited, unearned blessings come to us through no work of our own but only because he is a kind and gracious God...

Conclusion

The true gospel that Paul had preached in Galatia...

The true gospel that Paul had tried to prove all throughout this letter...

The true gospel that comes to you today has, is, and always will be a gospel of grace...

Because the true gospel says that you are dead in sin, a slave to sin, and it is only by God's outpouring of grace that you can ever be saved...

For some of us, we have seen God's grace, and we should now live as gracious people...

For others this morning who aren't saved, you are now experiencing God's grace because you are hearing and have heard that salvation has come to this world....

And it is available today not by what you can do or achieve for God, but by what he has done and accomplished for you on the cross as Jesus died in the place of guilty sinners...

What God asks of you in response to his grace is this...

Repent of our sins and believe upon the finished work of Christ on the cross...

And as we have learned today, the first place that belief and repentance must occur is in your heart this morning...

IT must first occur in the control center of you are..

It must occur in your mind and heart and then it will spread to your life...

You can do nothing on the outside to be saved this morning...

IF you want to be made new, it must occur on the inside of you first...

Repent and believe in your heart...

And I want add a final thought to end the book of Galatians...

Paul was writing to people who were being drawn to a religion of human achievement to tell them to let go of those works and simply cling to Christ....

And I may be preaching to someone this morning who has a storehouse of human achievement hoping that God will accept it on judgment day...

I want to warn you this morning...

If you have spent years collecting good works in hopes that God will save you based on them with, you are no closer to salvation than when you started...

God would say empty your closet of human achievement and give your heart of repentance and faith this morning....

And he will save you, and your achievements will no longer have your focus....

Instead, your focus will be upon God's achievement in Christ...

Let us pray.