

# Something to Boast About

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## Galatians 6:1-10

**P**eer pressure can have a strong influence on us. The style of our clothes, the kind of music we listen to, our vocabulary, even the brands we buy at the grocery store are impacted by what others do and say. We are often tempted to change our behavior so others will accept us. But such acceptance can be costly. In this closing passage, Paul gets us to consider whose approval we desire most.

Paul normally dictated his letters to someone who wrote them down. But Paul decides to add his final remarks himself, writing in large letters. He shows the big difference between himself and his opponents by revealing what each desires to boast about.

## Read Galatians 6:11-18

### 1. Why is Paul drawing attention to his handwriting style? (v. 11)

It was Paul's practice to dictate letters to a scribe or amanuensis, who would then write each word down (see Romans 16:22). Now, at the end of this letter, Paul takes the pen in his own hand to write the final words. (He told the Thessalonians this was the mark of each of his letters – 2 Thess 3:18.) Compared to the neat letters of the trained scribe, Paul wrote rather large letters. Paul wanted his readers to realize that the final words were written by Paul himself in order to verify that the letter was from him. This is much in the same way that a letter today is verified by a signature.

Some have believed also, that Paul's large letters were due to a possible vision problem in light of Galatians 4:15. Most feel it was simply for emphasis.

### 2. Explain how the Judaizers avoided persecution by requiring Gentiles to be circumcised. (v. 12)

By requiring Gentiles to be circumcised, the Jewish Christians didn't appear to be part of a new and dangerous sect to the unbelieving Jews. They blended in with the Jewish doctrine and were considered a harmless variation of Judaism with whom the Gentiles were more comfortable.

We who have faced little physical persecution should not underestimate the pressure the Galatian Christians felt.

### **3. Do circumcised people obey the law? Why or why not? (v. 13)**

Those who advocate circumcision don't actually keep the whole law. As Paul wrote earlier in Gal 5:3, "every man who lets himself be circumcised ...is obligated to obey the whole law."

The advocates of circumcision were unable to keep the law perfectly themselves—so what was their goal in compelling others to be circumcised?

### **4. Why do they want the Gentiles to be circumcised? (v. 13)**

They most likely told the Gentiles circumcision was needed to be holy and acceptable to God. But Paul tells the Galatians that the real reason is so they can boast about their flesh. They only care about their victories made in the cutting of Gentile flesh and the bragging rights that went along with it.

### **5. What is the only thing Paul is willing to boast in? (v. 14)**

Paul vowed never to boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Other translations use the word "glory" instead of boast.

We must remember that the cross was not yet the sacred symbol that it is today. At that time, the cross was a loathsome form of Roman execution and an object of shame. Try to imagine a hangman's noose in place of the cross. How would that look on your necklace?

For Paul, however, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ symbolized man's depravity and God's sufficiency. It is the perfect illustration of the failure of human works and the remedy of God's righteousness made available through faith in Christ. The cross is the tower of triumph for grace, and the seal of defeat for works.

### **6. What does Paul mean that the world is crucified to him and he to the world? (v. 14)**

The cross represents the point at which the Christian is cut off (crucified) from the world. Because of the cross, the pleasures of the world lose their appeal. Because of the cross, the child of God no longer is subjected to the basic principles of the world.

This reiterates what Paul stated in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

It is interesting that the scriptures also point to baptism as the separation of the believer from the old life (Romans 6:1-4). Actually, baptism and the cross are closely connected, since it is by baptism that we join Jesus in His death. It is the cross that makes baptism significant.

**7. In what way are Christians “new creations”? Read Colossians 2:9-12 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 for further insight. (v. 15)**

Because of the resurrection of Christ, we too, walk in newness of life. It is not God’s intention to remodel the person of flesh; He wants to make a new one! The only thing that counts, that matters to God, is whether a person is in Christ Jesus and is clothed in His righteousness.

In the Colossians passage, a spiritual circumcision occurs as God cuts away the sinful nature. This cutting away is when you were buried with Christ in baptism and then raised to new life.

In Acts 15, Peter testified that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles and God made no distinction between “us” and “them,” for he purified their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8-9). With purified hearts and the Holy Spirit in us, we are new creations of God.

**8. What is the rule Paul mentions? (v. 16)**

Paul is referring to what he said in the previous two verses, but more particularly verse 15. This verse summarizes the doctrine of the entire epistle to the Galatians. Paul pronounces a blessing of **peace** and **mercy** for those who walk according to this truth: ***Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.***

**9. Who does Paul mean by “the Israel of God”? (v. 16)**

Those who are in Christ are God’s chosen people, the children of God. Although for a time, people were born into this special group by physical bloodline, now people are born again into the Israel of God by union with Christ through His blood.

In other words, the Jews are no longer the Israel of God, the chosen people. “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants” (Rom 9:6-7).

**10. What are “the marks of Jesus” Paul bears on his body? (v. 17)**

In contrast to the now meaningless mark of circumcision (v. 15a), Paul bears scars as a result of his service for Christ. An example of this would be from the stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19), which Paul’s readers would have known about (since the church at Lystra would have been one of the recipients of this epistle).

In the first century, slaves were branded with their owner’s mark. In a real sense, Paul is the slave of Christ. In certain pagan cults, devotees were tattooed to show to whom they belonged.

**11. Why do these marks serve as a warning to anyone who would cause Paul trouble? (v. 17)**

Paul warns those who oppose him and gives the basis of his authority for stopping their attack. The marks on Paul’s body caused by his sufferings as an apostle of Christ served as proof of this authority. Such a proof of devotion to Christ should silence all critics.

**12. Paul ends the letter with a typical benediction. How does he address them, and why is this important to note? (v. 18)**

Paul concludes with a blessing of grace—a central theme in all of Paul’s letters. For the ninth and final time, Paul addresses his readers as “brothers.” Even though he has warned them and scolded them, he still considers them brothers and makes sure they know that.

**FINAL NOTE:**

The lessons of Galatians boil down to this:

If you have faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have been set free. Instead of going back into some form of slavery, whether to legalism or to sin, use your freedom to live for Christ and serve Him as He desires.