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**A1036 – September 5, 2010 – Galatians 6:11-15 – The Cross Of Christ**

As we near the end of the letter, Paul concludes that he boasts in the cross of Christ and we want to understand what he means by that. Living 20 centuries after the cross we have a nice flowery picture of the cross and, I hope to correct that distorted view of the cross so we come face to face with the real cross and not the surreal cross. The cross has to be grounded in its historical context in the ancient world if we're to appreciate what Paul means when he says I boast in nothing except the cross of Christ.

But to start, Gal 6:11, **See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.** Now the question this verse raises is whether Paul wrote the entire letter in his own hand or only the closing verses? There's evidence on both sides. The evidence that he wrote the entire letter consists of the aorist tense, translated **I am writing** but which is better translated "I wrote," But the fact that attention is drawn to his handwriting at this late point in the epistle is evidence that having dictated the letter up to this point he now takes the pen from the amanuensis and finishes in his own hand. Paul's custom was to use an amanuensis as he dictated. Citations include 1 Cor 16:21, Col 4:18, 2 Thess 3:17 and Rom 16:22. Take a look at the Rom 16:22. The amanuensis was a scribe, a letter writer, and it was customary for ancient scholars to use them when writing a letter. The reason being, paper was rare and so only specific professionals developed fine handwriting skills and ancient scholars, like modern doctors, often had horrible handwriting. Just ask any pharmacist and they'll tell you doctors have some of the poorest handwriting of any modern profession. In the ancient world scholars had poor handwriting. One of the Bible trivia questions often asked is who wrote the Book of Romans and people say, Oh, Paul wrote it. But look at Rom 16:22, "I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord." So, technically, if you

want to know who put the ink from the pen to the paper it was Tertius, not Paul. Yet we know from Rom 1 that Paul indeed is the mind behind the pen not Tertius. Tertius was an amanuensis, and apparently a fellow believer. Paul utilized, in this case, and perhaps others, fellow believers from other professions to help him in his labors. Paul apparently had poor handwriting and observing that Romans, 1 Cor, Col and 2 Thess all make note of the fact Paul used an amanuensis and picked up the pen at the end of the letter indicates that most likely in Gal he follows the same pattern.

As for Paul's handwriting he says, **See with what large letters I am writing to you**, not a large letter. The letter to the Galatians is short in comparison to some of his other letters, though this is the earliest of his letters and could not at the time be compared with those he wrote later. But the point remains that the letters Paul wrote were large in size much like a child learning to write, and suggestions that the last 8 verses were written in letters perhaps an inch tall while the rest of the letter was written in small cursive letters by the amanuensis.

The reason why Paul wrote in such large letters is unknown but people have suggested because he had poor eyesight due to repercussions from the Damascus Road experience (Acts 9:1-19) or that his hand was mangled due to the stoning he received just months before in the Galatia region (Acts 14:19). We really do not know the exact reason.

What we do know is that Paul followed the customary device of concluding a letter with his own hand to authenticate that the message it contained was indeed his message. As with all his letters he concluded the letter with the handwriting of his own hand as this was a distinguishing mark. It would be much like the way we put our signature on something; it authenticates a document as genuine.

Now these facts imply that he only wrote one letter to the churches of Galatia. There were at least four churches in Galatia, we mean to say south Galatia, as we've maintained throughout that the historical circumstances and date of writing indicate these were the four churches Paul planted on his first missionary journey in the area of south Galatia. These churches are described in Acts 13 and 14 and are the church at Pisidian Antioch, the church at Iconium, the church at Derbe and the church at Lystra. Whatever

church first received the letter would have it read to the congregation and would then pass it to the next church. If they wanted a copy of the letter they would have to make a copy before sending it to the next church. But it is implied that Paul intends the original letter with his own handwriting to be passed to each church until all had the opportunity to hear his message.

So in Gal 6:11 Paul takes up the pen. But he does so earlier than in any other epistle. Usually he takes the pen at the very close, just to write the final greeting in his own hand, which would be in verse 18, but here he takes the pen seven verses before the final greeting in verse 11. Why he does this is speculation but we infer from the tone of the letter that it is because of the scalding nature of this rebuke. Galatians is from start to finish a rebuke of believers who once understood freedom in Christ and now have given up their freedom in exchange for legalism. Paul has nothing commendatory to say to them. And so by taking up the pen himself before the final greeting he wants to, in the last verses, summarize and emphasize the main point; there is no other gospel than the gospel of grace and if anyone preaches any other gospel he is to be accursed because he has in essence rejected the cross of Christ as central to the gospel. Paul, in boasting solely in the cross obviously sought only to please God and not men. Those who removed the centrality of the cross sought to please men and not God. So we have a nice summary conclusion that neatly ties together the aim of his writing.

So let's read it starting in verse 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 for the cross of Christ.** <sup>13</sup>**For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.** Verses 12-13 show that men-pleasers have de-centralized the cross and replaced it with circumcision. But on the contrary, Paul, in verse 14, **But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.** <sup>15</sup>**For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.** So Paul centralized the cross and denounced circumcision as having any relevance to the new creation. This indeed would make Paul many enemies. Verse 16, **And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.** Verse 16, by the way, is the most controversial verse in the

entire epistle. The controversy has to do with the identification of the **them** and the **Israel of God**. Are those one and the same group or are those two separate groups. Those who say they are one and the same group argue that there is only one people of God and therefore the Church has replaced Israel as the Israel of God. Those who say they are two separate groups argue that Paul is using the phrase Israel of God to refer to the Jewish believers in the Church who may have been offended by Paul's tough stance against the Judaizers. Next week we'll take up that debate.

Let's look at the substance of Paul's message, verse 12. In this verse the motives of the Judaizers are clearly exposed. The ultimate thing they desire is to look good in front of men. They just want to impress everybody with how many Gentiles they can get circumcised. This is something like claiming scalps, but in their case it was foreskins. It was a contest to see who could get the most Gentile foreskins.

Now that sounds so tasteless, and it is, but we want to understand how this situation came about so let's review the historical background. The early church started off completely Jewish on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Acts 2 is the origin of the Church but the only members of humanity in the church were Jews. We call this the Jewish Pentecost. And in Acts 2-7 the Jewish Church grows in number significantly to probably about 25-30,000, including men, women and children. But they were all huddled around Jerusalem and the Temple until Stephen comes in the picture. Stephen was the one who saw the greater implications of the cross of Christ; that the cross of Christ was bigger than the Jewish people and the Jewish temple and the Jewish Jerusalem. He saw implications for the Gentiles and the whole earth and so Stephen was preaching these implications and we think from Acts 6 he went face to face in debate with Saul at a synagogue, and Saul got ripped to shreds by Stephen and this led ultimately to Stephen's martyrdom. Stephen was the first martyr of the Church. And it was his martyrdom that ultimately blew the church out of Jerusalem. What happened was Saul went on a rampage to devour Jewish believers because he thought what they were teaching about Jesus being the Messiah was heresy. So they started to scatter out of Jerusalem like tentacles going out and so as one tentacle would go out, Saul would go out and chop it off. Another tentacle would go out and Saul would go chop it off. While this was going on some of these Jewish believers were out in Judea and Samaria preaching the gospel and in Samaria some of the half-

breed Samaritans responded to the gospel and the Holy Spirit baptized them. And so in Acts 8 you have the Samaritan Pentecost and the church was now composed of Jews and Samaritans. Then in Acts 10 Peter has a vision to go eat unclean food, food Peter had never eaten, food that disgusted Peter. Yet Peter submitted to the vision and when an opportunity came to go visit the house of Cornelius, a Gentile in the Roman army stationed up in Caesarea, he went along with six other Jews as witnesses. And at Cornelius' house Peter preached the gospel and this Gentile man and those in his house also responded to the gospel and the Holy Spirit baptized them, even while uncircumcised. And so in Acts 10 you have the Gentile Pentecost. In Acts 2, Jews; Acts 8, Samaritans and Acts 10 Gentiles. Now these three groups had been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, all in the same way without any distinction except the fact that the Jews had been circumcised according to the OT Law of Moses and the Gentiles were not circumcised. But they were each baptized into the body of Christ regardless of circumcision.

Now you have to understand that these groups were polarized in the 1<sup>st</sup> century; these groups did not interact. Jews simply did not associate with Samaritans. They didn't even go into the region; they'd walk miles out of the way just to avoid these people. What did Jesus' disciples think when Jesus passed through the region and found Him talking to a Samaritan woman? They didn't approve. But if you thought there was antagonism between Jew and Samaritan there was even greater antagonism between Jew and Gentile. Gentiles weren't even half breeds. They were dogs, and Jews called them that because they were dirty pagans. They worshipped many gods and goddesses and so they were heathen and Jews wouldn't associate with them. So Jews could not get along with Samaritans or Gentiles, there were religious barriers between these groups. One of the barriers was food. The Jew had clean and unclean food and he could only eat clean food. Another barrier was circumcision and Gentiles were uncircumcised so they couldn't associate with them. Remember David, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" Both unclean food and uncircumcision was offensive to Jews. They formed barriers between Jews and Gentiles. So with Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles all in the same body of believers, all believing the same message of the cross of Christ, do you see some tension mounting? The Book of Acts traces this tension and one of the purposes of the Book of Acts is to show how as the Church takes in Samaritans and Gentiles the Holy Spirit overcomes these tensions. Because

here's what could theoretically occur; you could theoretically and very easily have three churches rather than one. If those religious barriers are not broken down by the Holy Spirit then the early church would have been split into a Jewish church, a Samaritan church and a Gentile church. You wouldn't have had any unity. But that's not the plan of God for this dispensation. The plan of God for this dispensation is to have unity of all three groups in one church. That's the unity that Paul talks about in the great Epistle to the Ephesians, the wall of partition has been broken down in Christ and there is neither Jew nor Gentile but all are one in Christ. There are not three bodies of Christ, there's only one. And God the Holy Spirit through the Book of Acts brings about that unity.

But before it's resolved you see the tensions rise in Acts 13-14 because large numbers of Gentiles are coming into the Church so that the majority shifts from Jewish believers to Gentile believers. And these Gentiles have been allowed to enter the Church on an equal level as Jews without going through Judaism first. In other words, they let them in without circumcising them first. And that really bugged a lot of the orthodox Jewish people because in the OT to join yourself to the assembly as a proselyte to Judaism you had to be circumcised. Granted you could remain on the fringe as a God-fearer without being circumcised but Paul was putting Jew and Gentile on an equal plain, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and the orthodox Jews didn't like that. So there are these tensions in the Jewish mindset, Gentiles aren't circumcised. This mindset had been ingrained in them for centuries so these barriers had to come down.

To exacerbate things you had Jewish Zealots running around. Zealots were a religiously militant group. Simon, one of Jesus' disciples, was a Zealot. Their political ambition was independence from Rome and they caused problems wherever they went. They murdered Roman officials right in the crowded streets of Jerusalem and if you saw the story of Masada then you're familiar with some of the Zealots. They were the last holdouts in Rome's war on Jerusalem and the Jews. It ended for all intents and purposes with Titus' invasion of Jerusalem in AD70, but continued until AD73 with the Zealots at Masada. They simply would not submit to Rome. They are a no-compromise type of Jew so they were against anyone and everyone that didn't go along with their religio-politico program. And that meant they persecuted fellow Jews who were letting Gentiles come in on an equal footing without

circumcision. Because, see, at this time, this early on time of Acts 13-14 Christianity was still seen as a sect within Judaism. They would learn later that it could not exist as a sect within Judaism and would have to separate, but at the time it was still seen under the umbrella of Judaism.

So we have these tensions and we can sympathize with the problems because there were barriers between Jew and Gentile and until God does something significant to destroy those barriers you are going to have problems. Some of those problems are in Acts 15:1 and 5. With large numbers of Gentiles coming into the church two confusions arose. These are not one and the same confusion, they are two confusions. One confusion was about how to be justified and the second confusion was about how to be sanctified. Some Jews said to be justified Gentiles needed to be circumcised. These Jewish believers are in verse 1, "Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." So we have category one Judaizers and category one Judaizers argue throughout the 40's and 50's that Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be justified. Now that argument is totally out to lunch. That argument can be met solely on the basis of the OT. Abraham was justified long before he was circumcised. And so the argument of verse 1 is easy to meet even on the basis of the OT. And you can imagine how Paul and Barnabas in verse 2 met the argument. "And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue." So this is going to result in the first Church Council, the Council of Jerusalem. The problem is coming to a head and so the leaders of the church, the mature men are going to resolve a major doctrinal conflict. Verse 3, "Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren." See, what they're doing here is they're testing their case. They'd say, now we were in Galatia and we preached the gospel to uncircumcised Gentiles and they responded to the gospel and were saved, now do you have a problem with that? And if there were problems they'd tighten their case and move on to the next city. Verse 4, "When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them." They present the case. And in verse 5 we come to category two Judaizers. Category one Judaizers argue

that Gentiles must be circumcised to be justified. We said that argument was easy to meet. But the argument of category two Judaizers is different and this one is more difficult to meet. Notice, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” Now, they’re not arguing that Gentiles can’t be justified, they’re accepting them as justified, what they’re arguing is that now that these Gentiles are justified they need to be circumcised as an introduction to sanctification under the Law of Moses. So we have two categories of Judaizers running around in the 40’s and 50’s. One group arguing circumcision is necessary for justification and another group arguing circumcision is necessary for sanctification. Now the council goes on to show that it’s not necessary to be circumcised for either. See, we have a complexity here in that the leaders of the church recognize that with the cross of Christ something has happened to the Law of Moses. Somehow it’s done away with in some sense, but the problem is that the Law of Christ hasn’t been written yet. The Law of Christ is being written but it’s not complete yet, so they’re not under the Law of Moses and that which they are under, the Law of Christ, is in formation as the NT canon. So you can understand the confusion. That’s the background of what Paul has to deal with in the letter to the Galatians.

Actually the letter to the Galatians was written just before the Council of Jerusalem. Do you know why? Does anyone know enough about the Council of Jerusalem to know why it implies that Galatians was written before it occurred? What came out of the Council of Jerusalem? A letter written to all the churches. The letter is recorded in Acts 15:23-29. And if the Galatian problem occurred after the letter was written then Paul could have just sent them a copy. But obviously Paul didn’t have the letter so he had to write the letter of Galatians. So Galatians was written before the Council of Jerusalem but after the 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Expedition. The only logical place to put the book is during Acts 14:28. It’s during that verse that Paul wrote Galatians. Then a few months later the problems he met in the letter to the Galatians came to a head and he was sent to Jerusalem where it was handled by leaders of the mother church.

But before this, and probably still afterwards, there was confusion about the role of circumcision. So now let’s read Gal 6:12-13 and see if it doesn’t make a little more sense. **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 for the cross of Christ.** <sup>13</sup>**For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.** Now, the situation is that you have Judaizers and these are probably orthodox Jews and they see some of their fellow Jewish believers allowing Gentiles to attach themselves to this new sect without going through the proper channels of Judaism, which is circumcision. And so the Judaizers are putting pressure on the Jewish believers who are doing this to have the Gentiles properly circumcised. And some of the Judaizers are probably Zealots and the Zealots, we know who they are, if you don't get on board with their program they're radical, they might kill you and your family off. So there's pressure on the Jewish believers to conform to their demands. It's easier just to go along with it for awhile until the pressure lifts, then go back and cling to the cross of Christ. So the rationale of these Jewish believers is to de-centralize the cross of Christ until the persecution lifts, then return the centrality of the cross.

So they're running around putting pressure on the Gentile believers to get circumcised and Yochanan, he has three foreskins this week and he can show that off to the Judaizers and he gets relief, Micaiah has four foreskins this week and he can boast in that so he gets relief from the persecution. This is what's going on in verse 12. And Paul's point in verse 12 is, look Gentiles, not even these Jewish believers that are having you circumcised are keeping the Law of Moses, so drop it, don't do it, they're only doing it to get the pressure lifted off of themselves. But by caving into their pressure you're resorting to legalism and departing from grace! And you can't grow spiritually that way. What does pulling your pants down and having a circumcision of the flesh do for you spiritually? That's why Paul comes along in later epistles and says, circumcision of the flesh doesn't matter, what matters is circumcision of the heart, it's not the external flesh that ultimately needs surgical correction, it's the internal heart that needs surgical correction by the scalpel of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ! It's the cross that matters

But that's what they're trying to avoid. Look at the end of verse 12, **simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.** See, you have problems, tremendous problems during this time between orthodox Jews who did not believe in Jesus Christ and Jews who did believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was a dividing line. It was so bad in the city of Rome in

AD50 all the Jews were expelled from Rome. The problem was related by Suetonius, a Roman author, in his book, *Lives of the Caesars*, he relates, "As the Jews kept on indulging in constant riots at the instigation of a man by the name of Chrestus, he banished them from Rome." In other words, there was one riot after another occurring in the Jewish ghetto quarters of Rome and the Roman police would go in and restore law and order and walk out, there'd be another riot, they'd send the Roman police in again, quell it, go out, another riot, and so the Roman inspectors began to ask, what's causing this problem, and they traced it back to a man by the name of Chrestus. Now it doesn't require too much imagination to see who Chrestus is. That's Christ. And what's happened Suetonius doesn't understand; he doesn't realize that Christ wasn't actually present in the ghettos. There's all this talk about the Christ going on in the ghetto. But Christ isn't there. He assumes Christ is there. He assumes this Christ is causing riots. Christ, in a way, is causing the riots in that everywhere these Jewish believers go they're arguing that Jesus is the Christ, they're trying to persuade their fellow Jewish friends that didn't believe in Christ to believe in Christ. So there was all this arguing in the Jewish ghetto over Jesus Chrestus. And there were 20,000 Jews in Rome at the time and if anytime you get two Jews in a disagreement you can have a riot, think what you get with 20,000. So Emperor Claudius has finally had it, he says we're not going to have this any more, get out of town. It shows you there was a lot of antagonism between Jewish believers in Jesus Chrestos and Jewish unbelievers in Jesus Chrestos. And some of the Jewish believers just got sick and tired of the persecution so they started giving into the pressure and circumcising the Gentile believers. That's vv 12-13; they want to make a good showing in front of these other Jews. So they were racking up the foreskins, impressing the non-Christian Jews and enjoying relief from the persecution of the cross.

Now you come to verse 14 and read it with that background, **But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.** <sup>15</sup>**For neither is circumcision anything or uncircumcision, but a new creation.** Paul doesn't only say circumcision doesn't count for anything, but he also boasts vociferously in the cross of Christ! And you can just imagine Paul's friends; now Paul, it's not necessary to be so vocal about the cross and so down on circumcision. If you keep this up you're just asking for it, you're asking for trouble and everywhere Paul went what did Paul

find? Trouble. And where did the trouble come from; Jews or Gentiles? It was the Jews. Turn to Acts 21:20. This is Paul's entrance to Jerusalem. He enters and the first thing he does is meet with the leaders of the church and watch what they say: "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; 22and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22What, then, is to be done?" These guys were pissing their pants; they didn't want to get in the middle of this. They want Paul to fix it. So he does his vow thing. Just to see how upset the Jews are, in vv 27ff this is when they see Paul in the Temple and they go ballistic on the guy. They attack him right in the Temple courtyard, they're willing to spill blood in the Temple and defile the Temple just to get rid of this guy who boasts in the cross of Christ. In v 31 it reports that the Roman army had to rescue Paul. But from this point forward Paul is never set free again, he's constantly in prison or under house arrest until he's executed under Nero.

So the words of Gal 6:14-15 are very combative words, and it shows you the central point of tension, it's the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ is the center of the ancient conflict and the modern conflict. The cross of Christ has been the conflict since He went to the cross as a substitutionary blood atonement. Everybody realizes that if what Christ did on the cross is true, if we can even look at it and many people refuse to look at it for what it really is, but if we do look at it there are only two sides. And this is heaven and hell talk and we're not supposed to talk about that because it's politically incorrect. But we talk because we don't care about political correctness, we care about men's souls. And the problem of sin-sick souls is the same yesterday as it is today and the solution is the same yesterday as it is today: the cross of Christ.

Paul was unwilling to back down and de-centralize the centrality of the cross. And this brought persecution his way but Paul didn't care what persecution came his way. Paul cared about the gospel of the cross of Christ. Nothing else mattered and Paul wouldn't exchange the foreskins of 500 Gentiles for the cross. He says **may it never be**, that's the strongest Greek negative, *me genoito*. **may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.** It's difficult after 20 centuries to come to see the cross for what it really is since it's come to be a sacred symbol, to realize the

unspeakable horror and loathing of the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in Paul's day. "The word...was unmentionable in polite Roman society (Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 16); even when one was being condemned to death" on a cross "the sentence used an archaic formula which served as a sort of euphemism: *arbori infelici suspendito*, 'hang him on the unlucky tree' (Cicero, *ibid.* 13)." It was a disgusting thought, abhorred by all society and a most ignoble thing to boast in. Yet Paul boasts in the cross, a shocking paradox to accepted societal norms. The 'utterly vile death of the cross' as Origen calls it, was so central to Paul's gospel that he called his message, 'the word of the cross' (1 Cor 1:18). This is why the message of the cross was so offensive to the Jews and sheer absurdity to the Greeks. How could a message so disgusting win any converts in Paul's day? Paul declared that it won converts due to the fact that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and the wisdom of God to those whom it is revealed and a demonstration of the Spirit's power. Only God could make a message of such stench and horror attractive to men that they might be saved.

And Paul fully **boasts** in it, that most unspeakable horror, **the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by which** he says at the end of verse 14, **by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.** One of the most definitive verses in the whole word of God showing the total separation of the Christian from the world system. We live *in* the world but not *of* the world. The word **world**, *kosmos*, meaning the total world system that is against God and exalts itself over God. The world which lies in the power of the evil one, who is the prince of the power of the air, who is the devil Himself, who is the thief who breaks in to steal and kill and destroy, who roareth about as a lion seeking someone to devour. That world system that is scheduled for destruction in Dan 2 in all its aspects; political, economic, religious and intellectual. Paul, in his life in Christ, recognized that it was not this world system that mattered but the new creation of verse 15. The present world system is doomed for total destruction and will be replaced with the new creation which is begun in Christ and the cross. Therefore, this world does not matter, Paul says the world is crucified to me, it's fenced off from me, and I to it. Positionally I'm separated completely from this world system and have none in it, citizenship-ally, my citizenship is in the kingdom of God. And therefore the only thing that matters in the present is taking every thought captive to Christ! As Paul said to the Corinthians, "I determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified." By which Paul meant all the riches of

wisdom and knowledge were hidden in Christ. And every thought must therefore be subjected to Christ who is the definer of all proper categories of thought: Lest we exalt ourselves ontologically by destroying the Creator-creature distinction, lest we exalt ourselves epistemologically by putting our thoughts above those of the Creator and Lest we exalt ourselves axiologically by defining norms and standards without reference to our Creator. If we do not determine, make a conscious effort to always and everywhere make all subject to Christ we make ourselves uncrucified to the world and the world uncrucified to us. But rather the world is crucified to all Christians and all Christians are to be crucified to the world. We have nothing in it, all that we have is relegated to the future new creation which our regenerate self is already prepared.

So Paul concludes, **For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.** Meaning - by the **new creation** not merely that we are new creatures, that we are, but the new heavens and new earth which will replace this present world system at the return of the Christ in His kingdom. That is all that matters. Like Abraham, we are aliens in this world, looking forward to the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. A world in which **neither circumcision or uncircumcision is anything**, but Christ is everything. Does the cross of Christ have that centrality to you? Or are you ashamed of the gospel?

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