

THE CROSS

TEXT : GALATIANS 6:11-18

Introduction :

1. We have come to the end of our series in the epistle to the Galatians.
2. The apostle Paul writes in verse 11, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand."
3. Instead of dictating this letter to an assistant, as he often did (cf. Romans 16:22), Paul wrote it himself.
4. There are various theories why Paul wrote the epistle himself. Perhaps there was no secretary available at the time and Paul was eager to write the letter right away.
5. There was a great urgency (cf. 1:6-9).
6. The "large letters" suggest Paul may have had an eye problem (cf. 4:13-15).
7. You may recall that in Acts 23, Paul could not recognize the high priest Ananias. That may have been because of poor eyesight (cf. Acts 23:1-5).
8. Some have speculated that poor eyesight was the "thorn in the flesh" that Paul refers to in II Corinthians 12:7.
9. Paul concludes this epistle by saying that he did not glory in his circumcision (6:15).
10. He did not glory in observing the law (6:13).
11. The only thing Paul gloried in was the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:14).
12. In the cross, in the cross,

be my glory ever,

till my raptured soul shall find

rest beyond the river . -- Fanny Crosby.

I. THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS

1. To most people today, the cross is nothing but a religious symbol or a pretty piece of jewelry, but in Bible times it was a shameful, horrible way to die.

2. Paul said in I Corinthians 1:18, " For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."
3. We are told that a Roman citizen would not even mention the cross in polite conversation because the cross represented rejection and shame.
4. The hymnwriter said the old rugged cross was "the emblem of suffering and shame," and "reproach," and "despised by the world."
5. The Judaizers minimized the offense of the cross, and tried to replace it with ritualism, particularly circumcision (Gal. 5:11, 12; 6:12).
6. Like the Judaizers of Paul's day, there are multitudes of people today who love to go along with religious rituals and ceremonies, as long as they do not have to repent of their sin and get right with God.
7. That is why Roman Catholicism and dead Protestantism are so popular. "Churchianity" is popular, but fundamental Christianity is despised.
8. It is easier to go along with sacraments and giving up certain things for Lent, and praying with rosary beads than becoming a genuine Christian because there is an offense of the cross.
9. Spurgeon said, " Strange, yet strangely true it is, that the Cross of Christ has always been an offense and that it has provoked the fiercest battles and the sternest strifes which men have ever had with their fellow men."
10. Many nominal Christians avoid the cross because they do not want to " suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (6:12).
11. Think of all the politicians who profess to be "Christian" but do not have a testimony of genuine conversion to Christ. These politicians are accepted by the world. But if a leader dares to announce that he is a born again believer who has accepted Christ as his Saviour, he will be fiercely attacked.
12. The cross represents the world's hatred for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the world's hatred for His followers.
13. Our Lord said in John 15:18, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."
14. The cross represents the condemnation of the flesh, and its efforts to please God by good works.
15. The Judaizers spoke often about the importance of the law, but Paul points out in verse 13 that they themselves failed to keep it.
16. Our Lord said in Matthew 23:3-5, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men."

17. "But all their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5a). Galatians 6:12 says they "desire to make a fair shew in the flesh."

18. Religious people like to put on a show. Paul said the Judaizers put on a show so they could "glory in your flesh" (6:13), i.e., so they could boast about their success in getting their followers circumcised.

19. Getting men circumcised is no great accomplishment. Getting men circumcised is not the same as getting men saved.

20. Jacob's sons persuaded Shechem and all of the other men in his tribe to be circumcised, but they had no intention of converting Shechem and the others to the true God of Israel.

21. In fact, Jacob's sons pushed Shechem and his tribe further away from God. Genesis 34:30 says that Jacob said to his sons Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites."

22. Not only did the Canaanites and the Perizzites despise Jacob, they also despised Jacob's God.

II. THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

1. After talking about the offense of the cross, Paul speaks of the glory of the cross (6:14). Paul's boasting was not in his many accomplishments, but "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Because of the cross, the world died to Paul, and Paul died to the world (6:14).

3. Someone once asked George Müller the secret of his successful ministry, and Müller replied, "There was a day when I died, utterly died; died to George Müller and his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved to God."

4. When a person gets saved, he says goodbye to the world. Sometimes it may take a while to understand that. Even George Müller did not understand it right away. But once he did he never turned back.

5. This is the idea behind baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27).

6. Harry Ironside told a story about a man who was asked by a Mason, "You belong to my lodge, don't you?"

7. The man replied, "No, I do not."

8. The man persisted: "But I know you. I was there the night you were initiated, and once you are a member of the lodge, you are a member until death."

9. "Exactly, I quite admit what you say, but I buried the lodge member in Lake Ontario." The Christian man was referring to his baptism.

10. When a Christian truly understands Galatians 6:14, the world loses its charm and attraction. The world is stripped of its glory and robbed of its power to seduce and delight.

11. Sometimes when I am waiting in line to buy groceries at the supermarket, I glance at the tacky tabloids strategically placed by the cashier. And I am surprised at the unflattering photographs of the movie stars and other celebrities. They no longer appear attractive or glamorous. In fact, some actually look ugly and frightening. That is the way the world really is. May God open our eyes to see it.

12. The cross is the dividing line between the church and the world; between good and evil; between truth and error; between light and darkness; between salvation and damnation; and between heaven and hell.

III. NEW LIFE IN THE CROSS (6:15)

1. The Judaizers taught salvation through good works, keeping the law, and ritualism, particularly circumcision (6:12, 13, 15).

2. The Judaizers said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

3. Paul said in Galatians 5:2, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."

4. There could be no compromise (1:6-9).

5. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (6:15).

6. Are you a "new creature"?

7. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

8. This is not through circumcision, or any other religious ritual but through faith in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:26).

9. This is God's "rule" (6:16).

10. This is "the law of Christ" (6:2).

11. Paul did not want to be "troubled" over false doctrine and religious ritualism (6:17). He had been whipped and beaten for preaching the true Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

12. He had the "marks" (scars) to prove it (6:17). The false teachers did not want to be persecuted, but Paul was persecuted, beaten, whipped, and imprisoned for preaching the Gospel.

13. Paul ends the epistle appropriately with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:18).

CONCLUSION :

1. The name "Charing Cross" originates from the Eleanor cross erected in the 13th century by King Edward I as a memorial to his wife, Eleanor.

2. Charing Cross is located smack dab in the center of London, England. It is named after the Eleanor cross which once stood there, in what was once the hamlet of Charing.

3. Since the second half of the 18th century Charing Cross has been recognized as the center of London.

4. The original cross is long gone, and since 1675 the site of the cross has been occupied by a statue of King Charles I mounted on a horse.

5. One day a little girl got lost walking around the crowded city streets of London, and a policeman seeing her crying, tried to calm her down and help her.

6. He asked her where she lived. Did she live near Piccadilly Circus?

7. "No."

8. Did she live near Big Ben?

9. "No."

10. How about Westminster Abbey? Did she live near there?

11. "No."

12. "How about Charing Cross?"

13. "Yes!" she said. "Sir, if you can take me to the cross, I'll find my way home from there."

14. That is what we must do. We must point people to the cross. It is the only way (Gal. 6:14).