

Galatians 6:14-16:

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. For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul continues his thoughts from Galatians 6's personal closing (11-18) on the boasting of humans. He contrasts it with the eternal work of Christ to solidify the message of what has real, eternal value. He furthermore reaches out to this very Jewish group of believers to remind them of their real relationship to God despite ethnically being Jewish.

Boasting

Paul makes a personal application in verse 14 about boasting – but the principle for appropriation extends to the whole body: boasting has no place in the New Testament believer's life except for in the work of Christ. Pharisees would often boast about a number of things (see 2 Corinthians 10:7-18) but the boasting carried no merit before God the Father who judged them only by faith in Him.

Peter, as reported in Galatians 2:11-13, lead the Jewish believers in separation from the gentiles at one point. Their whole life had been based around being able to proudly merit the applause of the outwardly righteous Jewish leaders and so in a moment of weakness they had been prepared to step back in the practices of the Jewish customs. If one of the fundamental elements of the Law was to love (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 10:19) then boasting technically has no place in a Jewish legal context since it is selfish. Romans 3:27 tells us that boasting is excluded because of faith. Faith is in God's work and we therefore have no room for our own pride or carnal merit. What work can anyone boast in? Christ's Crucifixion.

Crucifixion

Paul continues on to say that the world has been crucified to himself and himself to the world. This statement deserves some serious time for contemplation as to its application because it offends every sense of the flesh. It also requires some very serious thought because it is one of the spiritual growth truths¹.

Paul uses reciprocity to emphasize the separate of the believer and the world. Ephesians 2:1-9 describes the state we were in under the world and outline the lusts of the flesh and earthly desires as the world's native state [see also earlier in Galatians verses 5:19-21]. Sin's reign positionally and conditionally is dominant and

¹ You can listen to the series on Spiritual Growth Truths at http://www.hollyhillsbiblechurch.org/messages/?series_id=64&series_page=40

a master to those who do not have Christ and believe. Romans 6:6 & Galatians 2:20 tell the believer that he has been crucified with Christ and is therefore now not under the rule of sin.

A Closing Blessing

Paul closes this letter with a few more verses (17-18) but pronounces a blessing on those who are under the new creation in Christ; particularly that they would find peace and mercy conditionally as they awaited the Lord's return. Having an eternal perspective means that even if there are trials and tribulations that the believer embraces God's hand in their lives and growth in Him.

A New Creation

Since being circumcised (or not being circumcised) holds no value eternally Paul tells the Galatian believers that the thing that does matter is their being a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 repeats this message of being a new creation. Colossians 1:15-18 tells us that Christ is the firstborn from the dead, the first in the new creation.

What are the consequences of being a new creation?

How does being made a new creation make us evaluate or see:

- Our own lives?
- The lives of those around us?
- Eternity and our relationship with God (AKA salvation)?

God's Israel

God's Israel is a reference to those ethnic Jews that believe in Christ. In Romans 9:27 tells us that this is the remnant as outline in Isaiah 10:20-21. It is important to note that Israel is referenced literally throughout the New Testament and this is not a figurative reference to the church. This is a blessing to the descendants of Israel that are believers. It fits in with Paul's recognition that Israel are the chosen people of God who will be the recipients of tremendous blessing in the millennium due to being descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Paul keeps a respect for Israel's conditional state (see also Romans 1:16, 2:9, 2:10), but is not implying that the church and Israel are one and the same entity like some theological systems hold².

²For example "replacement theology" and "covenant theology"