

A FINAL GOSPEL APPEAL
PART 1

TEXT: GALATIANS 6:11-18

April 15, 2012

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:

Unlike other closing sections of Paul's letters, this concluding section has no expression of joy, no request for prayer and no doxology. Such items, notes Richard Longenecker, would have assumed a relationship of fellowship and thankfulness between Paul and his readers, which cannot be found in the letter (cf. *Galatians*, p. 288). Admittedly, Paul does address the Galatians as "brothers" in his closing appeal, which softens the severity of his tone (6:18; cf. also 1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1). Nonetheless, his closing appeal functions more as an implied exhortation and warning than a statement of joy and thanksgiving (cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 288). Boice notes, "The somewhat abrupt ending has the effect of leaving the great issue of the letter—faith or works—sharply before the Galatians" (*Galatians*, p. 505).

Even though Galatians 6:11-18 functions as the summary and conclusion of this letter, it serves a far more important purpose than that. Not only do vv. 11-18 summarize some of the main themes of the entire letter but they also set forth in strong language the essence of the Christian faith and life (i.e., the Cross in contrast to circumcision; the gospel over against external law-driven religion).

For one final time, Paul is contrasting Mt. Sinai (old covenant) with Mt. Calvary (new covenant). He is saying to the Galatians, "Make your choice. You can stand at the foot of Mt. Sinai and swear like the people of Israel, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Ex. 24:7; cf. Ex. 19:8; 24:3). Or, you can stand at the foot of Mt. Calvary and trust in the perfect and completed work of Christ alone. If you attempt to live by the old covenant, Christ will be of no advantage to you. You will be obligated to keep the whole law. You will be severed from Christ (Gal. 5:2-4). On the other hand, if you receive and rest in Christ's finished work alone you will be justified (2:16), adopted (4:1-7) and inheritors of the age to come (1:4; 6:15).

The old covenant (Mt. Sinai) places a man under the personal obligation of fulfilling a "Do this and live" covenantal relationship with God (cf. Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10; Lk. 10:25-28). This, of course, is impossible to live up to therefore the Law results in a curse rather than a blessing (Gal. 3:10). According to Jeremiah, the whole point of the new covenant is to tell God's people that they can't achieve a righteousness based on their obedience (Jer. 31:31-32). Therefore, God will make a new covenant in which He will put His law within His people, and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33-34). What man cannot do because of his sin, God in grace will do. God Himself will provide in grace what the old covenant demanded (i.e., love God and neighbor, cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) but made no provision to give. The old covenant was a law

covenant. It was purely a suzerainty treaty, which did not obligate God to do anything. It simply commands, with sanctions for obedience and disobedience (cf. Michael Horton, *God of Promise*, pp. 100-101).

Paul has taught that essence of the Christian faith and life consists not in what we do but rather in what God in Christ has done. More than anything else, as Paul brings his letter to a close he desires for the Galatians to understand the gospel and so he concludes with one final gospel appeal.

It is interesting to note how Paul ends the letter with much the same emphasis as how he began the letter (i.e., setting forth the centrality of the gospel). He begins Galatians with a gospel greeting (1:1-5), which anticipates many of the major themes in the letter. And, he concludes Galatians (6:11-18) with a final gospel-appeal, which summarizes many of the major themes in this letter.

Thus, we see how the gospel serves as the bookends of this letter. Paul begins by setting forth the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel and he concludes with the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel (and throughout the body of the letter he defends and defines the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel).

This is how the Christian life begins, progresses and ends—being encompassed by the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel. The gospel, is so to speak, the “bookends” of the Christian faith and life. Due to the influence of the Judaizers, the Galatians were in the process of abandoning the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel (and thus the sole sufficiency of Christ alone for justification).

In 1:6, Paul expresses his astonishment at how quickly the Galatians were in the process of deserting God who called them in the grace of Christ and were turning to a different gospel (i.e., one that taught Jesus + works [circumcision] = justification).

Throughout this letter, Paul has taught how both legalism (5:2-12) and license (5:13-24; 5:25-6:10) pose serious threats to the gospel. Both errors constantly tempt us to abandon the centrality of the gospel. Legalism—diminishing the law—leads to license—dismissing the law. Both threats are products of the flesh and lead to disastrous results (cf. 1:8-9; 5:2, 15, 21; 6:7-8). So, as Paul concludes, he reminds the Galatians (and us) one more time how both errors fail to understand and embrace the centrality of the cross (6:12-14) as well as the priority of regeneration and life in the Spirit (6:15).

The Holy Spirit, working through the gospel, is the antidote to both legalism (3:2-5, 14; 4:6-7; 5:2-12) and license (5:13-24, 5:25-6:10). The Holy Spirit convinces us of Christ’s sufficiency in justification and empowers us to fulfill the law’s requirements in sanctification. Whether then the issue is legalism (i.e., standing and access with God, justification) or license (i.e., empowerment to do good works that benefit others and fulfill the law, sanctification), the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel is the remedy.

The works of the law and the works of the flesh can accomplish nothing. Only the Holy Spirit working through the gospel can bring about access and favor with God (i.e., justification). And, only the Holy Spirit working through the gospel can empower the believer to do good works that are beneficial to one's neighbor (i.e., sanctification; fulfillment of the law of God; 5:13-14; 6:2).

Therefore, in bringing his letter to an end, Paul makes one final gospel appeal. He reiterates 5 main themes of his letter that he wishes to impress on the minds of the Galatians so that the gospel remains paramount in their individual and corporate lives.

LESSON:

I. PAUL REITERATES HIS AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORITY AS AN APOSTLE. VV. 11, 17

Paul writes, "11 See with what large letters I am writing to you in my own hand...¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."

Implied in Paul's closing appeal is his authenticity and authority as an apostle, which is exactly how he began his letter (1:1). Paul's apostleship is one of the most important themes in Galatians (1:11-2:21). The reason is because the Judaizers had raised questions about his authenticity as an apostle in order to undermine the truth of the gospel. Therefore, in order to protect the truth of the gospel, Paul affirms his apostolic authority and launches into an autobiographical defense of his apostleship (1:11-2:21) in order to uphold the truth of the gospel.

Paul now concludes this letter by reiterating his authenticity and authority as an apostle in order to motivate the Galatians to give careful attention to his concluding appeal, in which he summarizes the heart of the matters he wishes for them to grasp. He reminds the Galatians of his authenticity and authority as an apostle in two ways: first, by drawing attention to the style of his writing and second by reminding them of his suffering for the gospel.

A. PAUL'S STYLE OF WRITING, V. 11

It was Paul's custom to use an amanuensis to write his letters (cf. Rom. 16:22). However, instead of using an amanuensis to write the closing of his letter, Paul alerts the Galatians that they are now reading statements from his own pen. The phrase, "with my own hand" argues Dunn gives Paul's concluding statements "the indisputable stamp of his own authority," (cf. *Galatians*, p. 335). His use of the imperative, "see" and his reference to "large letters" serves to grab his readers attention and highlight the importance of what follows. As J.B. Lightfoot remarks, "The boldness of the handwriting answers to the force of the Apostle's convictions. The size of the characters will arrest the attention of his readers in spite of themselves (*Galatians*, p. 221). In other words, the large size of Paul's letters would

be like typing out a portion of a letter with the caps lock button on your keyboard in order to emphasize the point(s) you are intending to make.

Second, Paul reiterates his authority and authenticity as an apostle by calling attention to his suffering for the gospel (cf. 4:13-14).

B. PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL, v. 17

As one who was commissioned by the Lord to serve as the apostle to the Gentiles and as one who had risked his life—literally, cf. Acts 14:19—to establish the Galatians churches, Paul issues this strong directive in v. 17, “From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”

Because Paul refused to compromise in preaching the sufficiency of the cross apart from circumcision suffering was a major part of his life and ministry. Before being graciously called to his apostolic, gospel ministry (1:15-16), Paul severely persecuted the church and inflicted great suffering on Christians (1:13-14). However, after his conversion, the zealous persecutor became the frequently persecuted. Soon after his conversion, while he was preaching the gospel in Damascus (cf. 1:17), Luke reports how “the Jews plotted to kill him” (Acts 9:23). Having learned of this plot, Paul’s disciples let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket (Acts 9:25). From this point on, Paul’s life and ministry were marked by persecution for the sake of preaching Christ-crucified.

Paul understood his suffering as sharing in the suffering of Christ (Col. 1:24). Unlike Paul, the Judaizers sought to avoid persecution (v. 12), which testifies to their inauthenticity since they refused to preach the sufficiency of the cross for salvation. In contrast, Paul considered the physical scars in his body, which he received for preaching the sufficiency of the cross, to serve as the authenticating marks of his apostleship (cf. Eph. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3, 9; 3:11).

In 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, Paul records his sufferings for the gospel. In contrast to the false super apostles, Paul reluctantly boasts in his sufferings and weaknesses in order to set forth his authenticity and authority as a true apostle. He says he received “²³ ...countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Thirty nine lashes was the most severe beating allowed under the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deut. 25:1-3). The stoning Paul mentions took place in Lystra, a city of Southern Galatian, during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:19-20). It could be that Paul has this incident in mind when he refers to the “marks” (στίγματα) on his body. If this is the case, some of the Galatians may have personally known about the “marks” Paul is referring to. In any case, all these incidences left Paul’s body permanently scarred, which testified to the fact that he truly belonged to Jesus and thus the true people of God—the true Israel of God (v. 18).

Paul's words serve partly as a rebuke to the Galatians. Unlike the Galatians who were compromising and on the verge of apostasy, Paul remained faithful. His "marks" proved he was not deserting the One who called him in the grace of Christ and that he had not begun turning to a different gospel (cf. 1:6). Thus, Paul exhorts the Galatians to stop troubling him (i.e., "Stop entertaining the Judaizers' false gospel, resist them as I do and if necessary be willing to suffer like me for the sake of the gospel."). Few things bring greater joy to a pastor than to see his people walking in the truth (cf. 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."). And, conversely, few things bring more trouble to a pastor than to see his people not walking in the truth. Thus, Paul appeals to the Galatian believers to no longer trouble him by following the Judaizers and embracing their false gospel.

Paul's appeal may also serve as a warning to the Judaizers. The Judaizers constantly sought to interfere with his gospel ministry and stubbornly attacked him at every opportunity. Thus, Paul's sufferings not only authenticate his apostleship but they also serve as a warning to the Judaizers and anyone who would introduce a false gospel into the church. To interfere with the advance of the gospel is to come under Christ's judgment and retribution/curse of the law (cf., 1:8-9; see Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 300).

Paul's use of the word, "bear" (βαστάζω) confirms that he still has the cross in view (cf. Schreiner, *Galatians*, p. 384). Again, we see that Paul's concern in his closing appeal is to drive home the sufficiency and centrality of the gospel (He is not on an ego trip to highlight his authority!). The Judaizers' marks—circumcision—had no saving significance. Their marks pointed to the old creation (life lived under a "do this and live" relationship with God that results in a curse). In contrast, Paul's marks point to the new creation (cf. 6:15, regeneration/eternal life—now and our future resurrected life—brought about by the Holy Spirit working through the gospel). Paul's marks then are the only ones that matter because they point to the sufficiency of the cross for salvation (see Schreiner, *Galatians*, p. 384). This leads us to vv. 12-14.

II. PAUL REITERATES THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CROSS. VV. 12-14

As Paul concludes his letter he has only one thing on his mind, the sufficiency of the cross for salvation. He sets the cross (new covenant) over against circumcision (old covenant) and calls on the Galatians to make a choice. First, in vv. 12-13, he emphasizes the sufficiency of the cross negatively.

A. CIRCUMCISION, VV. 12-13

This is the final time Paul addresses the Judaizers. In vv. 12-13, Paul warns the Galatians of the Judaizers' dishonorable motives and he exposes their hypocrisy, self-deception and disobedience. He writes, "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised..."

Paul's statement in v. 12 summarizes the reason he wrote to the Galatians. Soon after Paul left, the Judaizers—Jewish Christians—arrived to complete Paul's "incomplete gospel." The subtlety of their error lay in this: They distorted the gospel not by subtraction but rather by addition. They preached Jesus crucified and risen but not as solely sufficient for salvation. They also added circumcision. Luke provides a summary of their false gospel in Acts 15:1, "...Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." According to the Judaizers a Gentile, in order to belong to the covenant people of God, had to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Their gospel maintained Jesus + circumcision = salvation rather than Jesus + nothing = salvation.

What was at stake was the sufficiency of the cross—a crucified Messiah—for salvation. There is always a constant threat of distorting the gospel by addition. Thus, we must always be on guard against distorting the gospel by adding additions to it. The constant temptation is to add Jesus plus something rather than to receive and rest in Jesus alone (Jesus plus baptism, Jesus plus being a good person, etc...).

We are alarmed at the Judaizers adding circumcision to the gospel. But, Evangelicals are also guilty—albeit not always intentionally—of adding to the gospel. For example, in a recent posting from a large Evangelical conference on the gospel, the conference website posted the following definition of the gospel, "The Gospel is the joyous declaration that God is redeeming the world through Christ (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:68; Eph 1:7; Col 1:20), and that He calls everyone everywhere to repent from sin and trust Jesus Christ for salvation (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 17:30)."

The two words, "and that," are the problem. This definition of the gospel includes not only the saving work of God in Christ in the first sentence (the gospel) but also one's proper response to the gospel in the second sentence (i.e., repentance and trust). This conflation, albeit not intentional, distorts the gospel and turns the gospel into Jesus plus something else, namely one's repentance and faith. But, the gospel (Christ's work) must be distinguished from the proper response to the gospel (i.e., repentance and trust).

For example, "Behold I bring you good news of great joy, repent and trust!" This is hardly good news. My faith and repentance are—if truth be told—horrible news. The believer's repentance and faith are not the good news but rather the necessary grace-empowered responses to the announcement of good news, which is Jesus' life, death, burial and resurrection alone. This is a good time for us to remind ourselves of what the gospel actually is. Graeme Goldsworthy writes, "The gospel is the message about Jesus in His life, death, (burial-J.F.) and resurrection. It is the distinct work of God the Son, who, by His Incarnation, becomes for us son of God, a role attested to by His resurrection" (*Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture*, p. 83).

The gospel sets forth Christ's perfect, finished work. We must not add any additions to Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection. Jesus' saving work is totally sufficient

to save us. Therefore, we must always be careful to preserve the truth of the gospel by upholding and maintaining its utter sufficiency (the cross + nothing = salvation). Yet, the Judaizers compromised the sufficiency of the Cross and “forced” the Galatians to be circumcised (e.g., 2:3, 14; 6:12).

Why did the Judaizers compel that the Galatians be circumcised?

1. PRAISE AND COMMENDATION OF OTHERS, v. 12A, 13B

First, Paul says they desired the praise and commendation of others. Paul writes in v. 12a, “they wanted to make a good showing in the flesh...” And then in v. 13b, he says, “...they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”

The word “boast” (καυχῆσονται) writes John Stott means, “to boast in, glory in, trust in, rejoice in, revel in, live for. The object of our boast or ‘glory’ fills our horizons, engrosses our attention, and absorbs our time and energy. In a word, our ‘glory’ is our obsession” (*The Cross of Christ*, p. 349).

The Judaizers were confident of their standing with God based on having been circumcised. They reveled in their ethnic identity and prerogative as a Jew in contrast to the Gentile “sinner” (i.e., uncircumcised, cf. 2:15, 17; see Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 339). The way a Gentile came to be accepted by God—so the Judaizers maintained—was by taking on the identifying mark of the Jew (i.e., circumcision; Gentiles becoming Jewish proselytes). So, when the Gentiles submitted to circumcision, this gave the Judaizers grounds to boast in their flesh. The mission of circumcising Gentiles absorbed their time and energy. They gloried in how many circumcisions they had performed in order to gain the commendation of others. James Boice writes, “They were trophy hunters and wanted to be able to report on mass ‘conversions’ in Galatia” (*Galatians*, p. 506). Ultimately, Paul says the Judaizers were not filled with concern for the Galatians’ salvation. Rather, they were filled with pride, which was manifested in their desire to outwardly boast in how many Gentile Christians they had converted into Jewish proselytes. “The humbling parallel,” writes James Montgomery Boice, “would be in the tendency to take pride in counting the number of ‘decisions for Christ’ or ‘baptisms’ today” (*Galatians*, pp. 506-507).

2. FEAR OF PERSECUTION, v. 12B

Second, the Judaizers promoted circumcision to avoid persecution. Paul writes that the Judaizers forced the Galatians to be circumcised “only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

As long as the Judaizers preached the cross plus circumcision, they were praised. By adding circumcision the Judaizers removed the offense of the cross (cf. Gal. 5:11). But, as soon as they proclaimed the cross as being totally sufficient for salvation, they exposed themselves to persecution from other fellow Jews. Thus, one way to

avoid persecution, particularly within Jewish contexts, was to be circumcised (cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 337).

Fear rather than faith fueled the Judaizers demand for circumcision. Paul has already shown how Peter fell into this same trap in Antioch (2:11-21). In 2:12, Paul writes, "For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, *fearing the circumcision party*" (emphasis mine). What happened in Antioch with Peter is what happened with the Judaizers in Galatia. The Judaizers discovered circumcised Jewish Christians and uncircumcised Gentile Christians fellowshiping and eating together in the Galatian churches. Such uninhibited mingling would invite persecution from fellow Jews. So, out of fear rather than a concern for the Galatians' salvation, the Judaizers were forcing the Galatians to be circumcised. If the Galatians would get circumcised all would be well. The Judaizers could then boast in the fact that all of the Gentiles were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses. But, like Peter, they were really afraid of what the "circumcision party" would do if they discovered circumcised Jewish believers fellowshiping with uncircumcised Gentile believers.

Such pride and fear translated into a distorted gospel. As we have seen, the Judaizers preached the cross of Christ. However, their problem was that they didn't preach the cross as being totally sufficient for salvation. The reason is because to proclaim a circumcision-less gospel was to invite persecution (cf. 4:26; 5:11). A gospel that proclaims the sufficiency of the cross humbles man. It tells a man that he can do nothing to earn his salvation. This is why men hate the cross and persecute those who proclaim a message of grace.

So, in order to avoid persecution the Judaizers added circumcision to the cross. However, such an addition, Paul argues, nullifies "the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" (2:21).

Paul argues that the Judaizers really had nothing to boast in because even though they had been circumcised they had not kept the law! Paul writes in v. 13a, "For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law..."

Following external religious observances doesn't equal conformity to what the law actually requires. For a Jew, circumcision served to demonstrate one's complete commitment to God's law. Paul, however, argues that it served to demonstrate one's failure to keep God's law! In Acts 15:5, Luke reports how some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees insisted, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the Law of Moses." But, Paul once again states that even those who are outwardly circumcised do not keep the law!

Therefore, not only were the Judaizers guilty of prideful motives but also they were guilty of gross hypocrisy and self-deception (cf. 6:3). Thinking they were law-keepers they were in reality law-breakers! Talk about self-deception! Again, Paul

reiterates how legalism actually leads to license (cf. 5:13-24). Legalists are actually lawless people because they do not fulfill the true intent of the law (cf. 5:13-14; 6:2).

Once again, Paul draws a stark contrast between the law (old covenant) and gospel (new covenant). The Law cannot give what it demands. Only the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel, gives what the law demands (cf. 5:13-14; 6:2). In chapter 5:3, Paul has already taught that to receive circumcision is to bring oneself under the obligation of keeping the whole law. One cannot pick and choose which aspects of the law to keep and which to dismiss. The Law is a whole entity and coming under one aspect of the Law demands that a person come under the whole Law.

Paul, however, has demonstrated that no one can keep the whole law (cf. 3:10). The Law only pronounces justification upon those who keep it perfectly. This is the problem! No one can keep it perfectly! "All this we will do" may be well intentioned but it is impossible! Sincerity doesn't lead to justification. Therefore, the law issues a curse (i.e., condemnation) instead of a blessing (i.e., justification). This is why the Judaizers' boast is vanity, useless. In Romans 3:27-28, Paul concludes, "²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

In contrast to the prideful, empty boast of the Judaizers, Paul declares that he will boast only in the cross of Christ. In v. 14, Paul emphasizes the sufficiency of the cross positively.

B. CROSS, v. 14

The Judaizers boasted in their ethnic identity, their works of the law (i.e., circumcision) and their success in circumcising Gentile converts. In contrast, Paul declares in the strongest possible terms that he will only boast in the cross of Christ. He writes, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." For Paul, there was no other possible ground for boasting. The cross was Paul's boast. He gloried and reveled and trusted in Christ crucified. He rejoiced in lived for Christ crucified (cf. Gal. 2:20). The object of his boast was the cross of Christ. A crucified Messiah filled his horizon, engrossed his attention and absorbed His time and energy. In a word, Christ crucified was his glory and obsession.

That Paul would boast in the cross was extraordinarily strange to both a Gentile and a Jew. Richard Longenecker explains,

Today, after almost two millennia of the cross as a sacred symbol, it is difficult for Christians to appreciate the repugnance and horror with which the cross was viewed among both Jews and Gentiles in the first century...The only things comparable in our day would be venerating an electric chair or

wearing a hangman's noose around our necks as a symbol of our religious devotion (*Galatians*, p. 294).

Timothy George notes that the Latin word *crux* was regarded as an expression so crude no polite Roman would utter it in public. So, to get around this, they would say, "Hang him on the unlucky tree" (*Galatians*, p. 436). As for a Jew, anyone who was hung on a tree was considered cursed by God (cf. Deut. 21:23; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:10-13). So, the obvious dilemma in a Jew's mind was, "How could Jesus, if He was the sinless Messiah, be cursed by God?" This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that the preaching of Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. Why would Paul boast in such a repugnant, horror-filled, foolish symbol?

The cross has been central in Paul's thinking and teaching throughout this letter (cf. 1:4; 2:20; 3:1, 13; 6:12, 14; cf. also 1 Cor. 1:17-18, 23; 2:2; 5:7; 8:11; 11:24-26). He has shown how the cross of Christ is of paramount importance in the gospel (cf. 2:21; 3:1, 13). We will come back to the question of why Paul would boast in the cross and examine it in more detail. For now, turn to Galatians 3:10-13. Here Paul answers the question, "How could Jesus, the sinless Messiah, be cursed by God?" The answer Paul gives is that Jesus' death on the cross redeemed us from the curse of the law" (3:13). Jesus bore the curse of the law that was due to us for our law breaking. The substitutionary death of Christ on the cross lies at the heart of the atonement and gospel message. On the cross, Jesus received God the Father's full, unmitigated wrath and punishment for sin. Hermans Witsius reminds us that on the cross Jesus beheld the awful tribunal of God. Witsius explains that Jesus saw the Judge Himself "armed with all the terrors of His incomprehensible vengeance." He received

the law brandishing all the thunders of its curses, the devil, and all the powers of darkness, with all the gates of hell poured out upon His soul. In a word, He saw justice itself, in all its inexorable rigour, to which He was now to make full satisfaction. He saw the face of His dearest Father, without darting a single ray of favour upon Him, but rather burning with hot jealousy in all the terrors of His wrath against the sins of mankind, which He had undertaken to atone for. And whitersoever He turned, not the least glimpse of relief appeared for Him, either in heaven or on earth, til with resolution and constancy He had acquitted Himself in the combat (*Economy of the Covenants*, p. 218).

REFLECTION:

One dare not think that he can add anything to such a perfect work! No amount of works we do could ever add a single ounce of merit to Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. When He cried, "It is finished!", there was nothing more to be done. Full atonement had been made. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. This is the reason—to be sure not the only reason as we

will come to see—why Paul boasted only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! There was no other possible ground for boasting. May this also be our only boast as well, namely an all-sufficient, crucified—and risen—Savior!

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