

## **The New Creatures \* Galatians 6:11-18**

### **November 8, 2015 \* Rod Fultz**

Science Fiction is all about strange beings. Whether it be zombies or weird combinations of humans and computers or invaders from outer space The more bizarre the better. But from my observation the plot line in these films are always the same: The strange beings are coming to take over the world and we have to find a way to stop them.

Well, 2000 years ago, God launched an invasion of strange beings and they have been infiltrating the nations, turning whole societies upside down, maddening leaders who thought they were in control ever since. I am talking (of course) about the invasion of the New Creatures. It is a far better story than any super hero movie you have ever seen. For it began with God sending His eternal Word into the womb of a virgin through His Holy Spirit, and that God-Man (Jesus Christ) who was born of her, growing up to a perfectly obedient life, fulfilling God's Holy Law even to the point of loving His neighbor so much that He willingly offered up His life as a guilt offering for our sin on the cross. So that, whoever believes in Christ will not perish in their sin (as they deserve) but in Him, will have everlasting life.

God raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him at His right hand. Then He launched the invasion! He sent His Holy Spirit into His disciples, filling them with supernatural power to speak His Life-Giving Word with boldness, to declare in resurrection power Christ to the nations. And supernaturally New Creatures began to appear: New People with New Natures!

But here is what is strange: These new creatures dwell within the same bodies of people formerly dead in trespasses and sins, who formerly had lived lives of self-righteousness, pride and contempt but now have been given new hearts which want to follow Jesus Christ. And the invasion is continuing today, led by none other than King Jesus Himself.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

This is what it means to be born again. And just like an infant begins to learn about the new world he is born into, Christians begin to see all of life from God's Perspective. As they do, their values change. Their priorities are re-aligned and they stand out from the surrounding population. They are God's Peculiar People (compared to society). They are the New Creatures.

As Paul closes his letter to the Galatians he wants them to understand this reality clearly: that there are only two types of people on the planet.

- 1) Those who are in Christ as His New Creations and
- 2) Those who are not.

Either you are under the authority of Jesus, led by His Spirit to fulfill His mission, or you still run life your own way without Him. By comparison race is irrelevant. Culture and socio-

economic background all pale in comparison to which Kingdom you are in. Listen as I read God's Holy Word through Paul as he closes with this reality:

Galatians 6:11–18 (ESV)

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

<sup>12</sup> It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

<sup>13</sup> For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

<sup>14</sup> 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 neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

<sup>16</sup> And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

It is probable that Paul used a scribe (an amanuensis) to pen his letters, but regardless of whether he did or not here, he authenticates that this is indeed from him by writing the closing with his own hand. This is his autograph. But Paul writes this section with large letters to emphasize the significance of what matters most (not only to the Galatians – but to all of us): Through the gospel God makes people into New Creations. The first characteristic of these strange new creatures which have invaded earth is that they stop falling for the false advertising of man-made religion.

## The New Creatures

### 1. Forsake the Façade

In Ft. Worth (where we used to live) along the main highway that loops around the area is a church building. The front is shaped in a V and from the highway it looks huge. But when you take the off ramp you get to see the building from the side, shockingly, behind that giant steeple and frontage of brick and pillars is a small modest building that would hold maybe 200 people. In architectural terms that is called a façade, a false front, a surface layer that puts forward an appearance of something more (even different) than what it actually is.

That is exactly what the Judaizers were trying to present to the Galatian believers, a façade of false promises for the purpose of making themselves look good because carnal minds are always more concerned with impressions than effects with appearances instead of substance

| Galatians 6:12 (ESV)

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Paul wants the motives of these false teachers fully exposed. Their ordering of new Gentile believers in the gospel to also be circumcised would in effect nullify the grace of God in the gospel! Remember that circumcision was the ceremonial act by which one agreed to be under the Covenant of Jewish Law.

You know how apps for your phone or computer programs are continually coming out with new versions of the same app. Well, for Galatia at that time, this was just the Deceiver's current version of an ongoing program (still running today) to bring Christians back under the bondage of merit based religion, religion where you, in effect, attempt to earn your salvation through your own efforts. Make sure you understand the difference so that you don't fall for a similar façade

In the gospel: One believes in the finished work of Jesus on your behalf. You begin to rely upon His perfect life (instead of trying to earn merit yourself through religious actions). You begin to trust in the full atonement of His death for forgiveness of all your sin (rather than the empty hope that your good deeds will somehow outweigh your bad) or that you do your part. You climb the religious ladder as far as you can and then God makes up the difference

The gospel is that Jesus has done 100% of the saving work on your behalf. You simply abandon trusting in yourself and believe on Him. (That's why it is good news!) His resurrection from the dead is assurance that you too will have eternal life and that all His merit has been credited to you as a free gift. Don't let anyone add to that. If they do, they are not out to help you.

Galatians 6:13 (ESV)

For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

Boasting in one's own accomplishments is the undeniable mark of the old creation. It is not the fruit of someone that has denied himself and taken up his cross to follow Jesus. It is the mark of a deceiver. So, Paul says, don't fall for the façade! Don't be persuaded by religious looking arguments that appear to add something good to gospel. Paul said these Judaizers demanded law-keeping from the Galatians but they themselves were hypocrites.

We have those today. They likewise only want you to be a notch in their belt, a trophy on their shelf, a "like" on their page, a statistic on their report. In fact, in America we are plagued with gospel facades on all sides, whether it is from family members adhering to a formalistic/man-centered religion or TV prosperity preachers, or from the seemingly unlimited stream of falsehood appearing on your computer screens.

False teachers always seek to add to the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (and His finished work) and much of the time they do it (not for your good but) to put on a good show, to make themselves look better (at your eternal expense), to make their "ministry" more popular.

You realize that don't you? The way to attract the masses and make "our ministry" successful is to avoid the stigma which society puts on those who make this the core of Christianity:

Luke 9:23–24 (ESV)

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

In Galatia if someone preached that message they would be stoned (like Paul was at Lystra) by both the Jews and the Romans. In our day (at least for now) you are simply ostracized, written off as antiquated and irrelevant out of touch. But it is only the cross which separates the New Creatures from the world.

Because the world, once they discover what the cross means, will avoid it at all costs! Once men hear that the meaning of the cross is actually that they are under the curse of sin and that on the cross, Jesus bore the penalty for that sin (eternal death) and that unless they repent and take up their cross they will spend forever under the wrath of God in hell, once they hear that you won't have to separate from them. They will run from you back to the world they love. Here's why:

Stott - "Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have self-inflated views of ourselves. It is there at the foot of the cross that we shrink to our true size."

False Teachers (just like the rest of the world) prefer to glory in themselves but Christians boast in the love of Christ displayed fully at the cross.

Galatians 6:14 (ESV)

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.

Did you know that boasting is a form of worship? What you boast in reveals Who you trust. That is why the God who loved you so much that He gave His only Son to bring you to Himself says:

1 Corinthians 1:31 (ESV)

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

In any given week what do people hear you bragging about: yourself, making confident assertions about all types of things, or some sports team, or your kid's performance, your political candidate? Whatever you brag on or make much of is (in that moment) being worshiped.

Paul (who had quite a resume to boast from if he wanted to) says Christ alone and what He did on the cross is the only thing I glory in, what I revel in, what I rejoice in. "Far Be it from me," he says, pushing to get all those lesser boasts out of his presence. They are empty compared to Christ. The cross is the pivot point of all of history. Let it become the lens through which you view yourself and the world.

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### 2. The Cross is your Life Lens

Each of us has had events and circumstances in our lives that shape the way we view our world. Our experiences become the lens through which we see all of life. If you have been hurt or rejected in the past by people, you tend to see people in your life today through the scars of that lens. But if, in fact, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus, the cross is now the place where all the pain can be nailed. All of our own failures can be nailed to the tree. All of our own pride can be nailed to the tree. Let the cross become the epicenter of your reality so that everything in your life is now seen in light of what Christ accomplished there. There, He proved His love for you and was delivered up in your place. The cross is now what has separates the new you from your old self. It is what defines who you are as a new creation in Christ Jesus

Galatians 6:14 (ESV)

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.

I wonder have you been trying to avoid the cross? Sort of like someone who needs to wear glasses to see properly all the time but only pulls them out in situations of extreme need because they don't like the thought of being that old? Often we treat Jesus (and His gospel) like that, don't we? Only bringing His reality into our world view if we really need Him (like when somebody dies or we are in financial trouble). Paul says no! The cross is the place where true Christians and the world have parted company. Be honest before the Lord this morning. Have you had a clean break with the world?

Stott – The world is an antonym to the new creation. You can't love the system of sin that characterizes the world and your new life in Christ at the same time

That is spiritual adultery.

1 John 2:15–17 (ESV)

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Note the contrast in this passage between the old, corrupt system of the world (perishing) and the new, eternal creation of which you are a part of in Christ Jesus. We are in the world but the system of sin which characterizes the world no longer rules over us. That is what it means to be a new creation. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the bondage of what the world loves (autonomy) and your new nature abhors everything which raises its head above your New King – Jesus Christ!

The cross is the lens through which we view all of life. For it is not merely the dividing line of history but our departing city for the New Creation. Every decision you make, every preference you exercise should be weighed against the price paid for you on the cross. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!

Galatians 6:15 (ESV)

For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Under the Old Covenant, circumcision was meant to set apart Israelites from pagan nations around them. It was the Jew's distinguishing mark that they belonged to God. Paul says not anymore!

Romans 2:28–29 (ESV)

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

The people of God are no longer defined by some external removal of flesh but by a circumcision of their hearts, by the Holy Spirit removing our heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh, by making believers in the gospel – New Creatures from every nation under heaven. Paul says that all other distinctions are now meaningless. God's one true people can be distinguished from the world around them by the newness of life they exhibit as those who have been born from on high as New Creations in Jesus Christ. That, Paul says, is the one rule of the true Israel.

Galatians 6:16 (ESV)

And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we see two ways to belong to God's People. He does not have two families. He has one Son. All His children are adopted into His Family through faith in the gospel. The sons of Abraham are now those who come to Christ by faith in His finished work on the cross. We Gentiles are grafted in to the rich root of Israel in Christ Jesus as a gift of His free mercy. We get to experience the depth of His gracious love and His supernatural peace as we walk through our lives carrying His Cross. We need to base our whole lives on that reality: as followers of a cross-bearing Savior, we will be like Him.

## **The New Creatures**

### **3. Prepare to Suffer**

You don't have to be a rapid news dog to detect that persecution among Christians is at epidemic levels around the globe. In January of this year, Open Doors reported:

Christian persecution reached historic levels in 2014, with approximately 100 million Christians around the world facing possible dire consequences for merely practicing their

religion. From imprisonment to torture to beheadings, more Christians worldwide live in fear for their lives than at any time in the modern era. –

For decades here in America, Christians who love God and who cling to His promises have subconsciously excluded ourselves from one promise:

2 Timothy 3:12–13 (ESV)

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,<sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

We certainly see verse 13 happening all around us do we not?? We already see Christianity almost entirely eliminated from the public square here in America. We see Christians who refuse to be silent to keep the glorious grace available in Jesus Christ to themselves being fired, sometimes imprisoned for standing on their convictions. Perhaps you have been condemned by your family members for your Gospel-centered views, ostracized, characterized as evil. Paul, the point man of the Invasion of the New Creatures in his day, knew well the sufferings of Christ as he boldly preached the gospel of grace:

Galatians 6:17 (ESV)

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Let no one trouble me = let no one dispute my apostolic authority. Here's why:

“The marks” (stigmata)= the brand (tattoo) that slave owners placed on their servants

Paul is saying that the scars on his body, which came from being stoned and left for dead, and whipped 40 lashes less one, are the authentic evidence that He is preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Both then and now, men resent the humiliation of having to view themselves as God sees them instead of how they have convinced themselves they are compared to others. Persecution for proclaiming the cross arises over resentment of the wounds which the cross inflicts on man's pride.

The world will attempt to silence the preaching of the cross at all costs. The world is part of the old creation and it hates the preaching of the new. As we look out on that world, along with Paul, along with the millions of our brothers and sisters in countries like North Korea Somalia Iraq Syria Nigeria Pakistan, should we not offer ourselves afresh to God this morning to say:

Lord, give me grace strengthen my faith to stand firm in your Gospel and  
Prepare me to Suffer. Prepare my children

God says: Good News I have more than enough grace and peace available!

Galatians 6:18 (ESV)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

The Royal king of the New Creatures is eager to pour out grace upon us as we represent Him and His truth here in the old creation. Let's prepare to invade the nations with good news come what may. Amen.