

Message #23

Galatians 6:11-18

Not long ago we were watching a documentary about a criminal who was tracked down for a murder and in the course of the program it showed a western store that was in Casper, Wyoming. Mary was doing something in the kitchen and when it showed the store, I said there is that store we have visited multiple times.

It is a store of different floors that contains different types of western gear on each floor. One floor has western clothing for women. Another floor has western clothing for men. Another floor has saddles and another floor has outfitting supplies such as ropes, panniers and other things. In the basement of this store are cowboy hats. There are all kinds of cowboy hats—different styles, different colors, different shapes, different sizes and different brands. There are Resistol hats, Eddy hats, Wrangler hats, Stetson hats, Cavender hats, Justin hats, and Rodeo King hats. There are hats made of straw, felt and palm leaf. If you can't find a hat you like at this store, it probably doesn't exist.

When it comes to religion, it is the same. There is something for everyone. There are many religions of the world. They come in all sizes, shapes, labels and price tags. But they all have the same dead vein in them—they all promote some sort of works righteousness.

Paul was telling these Galatians that there is only one way to be right with God and it is not by works, but by faith alone in Christ alone. We are not right with God on the basis of our works or our religion or our attempts to keep the O.T. Law. We are not right with God by anything we do in our flesh. The only way we may be right with God is by trusting in the pure grace of God that is found in Jesus Christ. That is the whole point of this book of Galatians. This is the way Paul started this book and this is the way Paul ends this book:

TRUE SALVATION AND TRUE SANCTIFICATION ARE ACCOMPLISHED BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND NOT BY WORKS, NOT BY RELIGION AND NOT BY ANY ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE O.T. LAW.

As Paul brings this letter to a conclusion that is precisely the point he wants to communicate. He wants to bring us back to the big theme of the entire epistle. There are five final thoughts that Paul presents to the Galatians:

FINAL THOUGHT #1 – God's grace is so important that Paul wrote Galatians with his own hand. **6:11**

When Paul first learned that the Galatians were being drawn away from grace into a law focus, he was so disturbed that he wrote himself. Now immediately we do see the importance of the written Scriptures. That is what is able to give us stability in the midst of a deranged religious world.

Now Paul stresses that he wrote with his own hand. That is not easy when you have an eyesight problem. Paul was half-blind. Galatians is not an extremely long letter. It is only 6 chapters. It is not like Romans and I Corinthians that are 16 chapters. But even six chapters are difficult for a man half-blind to write.

Most of the time, Paul used a secretary to pen his letters for him. This secretary was called an amanuensis. He would usually write a short note with his own hand, just to establish that it was a legitimate letter from him—I Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; II Thess. 3:17. Apparently there were many false letters that had been circulated by those in false religions, who claimed they were representing the apostles. So Paul would typically sign something himself.

Paul wrote in large letters. People with eyesight problems tend to want large print things. Paul referred to his eyes earlier in this epistle in the context of some bodily infirmity (Gal. 4:14-15). We know he had some “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor. 12:7) and we also know that he could not see the high priest who hit him (Acts 23:3). So this would lead us to conclude he had an eyesight problem.

Now the text says that he wrote in “large letters.” That may refer to the fact that Paul used all capital Greek letters, called uncial letters. It is possible that this whole letter was written in capital Greek letters. It is also possible that he wrote the conclusion in small case Greek letters called miniscule letters.

The point of mentioning this is that Paul is saying I so detest what the false Judaizers and legalists do that I have taken the time and the effort and the energy to write this with my own hand.

Nothing angers a grace preacher more than someone preaching a works gospel.

FINAL THOUGHT #2 – False legalists are motivated by false motives. **6:12-13**

Make no mistake about this, a false legalist, who teaches a false works system, is not motivated by a desire to see one walking close to God and in a close relationship with Jesus Christ. He is not motivated by a desire for people to know the Word of God so they may do God’s will. His motivation is as false as his religion.

There are three false motives brought out here:

False Motivation #1 - False Legalists are motivated by their own pride. **6:12a**

A false legalist loves to put on a good show for people. His desire is to make his flesh look as good as he possibly can rather than to admit and accept the truth that in our flesh lies no good thing. O.T. law and religious legalism appeals to the pride of man.

People who are in false works religions do put on an impressive show. They have showy liturgies, rituals and other religious acts and observances that they have invented. They have showy clothing and music all of which requires no heart that is right with God. It appears to be so sincere but it is so superficial. It is all motivated by pride. It is all false religious stuff.

Those who are caught up in false religion are not motivated by what the Bible actually says, but they are motivated in proudly and arrogantly defending their own vain way of thinking.

False Motivation #2 - False Legalists are motivated by their own cowardice. **6:12b**

People caught up in false religion are not only proud of their religion, but they are too afraid and too cowardly to leave it. They do not want to suffer any negative persecution. They are too afraid to trust in the cross-work of Jesus Christ because they are afraid of what their false religious brothers and sisters might think.

You will never get into trouble preaching works or legalism. You will never get into trouble preaching we need to be doing this or not doing that. But if you preach grace, you will suffer.

When we were in Pocatello, a businessman came to my office and I had the opportunity to present to him the Gospel of the pure grace of God. This man was a Mormon. He said to me, deep inside I know what you are saying is true. But he said if I accept this, I would lose my business because almost all of my business is done with people who reject it. I said, first of all you don't know you would lose all of your business, but even if you did, it is far better to lose some business than your soul. He asked if I would pray for him, which I did. He left my office and I have never seen him since. He was too afraid of what others might think.

False Motivation #3 - False Legalists are motivated by hypocrisy. **6:13**

False legalists love to tell others how to live life when in fact they themselves cannot even govern their own lives. They boast about different O.T. laws and about laws they themselves have not even kept.

People who are caught up in works religions are hypocrites. They pick a few laws and stress them to others when in all reality they cannot keep the law themselves. They totally disregard what James 2:10 says, "Whoever keeps the law and yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all." These people love to heap their burdens on others that they do not even keep themselves.

Notice their goal is to boast about how many people they are winning. They want to brag about the number of people they are recruiting. They are spiritually dead hypocrites.

FINAL THOUGHT #3 – The only thing that matters in one’s relationship with God is one’s relationship to the cross-work of Jesus Christ. **6:14-16**

Four facts are brought out:

Fact #1 - The cross of Jesus Christ sets you free from the world. **6:14b**

Religious monks think you can crucify the world by getting away from it. That will never work. No one will ever be free from the world by anything they do. It is Jesus Christ who is our victory.

We are confronted with the world every day and it is Jesus Christ who gives us victory, we do not.

Fact #2 - The cross of Jesus Christ sets you free from the Law. **6:15a**

Now if Paul would have said that the Law is good but Christianity is better, everything would have probably been fine. But Paul said the Law is nothing. Once you have believed on Jesus Christ, the Law means nothing. Circumcision or uncircumcision means nothing. The Law doesn’t matter once you come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Many people get caught up with the externals. They substitute rules and rituals for a relationship. They substitute laws for living.

Fact #3 - The cross of Jesus Christ makes you a new creation. **6:15b**

If you have believed on Jesus Christ, you are a new creation. The moment you trust Christ, “all things” become new. Your slate is clean.

Fact #4 - The cross of Jesus Christ gives you a new way to live life. **6:16**

Notice the text says, “those who will walk by this rule.” What rule are we talking about? The rule of grace. The rule that boasts in the grace of God found in Jesus Christ and a rule of life that does not try to govern by circumcision or no circumcision. In other words, the rule of life is living life free in the grace of God.

The one who governs his life by this rule will enjoy the peace of God and the mercy of God. This would also be true for Israel. If they would trust Jesus Christ and stop trusting in themselves, they too would experience God’s grace.

Once you trust Christ you walk by faith, not law or rules. As you continue to walk by faith in light of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, God’s peace and mercy will be upon you.

FINAL THOUGHT #4 – Do not let anyone attack Paul or his teaching or ministry. **6:17**

Paul expected these people to defend him. There is a place for defending a true grace teacher. Paul expected these Galatians to back him and support him and defend him. There is a place for standing up for grace and for the teacher who taught grace.

He carried the literal scar marks on his body (II Cor. 11:23-27). This man was literally beat up for the grace Gospel.

Every attack Paul suffered he suffered because of his teaching and preaching about the grace of God. He expected the people in the churches where he had ministered to defend grace and defend him.

FINAL THOUGHT #5 – God's grace is with you. **6:18**

Now Paul signs off by saying, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren.” Grace can only exist within the brethren and grace is something that affects your spirit.

If you believe in that which teaches works salvation or law-keeping traditional codes, grace has not affected your spirit.