

Lesson 25 – Galatians 6:11-18

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church
www.valleybible.net

Review

The main point of Galatians is that salvation is NOT by good works, moral living, religious ritual or observance, heredity, or organizational membership, but by **grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!!!** Salvation results in freedom; freedom from sin and freedom to live in a way that glorifies God.

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He is correcting the heresy of the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel or Christ plus legalism, which is really not another gospel since there is only one gospel of Christ.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul defended the true gospel by showing that he had received the gospel (God) through revelation and demonstrated that the true gospel has the power to change lives (persecutor/murderer to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ). That same authentication is true for the follower of Christ today.

In chapters 3 and 4, Paul defended justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He showed the things that the Law cannot do compared to justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

In Chapters 5 and 6, having nailed down his argument for freedom in Christ through justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, Paul looks to the practical application of that freedom.

Today, after having defended his apostleship, defended justification by faith, and presented the walk of freedom, Paul brings his letter to an end by a final contrast between the Judaizer false teachers and a true teacher, himself. He summarizes the issues covered in the letter by pointing out the pride involved in trusting in works (circumcision) over trusting by faith in the Cross of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to make them a new creation.

Conclusion (6:11-18)

1. Boasting in the flesh (6:11-13)

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. (NASB95)

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²It 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. ¹³For 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. (ESV)

Paul finishes this section in his own hand. It was not uncommon for biblical writers to use an amanuensis (recording secretary or scribe) since writing on papyrus was difficult.

⁴Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him. (Jeremiah 36:4)

¹²Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! (1 Peter 5:12)

²²I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. (Romans 16:2)

Yet Paul would often pen the last section of his letter as either an authentication of his authorship or as a personal touch.

²¹The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. ²²If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. (1 Corinthians 16:21-24)

¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you. (Colossians 4:18)

¹⁷I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18)

¹⁹I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). (Philemon 1:19)

We can only speculate about Paul's "large letters". Perhaps it had to do with an eye issue (4:13-15). Perhaps he was using large sized font or all capitals for emphasis. The important point is that Paul authenticated his authorship of this particular letter beginning the final contrast between false teachers and true teachers.

Paul is going to give his final condemnation of the Judaizers, the legalistic false teachers that add works to Christ. In the Judaizers' case they were adding the law or circumcision to Christ.

We must be careful here. These characteristics are not just found in THOSE false teachers. These tendencies can be found in us too.

1. Religious pride (v12a).

Paul's first condemning characteristic is religious pride in those that "desire to make a good showing in the flesh". "Desire" refers to a determined and constant exercise of the will. This is the Judaizers heart motive, and it permeates their actions.

"Good showing" means to make a fair appearance, make a good impression, stand well before others, appear plausible, to be concerned with making an external showing.

The Judaizers were concerned with how they looked on the outside, to other people. Paul was concerned with how he was in reality on the inside to God.

Jesus taught of this in the Sermon on the Mount when contrasting the good-showing-in-the-flesh faith practice with the results of true saving faith.

¹“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men **to be noticed by them**; otherwise you **have no reward with your Father who is in heaven**. (Matt 6:1)

²“So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **so that they may be honored by men**. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving will be in secret; and **your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you**. (Matt 6:2-4)

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners **so that they may be seen by men**. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and **your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you**. (Matt 6:5-6)

¹⁶“Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance **so that they will be noticed by men** when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and **your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you**. (Matt 6:16-18)

Those that who desire to make a good showing in the flesh have that showing as their reward. Those who are concerned about their heart and sowing to the Spirit will be rewarded by God.

❖ **What are your motives? Do you desire to be seen by people or by God?**

2. Compelling legalism (v12b).

The second characteristic of the false teachers was that they “try to compel you to be circumcised”. The false teachers were continually trying to coerce or force or make the gentiles add law or circumcision to Christ. Other uses of the word are “made” and “force”.

⁴⁵Immediately Jesus **made** His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. (Mark 6:45)

¹¹And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to **force** them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. (Acts 26:11)

False teachers place pressure on believers to submit to legalism. They elevate non-biblical rules, dos and don'ts, to the level of Scripture.

If you want to do X with faith, that is between you and the Lord. But compelling someone else to do X is legalism.

²³But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is not from faith*; and whatever is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23)

❖ **Are you firm in your faith to reject being compelled to legalism?**

3. Cowardice in the face of persecution (v12c).

The third characteristic of false teachers is that they are not willing to undergo persecution for the cross of Christ. False teachers are not willing to be identified with Christ alone. Identifying with the cross of Christ is identifying with his completely denied, surrendered, given-up life.

²³And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)

²⁶“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)

❖ **Have you denied everything to follow Christ?**

Persecution, at some level, is the expected outcome of following Christ.

¹²Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Tim 3:12)

❖ **Are you living godly in Christ Jesus?**

4. Hypocrisy (v13).

The final characteristic of false teachers is hypocrisy. They compel others to keep the Law, but they “do not even keep the Law”.

The Greek for “hypocrisy” originally referred to putting on a mask and playing a part on stage. It means to pretend to act from one position when one’s conduct is really displaying another. Hypocrisy is saying one thing and doing another. It is applying rules to other people that you do not apply to yourself. It is purporting to live one way and actually living another.

¹“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

The difference between a hypocrite and someone acting hypocritically, is what happens when they are confronted with their hypocrisy. A hypocrite refuses to recognize the claim/behavior disconnect. Someone who is acting hypocritically (sinning) will repent when confronted with the claim/behavior disconnect.

❖ **Do you live hypocritically (as opposed to sometimes acting hypocritically)?**

The reason the Judaizers wanted to compel the Gentiles to add Law to Christ through circumcision was so they could boast that they made converts to their heresy.

2. Boasting in the Cross (6:14-16)

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (NASB95)

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (ESV)

Teachers of biblical truth have several characteristics that are the opposite of Judaizer-like false teachers.

1. Humility (v14a)

For the Judaizers, the cross of Christ was not worth suffering for because they wanted to boast in flesh, in their own efforts, and the efforts of others whom they had compelled.

Paul would not boast. “Boast” has the basic meaning of praise, but negatively it can mean to take undo credit for something. “Boast” or “glory” depends on whom is being praised, self or God.

²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and **glory** in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, (Philippians 3:2-3)

Paul said that the Judaizers boast in self and their accomplishments, but “may it never be” that he should boast like that. “May it never be” is the strongest way to express a negative in Greek.

Paul would only boast in the “cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Paul is talking to the Galatian believers, so he uses “our”. A combined unity in Christ.

Paul’s only desire is to praise or glory in all that Christ has done and the blessings that flow from His cross. Paul refers to Christ with all His names so that the Galatians and Judaizers would not miss that the Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning, middle, and end of all praising.

❖ **Do you praise yourself or the Lord Jesus Christ?**

2. The pull of the world is broken (v14b)

True gospel preachers have the pull of the world broken because the world has been crucified to them and they to the world.

When we speak of “world” we mean the current world system that belongs to Satan. It is a system of deception and wickedness that leaves God out and is opposed to Him (James 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 16:11; 1 John 2:15-17; James 3:15). Satan’s aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive; appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to entice us to sin.

The power of the world, the flesh, and the devil has been broken for the believer in Christ. But for the legalist who adds works to Christ, they are still in slavery.

❖ Do you live as a freed slave?

3. Purity of the gospel (v15)

True gospel preachers understand that works mean nothing in salvation. Circumcision is nothing and neither is uncircumcision. Neither means anything with regard to salvation. But a new creation through the gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone means everything.

Here is the crux of the difference between works and the gospel. The sinner’s problem isn’t that they are in a little bit of trouble. Their problem is that they are dead and need to be made new in Christ.

¹And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵**even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 2:1-6)

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

❖ Is the gospel and its purpose clear in your mind?

Paul pronounces condemnation on the those who propagate the rule of Law. But on those who walk by the rule of faith alone apart from works, Paul pronounces blessings – peace and mercy.

Paul singles out a second group from the general group of those that trust alone in Christ as marked by the repetition of “upon”. These are Jewish believers, both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham since “Israel” always refers to physical Jews everywhere else in the NT (65 times).

❖ **What rule do you live by?**

3. Apostleship (6:17)

¹⁷From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. (NASB95)

¹⁷From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (ESV)

Here is Paul’s final admonition to the Judaizers and vacillating Galatians. You have caused me trouble, but “from now on let now one cause trouble for me.” “Trouble” literally carries the idea of a beating and so a state of discomfort or distress, trouble, difficulty.

The reason they should not cause figurative trouble is because he has endured literal trouble in the cause of Christ.

“Brand-marks” was what was cut or branded as a mark of ownership on the body of a soldier or slave. It was a permanent mark or scar on the body. Paul had permanent scars on his body that he received as an apostle of Christ as he preached the gospel of Christ.

At this time in Paul’s life, the scars most likely would have been obtained during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14:28) when he was stoned at Lystra and left for dead.

¹⁹But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. (Acts 14:19-20)

The damage to Paul’s body from this stoning could have been significant and was most likely visible as scars.

❖ **What marks you as a follower of Christ?**

4. Farewell (6:18)

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen. (NASB95)

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. (ESV)

To the brethren, his family in Christ, Paul gives his final benediction. He also points once again to Christ alone for salvation, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we with your spirit”. Not the law of Moses, not circumcision, not works, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul prays for grace to be with his brethren. “Grace” is God’s sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”.

❖ **Do you thank God for grace? Do you pray for grace?**

Paul finishes his treatise on grace with an “amen”. “This is firm”. “This I believe”. “Of this I am certain”.

❖ **Do you give your “amen” to grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone?**