

## **Galatians 6:11-18**

### **Distorted Desires**

#### **One Last Comparison**

Good morning church. So good to be back with you today. And thanks for your understanding on last week's need to go online due to both COVID in my family and the weather. Perfect storm of circumstances. Both of our sons ended up getting COVID, super mild just as we expected it would be if/when they got it, now our family's a perfect 6 for 6...

Today we are finishing the book of Galatians. We started the book of Galatians, verse by verse, back on October 24. After today we will have spent 14 weeks working through this book as an act of worship, verse by verse. My encouragement to each of us, with Mabel as the only exception, was to spend time reading through the entire book during the week, and allow the truth of God's word to penetrate deeply into your heart and mind. I hope that each of you, and those watching online, have spent meaningful time in this book through this time.

Where we've been, over the last 14 weeks, Paul had to deal with a major issue in these 4 churches that he'd planted. They had elevated false teachers, that were adding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That great good news story that everyone of us is dead in our sin. But God sent His son, God in the flesh, to live a perfect life, to pay the penalty for our sin on the cross, to defeat death by being raised from the dead, and offering life to all who by grace alone through faith alone would believe in his name. That's the gospel – the good news that we can have life in Jesus' name.

But these false teacher were trying to change it – in essence saying you have to be a good Jew too. Said another way – grace and faith aren't enough – it's up to your own effort. And this lie, is really what distinguishes Biblical Christianity from every other false religion that has ever existed. Biblical Christianity → grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scriptures alone, Glory of God alone → this is the way of life. Everything else adds some element of your own merit and work, and they're all lying – lies straight from the pit of hell.

So Paul writes this incredible letter of rebuke to these churches to get them refocused on the Gospel. And all along the way he's dropping Gospel bombs:

- 1:8 → Focus on the message not the messenger
- 1:24 → Paul's goal was that God be glorified
- 2:15-16 → Justified by faith alone
- 2:20 → Crucified with Christ
- 3:7 → Abraham's sons are those by faith
- 3:27-28 → ethnic, religious, economic, male/female differences don't matter – we have greater unity in Christ than any of our earthly differences
- 5:1 → For freedom Christ has set us
- 5:16 → Walk by the Spirit
- 6:10 → Work for the good of all, whenever we have the opportunity

And in these final 8 verses, Paul summarizes, or maybe better said makes one last effort to distinguish between the false teachers and true teachers like himself. And what Paul points out

in these closing verses, is the root of the false teachers' problems → their desired were distorted. And to highlight this – Paul gives these churches, and us by extension, one last comparison of himself and these false teachers.

Turn with me to Galatians 6:11-18

### **READ Galatians 6:11-18**

<sup>11</sup> Look at what large letters I use as I write to you in my own handwriting. <sup>12</sup> Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh are the ones who would compel you to be circumcised—but only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For even the circumcised don't keep the law themselves, and yet they want you to be circumcised in order to boast about your flesh.

<sup>14</sup> But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation. <sup>16</sup> May peace come to all those who follow this standard, and mercy even to the Israel of God!

<sup>17</sup> From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Brothers and sisters, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

### **PRAY.**

So Paul gives us one last comparison here – should be understood through the lens of everything he's already written to these churches. Where Paul kind of bottom lines it for these church.

And we see “Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh...but as for me.” Those, but as for me.

At the end of the day, the fundamental difference is one of motivation. Or desires. What is the overwhelming concern of these guys? It certainly wasn't the Gospel. And it definitely wasn't the people that made up the churches.

### **I. False Teachers:**

**V12** – Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh

- Their concern is appearances and impressions
- Their audience here is people – they want people to think well of them. They desire the praise of people. They desire the control and power that comes when people think well of you.
- The praise of people is a terrible idol. It will lead you and me into all kinds of garbage. Constantly playing whack-a-mole, always trying to keep up.

- We will never make all people happy, and to try is a fool's errand. **People pleasing is exhausting**. Because you and I will never make everyone happy.
- It's freeing – and it's taken me a LONG time to get here – but it's freeing when you stop caring what people think of you.
  - Not in an arrogant and harsh way – but in a way that values the glory of God above all.

**V12** – They would force you to be circumcised – **but only** to avoid persecution. We see the false teachers' motivation – avoid persecution. They weren't pursuing the glory of God, they weren't even pursuing the good of the people they were trying to lead. They were just trying to avoid persecution → and the path of minimal persecution was to add circumcision and law keeping to the Gospel.

When I was studying this week, and taking notes – I kept coming back to that part “but only to” ...I was using a different translation part of the week that phrased it “in order that” but you get the idea. And I started letting my mind race down some of the “but only to's” that we see today.

We're not going to have someone takeover this church and start preaching circumcision and OT law requirements. But let's not fool ourselves – there are plenty of “but only to's” that we may be susceptible to. Here's a couple that I came up with:

- American materialism
  - Don't miss that Jesus spoke more about money than heaven and hell combined
- Soft-selling sin
  - Way easier message to share that we've just messed up, but really are good at our core
  - Less offensive for sure
  - Minimizes the holiness of God, by also minimizing the wickedness of sin
  - Ephesians – For you were dead in your trespasses and sin...

Perhaps the largest issue in front of us in 2022 is a maintaining Biblical Sexual Ethic. Right now, the worst thing that happens to a church that maintains a Biblical Sexual Ethic is we may get content blocked on YouTube, Facebook, wherever else. But there is a time coming when we could conceivably lose our tax exempt status, maybe even be shut down, for actively believing, teaching and pursuing God's good design for human sexuality.

### **V13 – A Striking Irony**

They don't do or believe what they say – they just want something to brag about.

And then in V14 – we have the comparison.

## **II. But as for me...**

### **A. Paul's only source for boasting was in the cross.**

- This brother knew the greatness of his sin
- This brother knew what God, through Christ, had saved him from
- This brother knew what God, through Christ, had saved him for

- And as a result, he wasn't really interested in anyone seeing how awesome he was or how great he was. His boasting was only in the cross.

### **B. Paul's life was radically redirected**

The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world.

- The opinions of people – no longer mattered
- Staying current with the times – not an issue for him

The only thing that mattered – the single focus of Paul's life – was the Gospel. Sharing and showing people the greatness of the Gospel of Jesus, and trusting Jesus with the results. Nothing else mattered to Paul. He wouldn't allow himself to be distracted with other things. He was solely focused on the Gospel.

### **C. The heart of the matter – a new creation**

**Re-read V15.** What really mattered to Paul was to see people respond to the Gospel, to see people find life in Jesus' name. That new creation. It's what he would write about later to the church at Corinth, in 2 Corinthians 5

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has<sup>[d]</sup> come!

Paul closes this letter with a blessing to all who "follow this standard".

As we think through the book of Galatians, as we close out the book of Galatians, this morning I just want to close with a handful of reflection questions for each of us:

1. Is your desire for an easy life, or a faithful life?
2. Is your desire to have people "look at me" or is it more "follow me, as I follow Christ"?
3. Is your desire to avoid persecution and suffering at every turn or to know that it's inevitable, and to trust the Lord in and through it?
4. Is your desire the praise of people or the praise of the Lord?