

A New Creation  
Galatians 6:11-18  
June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

1. \_\_\_\_\_ religion of ritual (6:12-13)

2. \_\_\_\_\_ change by grace (6:14-17)

The \_\_\_\_\_ of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (6:18)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Galatians 6:11-18

1. What do notice about each of these hand written greetings at the end of Paul's other letters? How are they similar/different than the one at the end of Galatians?
  - a. Colossians 4:18
  - b. 2 Thessalonians 3:17
  - c. 1 Corinthians 16:21-24
2. Why does God consistently have to warn people about external forms of religion that don't match the heart? (see Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:6-8; Zech. 7:4-12) Do you ever notice the tendency in yourself to focus on an outer appearance of godliness rather than an inner reality of godliness? If so, how do you fight against that in yourself?
3. The false teachers in Galatia were emphasizing circumcision to avoid persecution (v. 12). Can you think of other issues today that Christians might feel pressured to adopt an unbiblical view in order to avoid hostility, opposition, and/or persecution?
4. What does it mean to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? (v. 14) How do the following passages communicate a similar idea?
  - a. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31
  - b. 2 Corinthians 10:16-17
  - c. Jeremiah 9:23-24
5. What freedom comes when the believer realizes that he or she has been crucified to the world? (v. 14) How is that similar to fearing the Lord versus fearing man? (Proverbs 29:25; Matt. 10:28)
6. Central to this passage is a comparison between Paul's and the teachers' responses to persecution for the cross of Christ. Describe the difference between the two.
7. Paul blesses with peace and mercy those who "walk by this rule" (6:16). What rule is Paul referring to, and what does it look like to walk by it?

New Creation  
Galatians 6:11-18  
June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Big idea: The Christian life is not one of external ritual but internal change in Christ.

Introduction –

Imagine that you receive a typed and printed letter in the mail from a dear friend that you respect. It's a couple pages long and as you get to the end you see that he signed his name and then added another paragraph in his own handwriting. What would you conclude about that handwritten section? It's personal and it's important.

Paul wrote this last section himself. (v. 11)

Common for a letter to be dictated and written down by an amanuensis and then signed by the sender who perhaps includes a brief note in his own hand writing.

Many of his letters end with a mention of the person who wrote down the dictation.

Paul wrote more and he wrote larger than usual at the end of Galatians. Why?

Emphasis.

Perhaps large letters because of weaker eyesight or poor penmanship, but also likely that it was for emphasis, like we would underline or bold or use all caps for emphasis.

If it's emphasis, what is he emphasizing in this conclusion? The same themes as the letter as a whole – protecting and defending the gospel by warning about false teachers and clarifying what is most important.

This last section summarizes the key themes of the book one more time before Paul signs off. There's a sense of urgency here. Let's lean in to see what is so critical as to be penned in the apostle's own handwriting to the churches scattered around the region of Galatia, preserved through 20 centuries, and placed in our hands today.

1. **Outward** religion of ritual (6:12-13)

- a. The false teachers had wrong motives (vv. 12-13)
  - i. They wanted to make a good showing
    1. "boast in your flesh" (v. 13)
    2. Expository Commentary – an ancient letter in which a city official encourages his brother to "make a good showing" when writing up a financial report so that its figures do not fall short of the previous year's revenues. The term refers, then, to giving a good impression and carries the nuance of fudging the truth to make the situation look better than it actually is.
    3. There is an attraction to appearing successful. If something has the appearance of success – if a church has an appearance of success – people want to be a part of it.
      - a. They wanted to boast in the appearance of success. The Galatians were just a means to their own self-glory.
      - b. What a warning that is for us.

- i. Do I share the gospel with someone because I care about them and where they will spend eternity, or because I want to be seen as the type of Christian that shares the gospel regularly? Do I hope to see them come to Christ because I care about their soul, or because I want to glory in the story of how it makes me look?
    - ii. Do I gather for worship and have a personal quiet time because I want to appear godly or because I want to know God?
  - 4. Through Isaiah the prophet, God warned His people about an external appearance rather than an inward reality.
    - a. **Isaiah 29:13** Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,
    - b. Jesus repeated that warning and applied it to the people of His own time. (Mark 7:6-8)
  - ii. They wanted to avoid persecution
    - 1. How would compelling circumcision and downplaying the cross protect them from persecution?
    - 2. Circumcision changed their status to essentially Jewish converts.
      - a. It draws attention away from their allegiance to a religious leader killed on a shameful cross.
      - b. It deflects pressure from zealous Jews who saw Paul and the other apostles corrupting Judaism. Compelling the gentile converts to Christ to be circumcised allows them to say these gentiles are just converts to Judaism.
      - c. "Just give in on this minor point and you won't offend so many people. Just give in on this point and you'll fit in with the culture so much better."
    - 3. How do we see a similar pressure today for Christians? What are the issues that if Christians would just go along with the culture, we're told, we won't offend so many people? What are the issues that if we just adopt the world's perspective then we can avoid some opposition?
      - a. That answer is different in every place and time.
        - i. Christians in India might be pressured to go along with caste based discrimination.
        - ii. Christians in the south 175 years ago would have been pressured to support slavery.
        - iii. Bonhoeffer and others in the free church in Germany in the late 1930's and 1940's were pressured to support the Nazi regime.
      - b. What is it in our time and place?
        - i. Pride Month is the perfect opportunity to consider this.

- ii. On June 1st, my Apple calendar app informed me it was LGBTQ Pride Month. Social media posts by the US Marines, the US Embassy in Vatican City, and almost every company you can imagine confirmed that as logos were changed to rainbow colors.
      - iii. We're told that to disagree with this narrative is hate, as if the only options are affirmation or hatred.
      - iv. That is choice architecture to push you toward a position.
        - 1. Instead we can chart the course of gentle, clear, loving disagreement that cares about the person but doesn't approve.
      - v. Just as Israel was enticed by small compromises to the surrounding gods of their day, so we are enticed to make small compromises – adding preferred pronouns, using preferred pronouns, displaying a rainbow sign.
    - c. There's a quote often attributed to Luther by apparently not said by him but rather Elizabeth Rundles Charles in the 1850's-
      - i. "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved. And to be steady on all the battle fields besides is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."
  - b. Salvation by works is inevitably hypocritical. (v. 13)
    - i. They want you to keep the law but they can't even keep the law themselves!
    - ii. Same warning as Jesus about the Pharisees
      - 1. **Matthew 23:2-4** "The scribes and the Pharisees ... say *things* and do not do *them*.<sup>4</sup> "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.
    - iii. Reflects the teaching throughout Galatians
      - 1. **Galatians 2:21** "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."
- 2. **Inward** change by grace (6:14-17)
  - a. Boasting only in the cross (v. 14a)
    - i. They are boasting in success and comfort and their own obedience, we "boast" only in the cross.
    - ii. We have lost the sense of ironic shock this statement would have for his original audience.
    - iii. We have come to associate the cross with beauty – beautiful necklaces, towering churches, solemn headstones. Is that what his original audience, even an audience of Christians, would have thought of? No, it was not a beautiful symbol but an instrument of shock and horror.

- iv. George – Crux was regarded as an expression in Latin so crude that no polite Roman would utter it in public. They might say “hang him on the unlucky tree.” What the world regards as too shameful to whisper in polite company, a detestable object used for the brutal execution of the dregs of society, Paul declared to be the proper basis for exultation. In this and in this alone he would make his boast, in life and death, for all time and eternity.
- v. Why could he boast in that which is considered a shameful thing by the world around him?
  - 1. The answer is in what he says next.
- b. Not living for the world’s approval (v. 14b)
  - i. Not an image of getting nailed to the world, but rather that we are dead to the world and the world is dead to us. Something that is crucified is something that is killed.
  - ii. The world has not been put to death in a broad, universal sense – the world is still alive. But it is dead *to me*.
    - 1. I am alive, but I am dead to the world.
    - 2. Someone might spitefully say to an estranged family member, “You are dead to me.”
      - a. What they mean in that hurtful phrase is, “you no longer have any claim of relationship with me. I don’t owe you anything.”
    - 3. This carries that meaning without the loaded bitterness.
    - 4. John Stott – the Christian does not care what the world thinks of them.
  - iii. Does the world think I am wasting my life by following Jesus?
    - 1. So what, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
  - iv. Does the world misunderstand my unwillingness to approve of something that I think is harmful as hate-filled bigotry?
    - 1. So what, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
  - v. Paul has proof of this conviction in the scars on his own body that he bears as a mark of persecution (v. 17)
- c. The priority of a new creation (v. 15)
  - i. The key question is not, “am I circumcised or not?”
    - 1. It’s irrelevant! A circumcised man who comes to Christ or a gentile woman who comes to Christ, it doesn’t matter.
    - 2. What matters is a new creation.
      - a. **John 3:3** Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
      - b. **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
  - 3. The key question you must ask yourself is, “Am I a new creation?” Not, “Do I attend church? Do I give? Do I project the right image?”
    - a. Conversion. Am I converted?
    - b. Salvation. Am I saved?
    - c. New creation. Do I have a new heart?
    - d. Forgiveness. Are my sins forgiven?

4. Not, “do I try to be a good person? Am I kind to people?”
  - a. New spiritual life should lead to those things, but they are effects of salvation not causes of salvation.
- d. Walking by this rule (v. 16)
  - i. Gospel culture that matches gospel doctrine
  - ii. “Israel of God” puts a finger on the debated issue throughout the book.
    1. After describing his own conversion to Christ from a persecuting, zealous Jewish background, Paul describes a confrontation he had with Peter, also with a Jewish background and now following Christ, who was pulling away from Gentile Christians and siding with the Judaizers who thought the Gentiles needed Jesus and circumcision.
    2. There was division in the church between “Israel” and the church. Paul says in 2:13, the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy. That sets the tone for the book, including the repeated confrontation of the need for circumcision – the need to become Christian AND Jewish, in a sense.
    3. This closing statement that what matters is not whether someone is circumcised (a Jewish follower of Jesus) or not circumcised (a gentile follower of Jesus) but a new creation sets the stage for this phrase “the Israel of God.”
      - a. It refers to those Jews – “Israel” – that have believed in Christ as the Messiah and are not joining the Judaizers in adding circumcision to the gospel for gentiles.
    4. “Israel of God” is a debated term and a critical phrase for those who view the church in the New Testament as fulfilling the promise to Israel in the OT. One of the key differences between the view known as dispensationalism and the view known as Covenant Theology.
      - a. Who is Israel? How are those promises to be fulfilled?
        - i. Covenant – Israel of God = the church
        - ii. Dispensational – Israel of God = believing Jews who have trusted in Jesus as Messiah.
    5. Certainly, Galatians has made the case that all those of faith in Christ – Jews and Gentiles alike – are children of Abraham.
      - a. **Galatians 3:7-9** Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.
      - b. The broad category of “the people of God” embraces Israel in the OT and the church (composed of Jews and Gentiles) in the NT.
3. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (6:18)
  - a. What a fitting conclusion to a book about the gospel of grace.



1

## 1. Outward religion of ritual (6:12-13)

2

**Isaiah 29:13** Then the Lord said,  
 "Because this people draw near  
 with their words And honor Me  
 with their lip service, But they  
 remove their hearts far from  
 Me, And their reverence for Me  
 consists of tradition learned *by  
 rote,*

3

"If I profess with the loudest voice and  
 clearest exposition every portion of the truth  
 of God except precisely that little point which  
 the world and the devil are at the moment  
 attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however  
 boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the  
 battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is  
 proved. And to be steady on all the battle  
 fields besides is merely flight and disgrace if  
 he flinches at that point."

Elizabeth Rundles Charles, 1864

4

**Matthew 23:2-4** "The scribes and the Pharisees ... say *things* and do not do *them*.<sup>4</sup> "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.

5

**Galatians 2:21** "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

6

2. **Inward** change  
by grace (6:14-17)

7

**John 3:3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

8



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

9

3. The *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (6:18)

10