

## *Final Words*

#13 in Series: *Set Free to Live Free*

(The book of Galatians)

Galatians 6:11-18

<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. <sup>12</sup> Those 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. <sup>13</sup> For 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. <sup>14</sup> But 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. <sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

<sup>17</sup> From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

<sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Today we come to the 13<sup>th</sup> and final message in our study of the book of Galatians. We have learned that this was the first book the Holy Spirit gave us through Paul and it is a vital for our understanding the freedom that one comes to know when we know, trust and follow Jesus. The title of our series has been *Set Free to Live Free*. Have you been set free? Have you been born again? Are you growing in the freedom that you have in Christ?... That is my on-going prayer for all of us...

As we come to his closing words of this letter – it occurs to me that when one is writing a final word – you can be certain that they are very important words... If you were to sit down today and write what could be your final words to someone, what would you say?...

Let's think together upon these final words to the Galatians, penned by Paul:

## 1. The Necessity of a Personal Word

<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

It is evident that up to this point in this book – which is really a letter – Paul had been dictating, and a scribe had been doing the writing... That was a common practice and for many reasons scholars believe that was Paul's practice...

Paul took the pen in his own hand and writes the conclusion to this letter... Let's pause for a moment... Paul often concluded his letters by signing his own name. It's like a signature... That would be how the recipients knew that the letter really came from him... But this time Paul doesn't just sign his name – he writes a conclusion and summary of the entire book.

Notice that he does so in large letters... Why the large letters? Some scholars have suggested that it was because of Paul's bad eyesight... That's possible. But it's also possible that Paul is taking the pen in hand at the end of this letter and underlining and highlighting his central message. It's the only time in any of his letters that he provides a concluding summary of his book in this way.

What Paul says in this conclusion will actually make or break your life... This is vitally important. There is really nothing that is more important than this.

He has argued well that there is a huge difference in living a life in religious bondage or a life liberated by Christ.

**Warren Wiersbe** explained the difference well in his commentary on the book – “It is not just a matter of ‘different doctrine,’ but a matter of two different ways of life. They had to choose between bondage or liberty (Gal. 5:1–12), the flesh or the Spirit (Gal. 5:13–26), and living for self or living for others (Gal. 6:1–10)... living for the praise of men or the glory of God (Gal. 6:11–18). He was dealing with *motive*, and there is no greater need in our churches today than for an examination of the motives for our ministries. We know *what* we are doing, but do we know *why* we are doing it? A good work is spoiled by a bad motive”

This concluding paragraph of the letter Paul summarizes the theme he had written much about in this letter. We begin our examination of this summary by thinking about –

## **2. The Dangers Produced by a False Gospel**

Those who were enslaved to the false gospel of a works-based religion are described in this section. We see that they are enslaved – and don't even realize it...

Before we examine what Paul said about them – we need to address an issue: Do you know what the most quoted verse in the Bible is?... I mean – the most quoted by non-believers?...

Matt. 7:1 (KJV) “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

And they're right – we are not the judge... But God is their Judge!... And He WILL judge – not us...

So – what is the alternative?... Make NO discernments?... Just embrace the concept that “everyone can determine their own truth for themselves?...

NO – God has admonished us all to be aware – and to be “fruit inspectors”!

Matthew 7:15-20 (NASB)

<sup>15</sup> Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? <sup>17</sup> So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> So then, you will know them by their fruits.

**John MacArthur** – “How do you respond to false teaching? Are you more concerned about avoiding controversy than exposing demonic systems that lead naive souls to eternal damnation? When Jesus encountered religious leaders who were misleading and taking advantage of the unsuspecting, His zeal for the truth led him to confront them with their hypocrisy (Matt. 23; John 2:13-17). When you seek to share Christ with those who have been led astray and snatch them before they fall into the fires of hell, have a healthy fear of the destructiveness and deceptiveness of their erroneous beliefs (Jude 23). Like the firefighter who is injured while putting out the fire, we must take care that the false teaching we are combatting not engulf us by causing us to doubt the truth and stop effectively serving the Lord.”

They are:

➤ **Putridly Proud** – <sup>12</sup> Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh

As we have discussed the last couple of weeks – pride was at the root of the Judaizers teachings... They were proud of their positions and they boasted of their teaching being superior to the gospel that was first revealed and taught by others...

Pride is putrid wherever it rises...

➤ **Bombastic Bullies** – try to compel you to be circumcised,

They were proud of their standards that they boasted of living up to and they were determined to get others to “march to their drum” in following their teachings...

**Bob Deffinbaugh** – “Legalists have the uncanny ability of applying the law more harshly toward others than toward themselves. The legalist concentrates on his strengths and the weaknesses of others.”

Why would they seek to do that? What was their motive?...

- **Corroded Cowards** – “simply so that they will not be persecuted for *(because of)* the cross of Christ”

They were what you might call “fence-straddle-er”. They wanted to be known as Christians – but did what it took not to be persecuted for it...

They proved to be –

- **Un-Holy Hypocrites** – “do not even keep the Law themselves”

<sup>13</sup> For 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.

You do know that there is no such thing as “holy hypocrisy”, don’t you?... These Judaizers boasted of standards that they were actually guilty of not keeping themselves...

### 3. The Security Ensured by the Cross of Christ

There are some significant differences in the character, attitude and motives of one who knows, loves and follows Jesus as opposed to those previously described ... or at least there should be.

We see at least 6 examples of this in the life and words of Paul himself – in what he states next... First, notice –

- A **Credible Contrast** – <sup>14</sup> But (... a strong contrast is about to be made)

The conjunction **but** is used to suggest a contrast...

- A **Personal Passion** for Christ – *may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Paul was not looking at the cross as merely a piece of wood on which a criminal died... He was looking at the cross of Christ ... and glorying in it.

Jesus is mentioned at least 45 times in the Galatian letter... That means that 1/3 of the verses contain some reference to Him... The person of Jesus Christ captivated Paul – as He does all who know Him...

One who has been rescued by Christ has –

- A **Changed Allegiance** – through which (*the cross of Christ*) the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

This is the mark of true conversion... The term “conversion” is an old word used by generations of Christians to describe their new life in Christ... It is a word that has just about been lost in our vocabulary – but it is an accurate term depicting what actually happens within us when we come to Christ... We are “converted” from following the world to following Christ...

**C.S. Lewis** – “If you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him...Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.”

The security and identity one has in knowing and following Christ results in a God-given ability to become –

- A **Discerner of Truth** – <sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Paul makes a strong judgement in this statement... He says that those “of the **circumcision**” (Jews) as well as those identified as “**uncircumcision**” (Gentiles / non-Jews) are both lacking...

What is he saying?... That a mere religious life, or a secular life miss the truth of life... So where is the truth of eternal life and value found? – it is identified as “a new creation”.

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

Paul also gives us an example of being –

- An **Affirmer of the Brethren** <sup>16</sup> And those who will walk by this rule (*follow this rule*), peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul not only declared his personal determination of following the Lord – maintaining an appropriate and healthy attitude toward the word – and being convinced of the truth he continually pursues – but he seeks to affirm all of those who have come to the same understanding... who “live by the same rule”...

Just what does Paul mean when he invokes the phrase “**the Israel of God**”?... He is basically stating, what he will state later to the Romans – that the only true Jews are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ...

Rom. 2:28-29 (NASB)

<sup>28</sup> For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup> But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

- A **Determined Disciple** – <sup>17</sup> From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

Here’s what Paul was saying... This is all that matters. From now on, he says, let’s not have any more confusion about the gospel. Let nobody bother me with false versions of the gospel, he says. But he’s glad to be part of the people of God who get the gospel, and he prays that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with the Galatians as they avoid false gospels and follow Christ!

So – in our examination of Paul’s closing words of this letter we saw:

1. **The Necessity of a Personal Word**
2. **The Dangers Produced by a False Gospel**
3. **The Security Ensured by the Cross of Christ** - finally, Paul gives...

## 4. The Pronouncement of God's Grace

<sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Will the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits today? That depends on two things:

One – if we heed Gal. 5:1 – the key verse of the entire letter – “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

And, second – we keep sowing to the Spirit instead of the flesh:

Gal. 6:8 (NASB) “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Questions to consider in Community Group (Choose those you think most pertinent for your group):

- What was significant about the fact that Paul would write this portion of the letter in his “own hand”?
- Part of the quote of Warren Wiersbe said – “A good work is spoiled by a bad motive”. What does he mean?
- Based on Matt. 7:1, 15-20 ... what is the difference between “judging” and being “fruit inspectors”?

Matt. 7:1 (KJV) “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Matthew 7:15-20 (NASB)

<sup>15</sup> Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? <sup>17</sup> So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> So then, you will know them by their fruits.

- Please discuss the John MacArthur quote:  
“How do you respond to false teaching? Are you more concerned about avoiding controversy than exposing demonic systems that lead naive souls to eternal damnation? When Jesus encountered religious leaders who were misleading and taking advantage of the unsuspecting, His zeal for the truth led him to confront them with their hypocrisy (Matt. 23; John 2:13-17). When you seek to share Christ with those who have been led astray and snatch them before they fall into the fires of hell, have a healthy fear of the destructiveness and deceptiveness of their erroneous beliefs (Jude 23). Like the firefighter who is injured while putting out the fire, we must take care that the false teaching we are combatting not engulf us by causing us to doubt the truth and stop effectively serving the Lord.”
- What were the “dangers of a false gospel” identified in the text? (Pride, Bullying, Cowardice, Hypocrisy) How easy is it to identify these characteristics?
- Name and describe some of the “significant differences in the character, attitude and motives of one who knows, loves and follows Jesus as opposed to those previously described”?
- Can you quote the key verse in the book?