

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 6, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

freedom  
THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN GALATIANS

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS A Bold, Blunt Conclusion *Galatians 6:11-18*

**REVIEW:** Just for review let's look one last time and some of the background material to the book that we have been talking about throughout our study. These are important background facts to keep in mind as we close out our study.

### **4 Important Background Facts on the Book of Galatians:**

(1) **Written by the Apostle Paul** – Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. This particular book/letter may have been his first letter. Also interesting to note is that some scholars believe that Paul have penned this letter himself, with his own hand (all of his other letters/writings were done through/with a personal amanuensis [scribe, secretary, recorder]).

(2) **Written as a circular letter** – Most of Paul's letter that we have in the New Testament were written to individual churches (i.e. Ephesians, Philippians) or to individuals (i.e. Timothy, Titus). This letter is different because it was written to a number of churches, and was meant to be passed/shared or "circulated" to each of these churches.

(3) **Written to churches in the region of Galatia** -Galatians is written to a number of different churches that Paul established during his first missionary journey in the region of Galatia in Asia Minor, which would be located in present day Turkey. This area was particularly important in the advance of the gospel and the New Testament church because it represented the movement of the good news/gospel further toward the west and to the rest of world, something Jesus had commanded from the very beginning of the New Testament church in Acts 1:8, "8 *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*"

(4) **Written to oppose and expose false teaching of the Judaizers** – After Paul had left the region of Galatia, following his first missionary journey and the establishment of these new churches, false teachers came in and began to expose these churches and new believers/Christians to false teaching. These false teachers were known as "Judaizers" and they

taught a “work-righteousness” system of salvation. Their teaching essentially said that in order to become a Christians you must first be circumcised and become a Jew, by obeying and following Jewish laws and customs. This was in direct contradiction to the good news/gospel Paul preached, which was salvation by grace, not by works.

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This closing section of the letter is Paul’s final rhetorical attack against the Judaizers’ doctrine and motives. It is also a positive statement of his own godly motives in preaching the true gospel.

*“<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! <sup>12</sup> As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. <sup>17</sup> From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen..” – Galatians 6:11-18*

In coming to the conclusion of this letter, we meet with a bold summary of what Paul has been saying all along. He is still troubled over the Galatians’ seizure of a legalistic religion of works, so he mentions that. He is sad that human effort has been exalted above the cross of Christ; he addresses that as well. He’s bothered by their return to Judaistic identity (circumcision) as opposed to embracing simple faith in the “new creation” made possible in Christ. Closing the letter, he does not pat the people on their heads and say sweetly, “You meant well, dear ones.” Instead, he bluntly declares that issues and leaves his readers with reproof rather than relief. There are times when this is the most effective way to encourage change.

**The Claims of a Work-Righteousness System of Salvation:** For those who may attached some type of works to salvation, be that the Law, good works, morality, religious duty, etc., there must by necessity be some claims that must be made. Here are three of them, let’s review them.

1. **If one is saved by works, salvation must be provisional based on those works** – That is, our salvation must be based on something that we do or have done. It makes... even must make... salvation conditional... conditional on what you do or do not do... i.e. keeping the law, obeying customs and standards, being good enough, doing enough religious duty, not breaking certain codes or laws.
2. **If one is saved by works, salvation must be preserved by the one continues on those works** – If salvation is a matter of what we do (i.e. law keeping, rule following, adherence to a moral code of good) the onus (responsibility, burden, obligation, duty) fall us to keep ourselves saved and in good standing with God by adhering to the standard. Further, it may indicate that since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s required standard.
3. **If one is saved by works, salvation must be perishable if one fails to maintain those works** – If it is conditional and up to us to maintain it, the implication must be that if we

don't live up to the condition and fail to maintain it we will no longer possess it. Therefore, a works-righteousness system of salvation automatically make salvation a losable proposition, at least possibly.

### **Why Paul Took This Issue So Seriously? Reasons Why Paul Was So Adament and Strong on Opposing Works-Righteousness As a Means of Salvation:**

1. **Human pride** – Works points to what man does and can do, exalts man and what man does, and thereby is oppressive to those who don't do, can't do, or can't match up.
2. **Religious fallacy** – False teaching on the truth
3. **Eternal consequence** –

### **What Scripture Says about Works as a Means of Salvation?:**

1. **Scripture teaches that salvation is not based on works that we have done but on what God had done** – Salvation is “unconditional” in nature and indeed doesn't depend on anything that we do or have done. Ephesians 2:8-9 - *“<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.”* John 3:16 - *“<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* Romans 6:23 - *“<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
2. **The Bible says that man's very best good works could never be good enough to save us and get us to heaven** - Man could never match up or be good enough to match up to God's Holy standard according to Scripture. Isaiah 64:6 - *“<sup>6</sup> All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”* Romans 3:10, 23 - *“<sup>10</sup> As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’ ...<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Matthew 7:21-23 - *“<sup>21</sup> ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’<sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*
3. **Scripture clearly teaches that since our salvation is not based on what man does, but on the finished work of Christ, it is forever and cannot be lost, and it is not up to man to maintain it** - Once saved it is forever and cannot be lost. We know this as the doctrine of “the eternal security of the believer.” John 10:27-30 - *“<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one.”* Titus 3:5-7 - *“<sup>5</sup> He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”* 1 Peter 1:3-4 - *“<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are kept by the power of God*

*through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Jude 24-25 – “<sup>24</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. <sup>25</sup> All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.” (NLT) John 3:16 – “<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

### **COMING TO A CLOSE (Galatians 6:11)**

Communication is so important in human relationship. Every hinges on it really. That is why God goes to such great lengths to communicate to us who He is, how He works, His way, His truths, His love for us, His desire to be in relationship with us. And it is important to note that God is the One who initiates communication and connection to and with us.

Communicating by written words carries with it its own challenges, pit-falls, and perils. That may be one of the problems we face today in our culture of emails, text messages, facebook posts and twitter, snap-chat. Much can be lost letter writing, however that plays out. We have to at least recognize the admitted short-coming of communicating by words written or typed on a page (computer, phone, or hand-held device). Interestingly, Paul faced the same dilemma in his day. Letter-writing had it's one limitations. Letter-writing is delicate business for several reasons:

- 1. It's not a face-to-face affair -**
- 2. What is written has the risk of being read by incidental persons -**
- 3. For the sake of brevity, emotion and feeling are sometimes held back -**

It would be helpful for us to keep in mind that twenty-one letters (books) out of the twenty-seven books contained in the New Testament were not written to you and me directly, their settings are in so many ways foreign to us, their authors we've never known, and they were written in a language unfamiliar to most of us. We depend to a great extent upon translations to assist our understanding. As we have said throughout our study, one of the things that make the book (letter) of Galatians so unique and distinguishes it from Paul's other letters is that some Biblical scholars believe that this is the only, of Paul's letters, that he wrote entirely himself, by his own hand, without the aid of an amanuensis (secretary, ghostwriter). This is a sometimes debated fact, but many do believe that Paul penned this letter himself, by his own hand and verse 11 of Galatians 6 give support to this idea, *“<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!”* The phrase “with what large letters” can be interpreted in two ways: (1) Paul's poor eyesight forced him to use large letters (see Gal.4:13,15) or (2) instead of the normal cursive style of writing used by professional scribes, he used the large, block letters (frequently employed in public notices) to emphasize the letter's content rather than its form. It was a visible picture that contrasted his concern with the content of the gospel of the Judaizers' only concern: appearances. The expression served as a transition to his concluding remarks. The phrase *“I have written to you with my own hand,”* as a good translation of the Greek verb, this indicates that Paul wrote the entire letter by his own hand, not merely penning a brief statement at the end of dictation to a secretary as he did other times (see 1 Cor. 16:21, Col, 4:18, 2 Thes.

3:17). Paul wrote this letter himself to make sure the Galatians knew he... no some forger... was writing it, and to personalize the document, given the importance and severity of its contents.

## **2 Important Things to Notice:**

1. **The tone** – The tone may be indicated by the words in **verse 11, “<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!”** This is a reference to large characters used to convey emphasis. In the “*koine (common) Greek*” of the New Testament quotation marks were non-existent, so emphasis was conveyed by enlarging the letters of the words written. Therefore, therefore the tone is emphatic.
2. **The style** – The style is indicated by the last phrase of **verse 11, “<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!”** Large letters stroked by Paul’s own hand added up to strong, bold, blunt expression. Instead of passing thoughts through a secretary, he now personally writes closing thoughts loaded with feeling... emotion is underscored.

## **FACTING THE FACTS (Galatians 6:12-16)**

These five verses form a personal, forceful summary to the facts already detailed in the letter. Thinking back, Paul reacted to the Judaizers who had made such an issue of circumcision. The apostle’s concluding thoughts focused on three issues:

## **3 Important Issues in Paul’s Concluding Thoughts:**

1. **Outward verses inward religion (vv.12-13)** – Notice Paul’s word in **verses 12-13, “<sup>12</sup> As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”** The Judaizers had drawn Christians out from under the message of grace back under the burden of the Law (or works as a means of salvation). These legalists were aggressive in seeking “converts” to circumcision. Perhaps it’s inconceivable these people would believe that such an outward and physical transaction would have any effect on eternal, internal salvation. But there are those who today blindly do just that with acts other than circumcision...

### **What are some of things that today we blindly attach to salvation?:**

- (1) **Baptism**
- (2) **Church membership**
- (3) **Sinner’s Prayer**
- (4) **Religious works (*tithing/giving, attendance, service, Bible reading, prayer, etc*)**
- (5) **Good works/behavior**

Paul even gives us in verses 12-13 two reasons that the Judaizers made their moves upon the Galatian believers:

## **2 Reasons the Judaizers Made their Move on the Galatian Believers:**

- (1) **To steer clear of persecution (v.12b)** – Verse 12 says, “<sup>12</sup> **As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.**”

- (2) **To boast in circumcision statistics (v.13b)** - Verse 13 says, *“<sup>13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”*

These may be very telling about why so many of us love to make our religious life and faith about doing, service... our works... checking boxes, and getting stars by our name. And even imposing those standards of doing religious kinds of things and living up to an imposed religious code on others. *Think about it... why do we so often fall into the temptation of making our faith walk and religious life about works, our works, what we do?*

**Some possible answer to why we often make your faith about what we do:**

- (1) **Our faith is expressed by what we do (our fruit)** - On the positive side, it is a truth that the fruit of our life, what we do is what authenticates that our faith is real. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:20**, *“Therefore by their fruit you will know them.”* It is not enough to profess our faith with our lips, our life should show it by what we do, how we live. John said in **1 John 3:18** in speaking of Christians, *“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”* And James the half-brother of Jesus said in **James 2:18**, *“<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* And in **verse 17** James said, *“Thus also, faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead.”* So we know that according to Scripture, our works are important because they do express and authenticate our faith... that is real.
- (2) **Others may be drawn to faith by what we do** – Also, on the more positive side of the faith/works argument is the fact that it is often our faith lived out and what others see in our life, how we live it, and how it is exhibited in our life that draw others to Christ. Others may in fact actually be drawn to Christ and saved by Him because they saw how real it was in us by our faith works. That may be what James was saying when he said in **James 5:15-18**, *“<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? <sup>17</sup> Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”*
- (3) **It’s easier to avoid criticism (ridicule, persecution) when we can point to all the good we have done** – On the negative side, our good works may insulate us from ridicule, make us more acceptable, enable us to please others by living up to the expected standard. Men-pleasers are prone to place a great deal of hope in “good works” and keeping all the rules in order to fit in. It may not be done to please and really live for God, but rather to please others.
- (4) **It make us feel better about ourselves, and sometimes it make us feel better than others** – Pride is a dangerous thing. Our service, good works and deeds, our ability to be good religiously can puff-up, make us feel we have arrived spiritually and have attained a high place. It may also be oppressive to others, in that it can lead to an exalting of oneself over others because of what we can do that they can’t... I’m more spiritual, I know more, I do more, I live better, I’ve been here longer, served more and better... therefore, I’m better, and I know what is right for your life, I know what you ought to do.

(5) **It makes us look good in the eyes of others** – Every one like a pat on the back, to be praised and recognized for what he or she does and accomplishes. We like the accolades and awards... our good works can get many awards and pats on the back, but they can't ever earn salvation and a right standing with God. **It is important to know that God doesn't love us one bit more or one bit less because of what we do or don't do.**

*Do any of these sound like what Paul said about the Judaizers motives that Paul exposes in verse 12-13?*

2. **Human verses Divine emphasis (vv.14-15)** – Notice Paul's words in verses 14-15, **"<sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."** Did you notice Paul's heart in the first part of verse 14, **"<sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."** Biblical Christianity is a matter of what Christ has done for us, not of what we have done for Him. Human activity is impotent in the shadow of the cross.

**A word regarding the cross:** *The cross represented all that was despised and cursed by people of Paul's day. But only at the cross is all mankind made level... sinners totally and completely without hope. Seeing ourselves there guilty, hopeless, and worthless, we find we have no other reasonable option but to receive the Lord Jesus Christ so as to inherit forgiveness, life and hope.*

3. **Temporal verses eternal life (v.16)** – Paul says in verse 16, **"<sup>16</sup> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."** Like us, the Galatians had a choice to make regarding the way they would walk... **"And as many as walk according to this rule..."** The term **"rule"** (canon) was a word meaning **"measuring rod"** or **"a carpenter's ruler."** It was used to indicate a simple life with roots going back to the cross. In other words, the "rule" referred to that life which was inward rather than outward... divine rather human. It represents authentic Christianity. Walking by the rule results in peace with God, an experience with His mercy. The point of the rule is that without the cross of Christ, there is not eternal life.

## **RESPONDING TO THE TRUTH (Galatians 6:17-18)**

Paul closes out his letter with an interesting and seemingly abrupt ending, speaking of the marks of the flesh and those of the heart. In so doing he well sums up the entire message of Galatians with two simple truths that should be remembered. Two things should be considered.

### **2 Simple But Essential Truths From Galatians That All Should Hear and Remember:**

1. **In our do-it-yourself society, salvation by grace is easily rejected** –
2. **In God's plan, the only way we are accepted is through the work of Christ on our behalf** – There is no other way. Not by religious works we have done. Not by moral behavior we practice. Not by genetics, ethnicity, religiosity, denominationalism. Not by obeying the law, ritual keeping, or bean counting. We are not saved ever by what we do, but by what Christ alone has done for us... on our behalf.