

Title: A better way of “doing” church  
Text: Galatians 6.11-18  
Theme: Grace-filled relationships  
Series: 2019 Summer Galatians series #6  
Prop Stmtnt: The gospel rightly understood and lived out creates a entirely different way of relating to one another.

Read Text:

We have come to the end of the book of Galatians. The Galatians were the members of these new churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe where Paul and Barnabas had been and had preached the gospel and organized these new believers into congregations. Within a year or so, these congregations were being infiltrated by people who were trying to lead them astray by telling them that if they really wanted to follow Jesus, that they had to obey the OT law. This is called legalism. Legalism is a distortion of the gospel and is certainly NOT good news because that is the problem. No one can actually keep the law. That is why we need a Savior. Last week I stated that legalism produces a culture of cannibalism. A legalist is never satisfied because instead of looking to Christ who fulfilled the law, and paid our price for sin by dying in our place, a legalist is trying to prove himself to others. He is looking for affirmation and ways he can be validated. If he sees someone who is being esteemed more than himself, he is threatened and intimidated by that person.

So, in this letter, Paul, righteously, passionately and theologically goes after these legalists and their false teaching. He exposes the issues, addresses them, re-explains the gospel as being by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He shows how the OT pointed to this and then spends the last two chapters explaining the fruit of the gospel. Here is what the gospel will look like in our lives. This brings us to the end where Paul presents two opposing ways of doing church. He describes what relationships are like when they are driven by legalism and what relationships are like when they are driven by the gospel.

I will “make much of you” so that you will make much of me.

Or

I will love you because I am and you are loved by Christ and we are in the same family.

I. **I will “make much of you” so that you will make much of me.** (12-13)

Matthew 23.13-15; 25-28

We cringe when we hear people talk about all of the hypocrisy in churches as the reason for why they do not take Christianity seriously. The truth is, there is a lot of hypocrisy. John MacArthur said, *“Con men and charlatans have always been attracted to religion because there are lots of people in the world who confuse gullibility with faith. Innocent but credulous people are*

*particularly susceptible to spiritual subterfuge, and false teachers who are greedy for gain see them as easy marks.”<sup>1</sup>*

**A. A legalist wants to look good in front of others. – 12a**

There is quite a play on words in this verse. Paul is exposing the motivation of these teachers who are trying to force the Gentiles into being circumcised. They don't really care about you, they want to look good in front of others. They want to intimidate you because they are intimidated by others. They are trying to “make a good showing in the flesh” (lit. putting on a good face) in order to cover up what their true motivation is. It's not that they really love you or care about you. They want to use you so that they can fill a quota.

We see this in different business models. You are hired by an insurance company to sell insurance with the stories of people who make a great income from it. So, you sign on. They tell you that in order to keep your job, you have to sell so many policies, so, you need to start with your family, friends, people you know at church, etc. So, you call them and see if they want to get together for lunch. During lunch you try your sales pitch on them, which now makes things really awkward. They thought you wanted to get together for lunch because you wanted to hang out, now they find out that you are trying to sell them something and it's confusing. After going through all of your family and friends, if you don't sell enough policies, the company lets you go, but meanwhile they hang on to the sales that you made and they simply hire others who go through the same thing. Do you see what is going on within those companies? That is how they do business. That is their model. They use you to get what they want and expect you to use others to get what you want. If you don't, you are of no use to them. There is no loyalty in that, just performance. That's legal if you want to run your business like that. But, that is not how relationships in the church work.

When legalism is prevalent in a church, it creates a culture of fear because people are trying to impress one another and there is no security in that. The fear of man is a snare. It is bondage to live with the goal that you can make people like you and validate you and that bondage will drive you to using others in order to achieve that. It is exhausting.

Let's say that every Sunday afternoon I called every ABF teacher/leader and asked one question: How many did you have in your class today? I didn't ask about how they were doing, how their class was, what they taught, how it was received, what encouragements they had, what concerns they had, just – how many were there? Would that create a bond of trust and love? No! I would be telling them one thing. Your value to me is based on how good you make me look. I want your class to grow so that it will make much of me. There's no love in that.

**B. A legalist will use you to avoid embarrassment. – 12b**

How would forcing Gentile converts to be circumcised help these false teachers avoid persecution? These false teachers that seemed to come behind Paul (later on we will see how this happened to the church in Philippi and Colossae) were coming from Jerusalem and telling these Gentile converts that if they were really going to be true followers of the Jewish Messiah that

---

<sup>1</sup> Remaining Faithful in Ministry, p.43

they had to be circumcised, because if these men did not believe this and insist on this position, they risked being ostracized. Next Sunday we will pick up with Acts 14 and by Acts 15, we will see how this issue results in a full blown crisis for the early church.

In this verse (12) Paul is exposing what is behind the legalist's demands. The legalist is being pressured by others and he wants to avoid the conflict. So, going back to my example. Let's say that the Elders say to me, "Bob, we expect you to grow the attendance of this church by 10% this year or we will be looking for a new senior pastor." So, now you see why I am calling every ABF teacher/leader and putting pressure on them. Someone else is putting pressure on me. The Elders want to be known as leaders of a successful and growing church. They don't want to be perceived as failures. So, they put the pressure on me to perform for them. My job is to make them look good, so I put the pressure on others. And you see what this does to the culture of the church. Our relationships are all based on how we are producing the numbers.

And sadly, this is what life in a church can look like. I want the leader to make much of me, so I will make much of him so that he will do that for me. He wants you to make much of him so he makes much of you so that you will make much of him. This is how we win friends and influence people as Dale Carnegie puts it. But, the heart of that is self.

#### **C. A legalist is inconsistent. – 13**

Paul is simply pointing out that the very people who demand that you keep the law don't keep the law because no one can. Or, they will, like the Pharisees, use the law as an intimidation technique to stay in power and be respected. But, what happens when you get close to a Pharisee? Or what happens when you get on the inside of their meetings? What do you find? Like the opening example from Daniel 6, and what was seen in the ministry of Christ, you find a bunch of insecure men who are willing to do very godless things in the name of God in order to protect their power. That is what Paul is saying. When you get close to these legalists you will not find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, humility and tenderness. You find ego-maniacs who excuse their own inconsistencies because in their minds they do not have practice what they are preaching.

#### **D. A legalist wants you for validation. – 13b**

They want to use you so they can boast. Your value is to make him find value. You are a means to an end and when you can't help him get what he wants, you are discarded. A legalist is never satisfied and can never rest and therefore won't let anyone else rest. If I am using you to advance my esteem and you are using me to advance yours, how is that any different than the world? Isn't that what happens in college and professional sports? Your job is to win. Your value to me as a fan is to make me feel good about me by causing the team that I cheer for to win and if you don't produce, I want the organization to get rid of you and bring in someone who will. Loyalty is rare because the fans are so fickle. Why are the fans fickle? Because they are worshiping themselves and in many cases, so are the players. Shouldn't the church be different? Isn't there a better way of doing church? Yes! And Paul points that out. Instead of making much of you so that you will make much of me and having a culture of insecurity driven by mutual manipulation and power plays. What if you had relationships where you were loved because you were in Christ? You

were loved by others because you were first loved by Christ and since you are loved by Christ you are loved by those who love Christ and because you love Christ, you love those who love Christ. That is how the church is called to be.

## II. **I will love you because we are in Christ.** (11, 14-18)

Now, let's all acknowledge that we will never do this perfectly until glory. However, we can be a taste of this to one another which should only cause us to desire glory even more. Look at how this is presented in this text. Throughout this book Paul points out the fact that these false teachers were trying to use these believers to advance their own agenda, while in contrast to that, Paul gave his own life and soul for them and to them. This is clear even from v.11.

### A. **Grace causes you to love another more than self.** (11)

I'm writing this letter to you with my own hand. Now, this probably means that up until this point in the letter that Paul had used what is called an amanuensis. (One who wrote down what Paul said) But now, at the end of the letter, Paul picks up the writing instrument and he personally writes down the conclusion. The fact that he uses large letters has been often viewed as evidence that Paul had poor eye sight (something hinted at in chapter 4) and that may have been the thorn in the flesh that he lived with. All of that is possible. But the point that Paul is making is how personally he cares for these people. He is taking the time to care for them.

Years ago we studied the book of 1 Corinthians together. The believers in Corinth treated Paul horribly. He wrote 4 letters to them (2 of which are in the Bible) he visited them several times knowing that he was going to have his heart stepped on and be crushed by some of them. Why? Why would Paul expose himself to all of that? Because the gospel gives grace as the glue for our relationships and grace causes you to love another more than self.

### B. **Grace wants to serve in order to see you flourish.** (11)

This letter is a corrective and there is clear warning in this letter, but every word drips with love. Paul loves these people and does not want to see them be rolled up into a joint and smoked by these false teachers and then flicked to the curb. He is rightfully angry at how they are being used by people who don't care about them. Paul wants to see them flourish. He wants to see them love and be loved. He wants to see them enjoy Christ and not be in bondage to the fear of man and the fear of not measuring up and the fear of not being good enough and not making the grade. That is why he wrote this letter and he is only underscoring that here in v.11.

### C. **Grace is willing to suffer for your good.** (14, 17)

These false teachers want to use you so you can help them look good in front of others. They want to use you so that they can boast. Using that (13) as a play on words, Paul says that the only boasting that he will do is in the cross (14). God forbid! God, never let this happen to me! Far be it from me to boast, except in the cross. But, that's the shock. Boasting and the cross don't mix. What does the cross do? It destroys boasting. The cross is humbling because the perfect Son of God laid down his life in such a horrific way because of my sin. Therefore, I am going to

identify myself with Jesus and with the cross knowing full well that instead of avoiding persecution, I will most likely get it. But that's okay. I am willing to experience suffering because I love Christ and his people. These false teachers want to avoid persecution. They want you to suffer for them, but they are not willing to suffer for you. I (17) have the marks in my body to prove that I am willing to suffer for you.

**D. Grace wants to make much of Jesus. (14)**

Instead of wanting to make a good showing (12), grace-based relationships want to make much of Jesus. The difference is huge. Instead of being used by others for their fake glory, we are encouraged by grace-based relationships to help spread the glory of the One who is truly glorious. I am boasting the cross of Jesus. I am crucified to this world. I am dead to its agenda and to its ways. There is a better way.

**E. Grace wants you to make much of Jesus. (15-16)**

We were designed to live in harmony with God. Our greatest goal and most satisfying aspiration is to reflect Jesus. Christ is our standing and identity? We are a new creation in Christ. It's not what we have done in trying to keep the law, it is based on what Christ has done! We are going to point to him and we are going to help one another point to him. And as for all who walk by this rule – the rule of the new creation – peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. The church, the believers, the new covenant, grace-based, gospel-believing people are the new nation, the new people of God. And our boast is not in how big we are, how powerful we are, how impressive we are, but in Christ. Therefore, what do we want to see in each other? I want to see you make much of Jesus. I want to see you love, trust and enjoy Christ in every situation. I want to see you run your race with faithfulness and finish your course with joy.

**F. Grace wants you to enjoy grace. (18)**

Galatians presents two ways of doing church. The first one is marked by legalists who want to use people as pawns to gain power, esteem, influence and then protect it from being lost. The people are not loved or cared for, they are used. They are a means to an end. These leaders will get what they want from them and then discard them when they are done. The second way of doing church starts with being, not doing. It starts with the gospel and how our identity in Christ changes our focus from being on ourselves and places it on Christ. This frees us to love and be loved without an agenda of wanting esteem or wanting a position, or wanting a title, or wanting to be thought of as being great. All of that kind of attention is for Christ.

Let me close with an example from history that helps us see the difference. During W.W.II, Hitler broke a treaty with Stalin and inexplicably invaded Russia. Two evil ego-maniacs had the power of their nations and armies at their disposal and they were using them in order to make themselves look powerful. The German invasion made it to the gates of Moscow and to Stalingrad. Conquering Stalingrad would have been immensely humiliating to Stalin and Hitler was hell-bound to make it happen and Stalin was hell-bound to stop it and the result was hellish. The Russian generals knew that if Stalingrad fell, they would be executed, so they ordered their officers to win at all costs, even if that meant losing the entire army, it didn't matter. Every

soldier was expendable because Stalin's reputation was at stake. On the ground this meant that for the Russian soldier there was no retreat. You either died attacking the Germans, or you died by the hands of your own officers for not attacking. You would die either way. By Russian bullets or German. How much love do you think the soldiers had for their officers? How much love do you think the officers had for their generals? How much love do you think the generals had for Stalin? None.

History records another battle. In this battle, the commander did not send any of his troops because they wouldn't live. He went himself. He took all of the attacks upon himself and in so doing he not only protected his troops, he exhausted the enemy and destroyed him. He loves his troops so much that he gave his life for them. But he is so powerful that death could not hold him. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends. Which leader do you want to follow? And what kind of a leader are we called to look like?