**Live Free – Galatians 6:11-18 – The Mark of God**

**Paul’s final paragraph… If you’ve seen each one you know how timely they’ve been. 1/3 not watching service. Covid Culture has left a mark on my soul. There is a mark (imprint) Paul speaks of…**

**Recap (map) Paul to Galatian churches who were turning from the truth to a lie by false teachers - this is a personal, passionate response.**

**We start with an often-skipped verse that speaks of the urgency - Galatians 6:11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! (As you can see my writing is getting bigger. When you write you start off neat - then becomes sloppy & big. So pressing, Paul writes w/out taking time to rest hand)**

**Usually Paul wrote w/ a scribe, not that day - it’s urgent!**

**What would you do if you someone moved into your house to lead family astray and you’re 1000m away?**

**His final words, a warning of false teachers – Gal. 6:12 Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. (Religious ritual) The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. (to avoid being looked down) 13 Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.**

**Paul gives us a list of things to look for in false teachers. If you are looking for a pastor, go to this verse. Test leaders by this…**

**THE TEST: Indicators someone is a false teacher: (Test me)**

**It’s a real warning in the NT - 1 peter 5:8 / Acts 20:30 - Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. (They are out there – put them thru the Gal Test)**

**\* Do they preach the true gospel? V11. “Those…” Gal 1-4 - over and over**

**Jesus (God in the flesh) lived – Jesus died – Jesus was buried – and rose again from the dead to save us from our sin.**

**Jesus + nothing = everything / Jesus + anything = nothing**

**It is not about being good, but Jesus being good / not obligation, but transformation / not being a moral person, but a new person**

**After he hammers the gospel, he says… Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (false gospels are bondage)**

**No more of bondage – Chains (spiritual chains)**

**Galatian 5:13 You… were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.**

**Some react differently to the freedom of the Gospel**

* **Some go crazy with rules (legalism)**

**Rules, regulations, Hail Mary’s, light candles, obey the ten, try harder**

**Not only love neighbor, but love like this… Not only read bible, but read like this / hair / clothes Result: guilt, exhaustion= bondage to rules**

* **Some just go crazy – (lawlessness)**

**Do what you want, live it up (aka. hedonism) Pastor friends who smoke, drink & swear more than ever - and mock those who don’t? You must be immature or a legalist - Result: bondage to self**

**Both sides can be chains – a mark of bondage**

**This exposes two things Christians tend to do:**

**\* Syn-cretism – mixing the world w/ God (philosophies, opinions, lifestyles - to the point you can’t tell the difference)**

**\* Sec-tarianism – divide ourselves from the world (fear of mixing with it, we don’t involve ourselves – separate completely – live in a bubble)**

**Syncretism – leads to unfaithfulness to God - Turns freedom into slavery to our selfishness w/ no self-control (lawlessness)**

**Sectarianism – leads to irrelevance – a faith with no real impact on lives – just a bunch of spiritual weirdos (legalism)**

**Jesus - John 17:5 - My prayer is not that you take them out of the world (error of sectarianism) but that you protect them from the evil one. (to from syncretism)**

**Churches in Galatia were being taught and tricked into doing both - Paul was furious. He radically encountered Jesus – a transformed murderer (of Jesus followers) to a martyr for Jesus. He met the amazing love of Jesus and wanted them to know it too.**

**\* Are they arrogant? Braggarts (obsessed with image & impression)**

**v.12 “Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh…”**

**They try to impress with actions or accomplishments - like to brag about what they have done and have – and talk about self a lot**

**Look what I’ve done – isn’t it great – you can have it too if… Formulas - You can have the marriage, car, job, life – if you…**

**They focus on their image and what everyone looks like (the outside)**

**But - God always works from the inside out – from our heart & mind, then it begins to show on the outside**

**1 Samuel 16:7 - Man look on the outward, but God looks on the heart. (David was not impressive outside – but God saw his heart)**

**You can get people to dress modest, stop swearing, not get drunk, not sleep around, change habits, even do missions, but if they don’t know Jesus - you die and go to hell a good moral person.**

**\* Are they bullies? v12 “they… compel you (force you) to be circumcised.”**

**Do they like to use pressure, guilt, or shame to get you to do things or to follow God? They push people around. Use fear as a motivator.**

**I’ve met a few bully pastors/ teachers in my life –**

**If you don’t do this, you’re not a real Christian.**

**\* Are they cowards? v12 they…avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ**

**An indicator of a false teacher is they try to avoid persecution.**

**They’re exciting but when hard times come - give up. Money dries up / no paycheck – they pack their bags / opposition comes – leave / gets hard – they quit. They are in it for fame, fortune, and the feelings /**

**Paul says a true leader never gives up in the face of trials.**

**People have told me - I should have given up here at LW, quit, start over - Jesus is in charge, I’m not going anywhere.**

**\*\*\* They don’t teach the whole word - don’t want to offend people.**

**They like to teach you will always be healed, have money, be blessed if you do this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Narsi-gesis preaching, is not the gospel**

**It’s easy to be a teacher, Christian, parent, whatever – when things are going good, but when trials come - you see what a person is really made of. False teachers are in it for self.**

**\* Are they hypocrites? v12 - they... don’t keep the law, yet they want you to**

**They burden people with heavy loads – that they don’t even follow.**

**Insert ministry scandal of choice here - happens often. Hypocrites. If you’ re going to tell me love my neighbor… to be faithful to my wife… you better do it too.**

**BTW - Just because someone can lead – does not make them a leader.**

**Even if they can sing, speak, plan, play have skills, & move your heart**

**A mark of a true leader is Character - Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (What does character / way of life speak?)**

**\* Are they users? (of people)**

**Gal 6:13 …they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. (They want you to make them look good)**

**You’re just a number – a story – a means to an end – a stat – a step to a better program – bigger building – another donation – a larger ministry**

**Paul had nothing good to say about these so-called leaders and Christians whose true purpose was spiritual seduction.**

**Galatians 6:14 May I never boast (brag about what I’ve done) except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, (All about Jesus!!! all the time!!)**

**What do you boast about? Accomplishments, connections, grades, portfolio, talents… only one thing is worth it.**

**Is it good to brag – sure… if you’re bragging about Jesus – job, family, sports, our church – thank you, it’s Jesus. I will gladly tell you stories of how Jesus has changed lives.**

**I will boast in this… God in human flesh mocked & humiliated, scorned & betrayed was beat & punished in my place – died & rose again. He conquered sin & death and sends us out to tell this world good news, Jesus breaks the chains!!**

**Gal 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Nothing compares to the cross – the world is dead to me)**

**Paul says these false fake teachers and hypocrites - care only about appearance, not changed hearts – they avoid suffering and hardship – an seek the easy way**

**Paul says I’ll take the hard way – the long way of Christ, even if that means a life that’s difficult, so be it!! I’ve got Jesus, that’s enough. When you get this – you realize nothing else matters**

**6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. (Rules, rituals, & religious requirements are not what counts, Only thing counts, are you a new creation in Christ? Are you born again? – echoes - 2 Cor 5:17)**

**It’s not about cleaning us up - it’s about Jesus cleansing us / It’s about Jesus loving the unlovely – so we can become great lovers of others / It’s Jesus restoring and rebuilding hearts from ruble!**

**Paul says to them and us - *Don’t get sidetracked.* We can get sidetracked by political issues, social issues, movements, fads, traditions, buildings - it’s all about being a new creation in Christ.**

**Gal 6:16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule - to the Israel of God. (he loves and wants his Jewish friends to know Jesus - Then he says…) 17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, (don’t doubt my commitment) for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.**

**You think circumcision left a scar - check this out. These are the scars of being beaten, whipped, stoned, scourged, and stabbed for Christ. I have the marks to prove it. My limp and chronic pain says I’m not afraid to tell you the truth. (My cancer scars remind me, I’m alive!)**

**“marks of Jesus” – same GK word for tattoo & branding. They were marks of ownership. Paul says, I belong to Jesus (here’s my mark!)**

**Jesus is known by his scars and often so are his people.**

**Paul spent the entire letter reminding them of the Good News, our position in Christ, and how God works it in us…**

**I thought of it like a tangled cord – represents us trapped confused / the lights out. False teachers say detangle yourself - before you plug into Jesus Paul says just Plug in to Jesus - be empowered (still tangled) = justification (our position in Christ) Then Jesus from the inside out straightens us out (detangles) = sanctification.**

**Paul ends with a simple and powerful blessing… 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.**

**Amen = May it always be so - to the very last verse he hammers – it is about God’s grace**

**Grace = unmerited loving kindness and favor**

**I love the concept of grace – it is found in no other religion, philosophy, or tradition in the world. We don’t deserve it.**

**We can’t detangle ourselves – We can’t straighten ourselves out. But by the grace of God – Jesus does!!**

**TWO THINGS ABOUT GRACE**

1. **God’s grace is magnificent**

**Take a breath – that’s God’s grace – You are born, live, have anything (skills, abilities, talents), the fruit we bear, any joy we experience – the new heart we can have, any hope we have - it’s all by God’s grace.**

**No matter the question, the answer is always the grace of God. God reveals his glorious grace in Jesus.**

**Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (guilty enemies of God – dead in sin – unable to save ourselves) - it is by grace you have been saved. (God’s unmerited favor)**

**6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, (so that we might for generations to come – declare the great grace of God) expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (The cross is grace) 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.**

**It is by His grace you are loved, called, pardoned, forgiven, risen, reborn, filled, healed, transformed, & made new – A magnificent grace**

1. **God’s grace is sufficient**

**But I’m not perfect – Jesus says but he is perfect**

**But I can’t pay it back – Jesus says it’s already paid for**

**But I’m unlovely – Jesus says, I love you any ways and you are to me**

**But I’m dirty – Jesus says I can cleanse you**

**But I’m faithless – Jesus says, but I am faithful**

**But I don’t deserve it – Jesus says, “That’s my grace.”**

**The problem is always sin, the answer is always the grace of God**

**Paul’s letter to the Galatians was about having, walking, and extending the mark of God = Grace**

**For those who have tasted this and know that the Lord is good**

**Remember the cross - God’s grace will mature you!**

**The Cord - Your reach (influence) is determined by how much we yield to God’s work in us – how far will you reach?**

**For those who are heavy hearted - look to the cross – Grace**

**For those who have yet to know His goodness – Come to the cross**

**God is gracious, faithful, trustworthy – come to the cross!**

**Gal 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen. (May God’s amazing, unfathomable, undeserved, unmerited grace - be with your spirit – amen!)**

**Next week - communion**