



"We proclaim Him, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ." Col 1:28

"Legalism: Crushed by the Cross"

Galatians 6:11-18

May 3, 2026

Gal 6:11-18

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

16 And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

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

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

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

- Paul is going to conclude with a crushing blow to the legalist.
- But before he does that, he proves that this letter is genuine.
- Usually, a writer will dictate a letter to someone.
- Paul may have done that or he may have written the whole letter himself or he may have just wrote the ending of the letter.
- Paul wrote in large letters perhaps because of poor eyesight caused by disease or damage from stoning or other persecutions.

Gal 4:15

15 For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

- The point is, this letter is authentic.

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- Paul now sets forth a contrast between:

1. Those who are according to the flesh (the legalists, the "Circumcision", the Judaizers).
2. Those who are according to grace through faith and nothing more. (the believer-Gal 3:9)

Characteristics of the legalist:

1. They want to look "good in the flesh" to receive human praise. (12a)
2. They want converts to legalism. (12b)
3. They are hypocrites. If they can focus attention on their converts, people won't notice their disobedience to the law. (13a)
4. **They are legalists for 2 reasons:**
 1. Fear of human opposition. (12c)

Matt 13:21

21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or **persecution** arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

2. To boast of their success to those in Jerusalem. (13b)

“Success isn’t about getting people to follow you.
Success is all about getting people to follow Jesus.
Success isn’t all about how many people you helped.
Success is seeing others learn to go to Jesus and trust
Him for themselves.”

- Rich Cathers

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7 Characteristics of the grace/faitH believer:

1. Boasts in 1 thing – the Cross. (14a)

The Cross:

1. Crushes pride.
2. Crushes self-righteousness.
3. Crushes boasting.
4. Crushes confidence in the flesh.
5. Crushes self-exaltation.

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Characteristics of the grace/faitH believer:

2. The world has died to the believer. (14b)
3. The believer has died to the world. (14c)

Gal 2:20

20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

4. Not concerned about the “dos and don’ts”.

Col 2:20-22
20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

22 . . . in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

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“Paul put his pride in the one thing that empties him of pride”

- Dan Duncan

Legalism in the Church

• Just because you get past Level 1 of legalism, does not mean you are done with it.

Level 1 legalism: Obeying the Law (rituals, traditions, rules) to obtain justification/salvation.

Level 2 legalism: Keeping a list of the dos and don’ts to keep your salvation.

- There are many churches, even denominations that are legalistic.
- They may appear spiritual, but it is mainly external.
- Level 2 legalism:
 1. Kills spiritual growth and transformation.
 2. Is deadly for the youth. Causes rebellion and regression.
 3. Results in guilt, pride, loss of assurance, hypocrisy, and a distorted view of God.
 4. Produces “flashlight” believers. They take the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Believers need to be taught how to live by the Spirit.
- Legalism can also be a personal belief. It can creep in.
- **A test for legalism:** “Do I obey God’s Word because I want to or because I have to.”

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7 characteristics of the grace/faith believer:

5. Desires transformation.

“A new creation means a new life, a new relationship to God, which results in a new attitude toward the world, a new form of conduct, a life of obedience, a life of love, and bearing others’ burdens.”

6. They will experience God’s peace and mercy which are God’s free gifts He purchased on the cross for the believer.

7. They see no difference between Jews and Gentiles who walk by grace/faith.

Gal 3:28

8 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

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Closing remarks:

1. Don’t cause problems. Look at my body.

2 Cor 11:23-28

23 in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

2 Cor 12:10

10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Application

1. You are either exalting in your self or you are exalting in Christ.
2. Where do we boast? Is it from the flesh or the Spirit?

Numbers –

Church – attendance, decisions, baptisms

Personal – bank accounts, portfolio, houses, cars.

Appearance -

Church – building, prestigious people.

Personal – clothes, good looks

Achievements -

Church – fund-raising drive, missionary efforts, fighting pornography, establishing hospitals, protesting abortion.

Personal – education, promotions, family, your abilities and talents.

3. **Summary of Galatians:** Legalism is a false teaching that robs the individual of salvation by grace, brings damnation for those who teach it, breeds arrogance, pride and hypocrisy, sets false standards of spirituality, stifles the Holy Spirit’s work, ignores the work of the Cross, and brings the contempt of God.

- Next week . . .

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Closing remarks:

1. Don’t cause problems.

2. Grace needs to dominate your spirit.

Next week we begin a new book. It is the book of ??????