Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Hypocrisy of the Legalists
Scripture: Galatians 6:11-13
Code: 1673

I draw your attention tonight to the 6th Chapter of Galatians. And we take the last portion of Scripture that comes as a unit in the book of Galatians verses 11-18 for our study tonight. And although it is a farewell portion of the book and although it is somewhat chopped up in terms of subject. The closer...or at least appears to be on the surface, the closer you look at it, the more beautifully tied together it is. The logical mind of Paul works its way right up to the very finish of the book of Galatians. And as we mentioned to you earlier, the book of Galatians is the one book that Paul wrote that has absolutely no personal references at all.

He is so concerned, he is so anxious. There is so much righteous indignation and urgency in his heart that he never bothers with any kind of personal amenities whatever. He makes absolutely no personal notations. He has very little to say concerning any good things that the Galatians had ever done. Any nice little phrases of comfort or a gentleness. They just aren't here. And as you come to the very end of Galatians, that really never changes. It is with the same urgency, the same righteous indignation, the same concern for his churches and for their confusion which had been placed upon them by the Judaisers that he writes even the conclusion. And so he really doesn't mix in any niceties. It just carries itself out to the very end with the same kind of intensity that he has had since he began.

Now you'll remember that the Galatian churches had been corrupted by some Judaising teachers. That is Paul taught them salvation by Grace and some teachers from Jerusalem came along claiming to be Christians, but believing in salvation by works. They told the Gentile converts that they weren't truly saved unless they were circumcised. Unless they became real Jews or at least proselytes. And then they added to that the fact that they were not true living Christians unless they lived the Christian life by the laws of Moses.

So they imposed a legal system on the Galatian Christians and messed them up, troubled them, hassled them, confused them. And Paul wrote the letter to the Galatian churches in order to correct the confusion. Now as he comes to the conclusion of his book, he wants to give one final word. And really it's kind of a summary of everything he has said. It appears in verse 11 through 18 as a final contrast between him and the Judaisers, and really that's the issue.

They told the Galatians believe us, he says believe me. They said you're saved by works. He says you're saved by grace. They said you live by law. He says you live by the Spirit. So the contrast is

very diametric all the way through the book and it's no different at the end as he puts himself in absolute opposition to the Judaisers with this final kind of summary. And what it really is is a last effort to force the Galatians to deny law, to deny the flesh, and to accept grace and the life of the Spirit. This is his last argument. Now mark it. The key to this argument is the cross of Christ.

Paul makes the cross the dividing line. His statement in verse 14, "God forbid that I should glory accept in the cross," is the crux of this entire section. To Paul the cross is the determiner of destiny. What a man does and how a man reacts to the cross of Jesus Christ is the one single factor that determines his ultimate destiny. Now if you were to go around the world and collect all of the philosophies that would give you some information on what determines man's destiny, you could come up with a million different answers.

But if you were to talk to the apostle Paul and say what is it that determines a man's destiny, he would say there's only one thing and that's how that man relates to the cross of Jesus Christ. That is the absolute determiner of the destiny of every man. Now that just wipes out most of the philosophies of the world. In fact, all of them apart from Christian truth. Every man's life and every man's eternity is determined by his relationship to the cross of Jesus Christ. The insignia of the Christian faith is the cross. Because that is the crux of everything. Our insignia is not too tables of stone containing ten commandments. You've never seen that hanging around a Christian's neck.

It's not a sword and it's not an angel. And really, it isn't even a fish, as popular as that is, but the insignia of Christianity is a cross and it has always been a cross. And our insignia is not a mythical thing. It is not a simply symbolic thing. It is not in an artistic rendering. It is a historical and actual cross that is the significance of Christianity, a real one. First century references to Christianity and to the Lord Jesus always refer to the crucifixion. That is extra biblical ones. If you were to read, for example, the historians, Suetonisand Tassidus, you would read their description of Christians is this. "Christians are followers of a criminal who was crucified under Pontius Pilate."

Christianity has always been identified even from the first century historians with a cross. The cross is the most cruel instrument of execution man has ever devised. Man has never out done himself in thinking up horrible torture that can succeed in being more devastating, more punishing, more horrible than a cross. It can't be done. That's it. It was so horrible that no Roman citizen ever could be crucified. It was horrible to the extent that the Jews despised the cross as far back as even the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 21 said "cursed is everyone who hangs on the tree." And as well as that talks about hanging, it is used to fulfill the prophecy of crucifixion as well.

So the cross was hated by the Romans. It was hated by the Jews. The Jews still hate the idea of the cross. One of the first things the new country of Israel did was change the name of an area known as the valley of the cross. They changed it and changed it fast because the cross to them is an offense. Now when somebody was executed with the cross it was not just to kill them, it was to degrade them.

You could easily kill people but the cross was to add degradation to death. Yet in spite of the fact that the Romans despised the cross and the Jews despised the cross, the cross becomes the beautiful symbol of Christianity.

You say well how so. I mean, how could that ever happen that Christians who are supposed to be loving and gentle and harmless kind of people and even Jesus said, "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves," how is that Christians would ever select in the world a cross as their symbol? The answer is simple isn't it? Because Jesus' death accomplished our salvation and He died on the cross and what He accomplished in dying on the cross was the atonement for our sins, the forgiveness of God, this was the greatest expression of God's love and the accomplishment of ultimate salvation. Consequently to us it's a glorious symbol. The cross then is the great insignia of Christianity.

Now just because you see the cross in Chapter 6, verse 14 does not mean that the cross is new in Galatians, not at all. If you're going to write an entire Epistle talking about grace, if you're going to write an entire Epistle talking about the fact that you're saved by faith not works, grace not law, you're going to have to talk about the cross a lot more than just at the end. Some people have called the book of Galatians the crucifixion Epistle. Because it mentions the crucifixion at least four separate times. Chapter 3, verse 1 talks about Christ crucified.

Chapter 2, verse 20 he talks about being crucified with Christ. Chapter 5, verse 24 talks about the flesh being crucified. And Chapter 6, verse 14 talks about the world being crucified. And I being crucified to the world. So the cross is mentioned repeatedly in the book of Galatians and the reason is because in any discussion of the true means of salvation in any discussion of the truth about redemption or how a man reaches God the cross has to be at the center of the discussion. So Paul sums up his letter again by stating that the cross must be held in perspective. The cross, the crucifixion of Christ is the determiner of every man's destiny. And what he does here is interesting. He contrasts himself with the Judaisers on one basis. On the basis of the attitude of each toward the cross.

The Judaisers have one attitude, he has another attitude. On the basis of those two attitudes, they stand in absolute opposition. Now mark this, as we've told you in our study of Galatians there are only two religions in all the world. There are not thousands of religions. There are only two religions in the world. There is faith religion, known as Christianity and there is works religion, which is everything else but Christianity. And under any name it's the same stuff. It's as if you put sawdust in every can and every box in the market. Under every conceivable label and you open it up and it was always sawdust. No matter what the label is in terms of false religion it is always the same religion. It is Satan's religion of salvation by works. Those two stand in opposition and Paul here sets them in contrast.

Two religions, the religion of human achievement which says I, on my own merit, can accomplish what needs to be accomplished to make me right with God. And the religion of divine achievement, which says I can't accomplish anything. God accomplished it all in the death of Jesus Christ. I'll simply accept that. Those are the two religions of the world. There are no others.

Now in Philippians, just to draw your attention before we look at the passage before us, Philippians 3. It says, "Brethren be followers together of me and mark them who walk even as you have us for an example." Now watch, for many walk of whom I've told you often and now tell you weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction. Now notice that. Anybody who lives in opposition to the cross his end is what? Destruction. It doesn't matter how you qualify the opposition. It doesn't matter what the brand name is. It doesn't matter whether it's Christian science or Buddhism, it doesn't matter whether it's Soon Mun Moonor whether its...that's right isn't it? Some liberal over here on the corner at the first liberal stone quarry of Panorama City. It doesn't matter what the religious box is, it's all the same thing.

Anybody who is any enemy of the cross...you say what's an enemy of the cross? Somebody who denies the sufficiency of Jesus Christ sacrifice for the salvation of men. That's an enemy of the cross and his end is what? Destruction. So Paul has said before and he says it again in effect in Galatians. There are only two religions. The religion of human achievement and the religion of divine accomplishment. There is the cross and then there is everything else.

Now we're going to see these in contrast. The work system to grace system. Now what about the Judaisers? Well, here's their problem. They gloried in the flesh. That's point one. Point two Paul gloried in the cross and there's the outline. Not even three points only two, because there are only two, right? You say what do you mean glory in the flesh? That's a religion of human achievement. I, in my own flesh by my own strength by doing 49 little spiritual goodies can accomplish whatever needs to be accomplished to rightly relate myself to God. Whereas the cross says you couldn't accomplish it. The Son accomplished it on the cross, just accept it. That's all there is. There couldn't be any more than two points to the outline because there are only two religions.

First of all, let's look at the Judaisers. Theirs was a system of works glorying in the flesh, verses 11-13. They gloried in the flesh. Now this is the view of religion that a man is sufficient to himself to effect the transformation to have fellowship with God to earn blessing and to gain eternal life and he can do it on his own. And incidentally, it's a doctrine continually propagated by Satan, all of his demons and all of his false teachers. And it's what the legalizing Jews taught in Galatia. Now notice verse 11. "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand."

Now I want to stop there because I want to dwell on this verse. You say how could you dwell on that verse. It's...there's nothing there. There is. He says, "you see how large of a letter I have written you

with mine own hand." Now this verse cannot be interpreted dogmatically. We can't say positively what he means by this, so understand that. I am going to tell you what I think is a very good possibility, but I can't be dogmatic about it, because there's no way to be. It just says what it says and I'm going to do the best I can with it. Well, to begin with if we're going to know what it means we ought to at least translated it correctly.

This is how it translates. You see from the Greek, with what large letters I wrote to you with my own hand. It's not correct to translate it how large a letter, but with large letters. Now you would translate it a large letter because it's not that large. Romans is larger, 1 Corinthians is larger, 2 Corinthians is larger and Ephesians is larger. You say well, maybe this is the first one he ever wrote and he thought it was large, because he hadn't written any others. That's possible. That's very possible and that's maybe a substantial argument. Technically, you could translate it that way. But the best translation, I think the purest one is the one that says you see with what large letters, plural, I have written unto you with mine own hand.

It's not the large letter that he's trying to get across, I don't think. That wouldn't be a particular point in saying that, but it is the size of the letters that he has in minds. You see these big letters. Now to support the point, let me say this, whenever the apostle Paul in his writings refers to a letter in total, a letter like an Epistle, he always uses the Greek word Epistle. For example, Romans 16:22, 1 Corinthians 5:9, 2 Corinthians 7:8, Colossians 4:16, and 1 Thessalonians 5:27 when he refers to the letter, when he says this letter. It always is the word for Epistle. He does not use that word here. He uses the word for letters. Not for an Epistle, but for the letters. And so it seems to me that that is his emphasis.

Now stay with me. I know you're saying this is really trivia, but there's a point in it. Paul says, "With what large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand." Now he was in the habit of dictating his Epistles to a person called an amanuensis or a secretary. He would dictate it and the secretary would write it down. And at the end of every letter, mark this, Paul would take the pen from the hand of secretary and he would write the conclusion. Paul would write with his own the conclusion to the letter and sign his own name. You say, why did he do that? There's an obvious reason. And that is in order to avoid anybody forging the letter.

Do you realize that in the early church there were all kinds of forgeries floating around, all over every where. One of the ways that Paul validated the true letters that he really wrote was by writing out the conclusion himself and signing his own name. Now this is true, for example, and I'll give you some illustrations in 1 Corinthians 16:21, "the salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand." And then he proceeds to write three more verses. So they could really know that this was his writing. Here's another one, Colossians 4:18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. And then he proceeds to write some more. There's another one 2 Thessalonians 3:17. "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand which is the token in every Epistle, so I write."

In other words, at the end of all his Epistles, he says, I have always written the salutation and that came at the end. "With my own hand." And you know, this was very necessary, especially in the early church when people were trying to forge...Satan was trying to forge things." Do you realize that already the Thessalonians at least had received a forged letter and it messed them up. Listen to 2 Thessalonians 2:1. "We beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him that you be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled neither by Spirit nor by word nor my letter as from us as that the day of the Lord is present." Somebody had written the Thessalonians a letter supposedly from Paul telling them they were already in the tribulation.

And they got all messed up and that's why he goes on to say let nobody deceive you, that day will not come except this happen and this happen and this happen. So there was the problem of forgery and some of the Thessalonians had been hoodwinked into believing or at least getting confused by a forged letter. So the letters were written by an amanuensis or a secretary and at the end of the letter, the apostle took the pen himself wrote his own signature and wrote some little closing remarks. So these are Paul's own letters. So he says, you see with what large letters I myself am now writing. But now watch this, I feel in my own mind, and again I'm not dogmatic on this, but I just feel this way, that Paul not only wrote the ending of this thing, but he wrote the whole thing.

I think Galatians is the one letter that he wrote from beginning to end. And there's a reason for that and I'm not going to go into all of the features of the Epistle airiestand all that kind of stuff and try to show you what I mean by that. The very choice of Greek construction here is never used anywhere in the New Testament to speak of something the writer is about to write. It always speaks of something he has written. So when he says here, it's clear, see we with large letters I what? Have written.

It seems to be the indication that he's going backwards with that. Now at the end of 2 Thessalonians when all he wrote was the ending, he doesn't use that tense. He uses the present tense. So I am writing. So the difference indicates to me that he probably wrote the whole thing. You say well, why would he do that? Well, I think there may be several reasons. Number one he really heard that news he must have gotten hot fast. The letter indicates that he was really hot, right? He was fuming from the beginning of Galatians to the end and it seems to me that he just grabbed the nearest pen and whatever ink he had and just took off and wrote that there. In addition to that I think he desired to make this letter as intensely personal as he could, because of the fact that it was such a rebuking letter and there was no personal character in it in terms of specifics. I think that it could have been well his design to make it a personal confrontation and certainly he wanted to confront the Judaisers in a very personal way.

But let me see by adding another thought the fullness of what the verse is saying. You see with what large letters I have written unto you with my own hand. As you read that there is almost something

pathetic in it. There's almost something brokenhearted about it. He's saying in effect, I hope you can read in these large scribbly, untidy, scrawling letters the pain in my heart about you. I've gone about this myself. And you know, it must have been a very difficult thing for him to do that, because he had a problem, and what may well have been his problem, eyesight. And for him to sit down and do this whole thing, he's saying in effect, you see with what large letters I personally have written all of this as if to say will you just for a minute stop and think that my heart is revealed in this letter to you?

You say well, why did he write with large letters. Well, some say he had bad eyesight. And if he had bad eyesight, he'd write large. Did you ever see a person with extremely bad eyesight? Everything is large, has to be so they can see what they're writing. You say well, how do you know he had bad eyesight? Well, we're not positive, but it's a good indication. Chapter 4 of Galatians, verse 13. He says, and "You know how through infirmity the flesh I preach the gospel unto you at first and your trial which was in my flesh you despise not and rejected but received me as an angel of God even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness you spoke of? For I bear you witness that if it had been possible you would have plucked out your own," what, "eyes and given them to me."

So there may be the implication there that he had an eye problem and it may be corroborated somewhat by the statement here that he wrote with large letters. Other commentators say that the reason he wrote with large letters was for emphasis. He wrote the whole thing in capital letters to emphasize it. That wouldn't make any sense. If you wrote the whole thing in capital letters you wouldn't be emphasizing anything. It'd all be the same. Another commentator said the reason he wrote with large letters is because he was treating his readers like children, and since he was rebuking childish, spiritual immaturity, he used baby writing. I really feel that's pushing it. There may be some truth in point one that the blindness was a factor, but let me give you this, now hang on this all has a point.

I really feel there's something else that explains the reason he used large letters. There were two styles of Greek writing, and there style are. We learn today in seminary, we learn on style and the Greek speaking world today has a different style. The first style is what's called literary unseal. That means everything is an unconnected big letters. You know how the little kids print when they begin to print, they print all those great big huge letters? Pretty soon they learn to write. Well unseal is the big block letters that are disconnected. The writing that connects is called cursive. Cursive, smaller and joined. Now most scholars, manuscript scholars feel that Paul's letters were probably done in cursive writing because the most adept scribes would write in beautiful flowing cursive.

The less educated would write in big block letters. And I realize that because I know Greek even after having all the years of Greek that I had, I still write great big block letter Greek and if somebody...somebody says oh I got a letter from my aunt in Greece could you interpret it? Interpret it, I can't even read it, because I can't read the cursive. I'm not that educated. Not that acquainted. Now according to Sir Frederick Kenyan who did some study on this, there are four classes of

workmanship in the 1st Century manuscripts.

There is the best professional scribe who brought in the most beautiful cursive style that just read beautifully and flowingly. Then there was secondly, the good ordinary professional hand, not quite the class A, but sort of class B. Then thirdly, there was the educated man who was not a scribe. And probably these are the kinds of men that Paul used to write his letters. They were not professional scribes, they were not as professional as the other two, but they were educated and so they could write. And fourthly, there was the common every day hand and this is the guy who just really wasn't that sharp at all and he wrote in great big block, unseal letters.

The big untidy sprawling letters indicate, I think, the fact that Paul not only had an eyesight problem, but that he was no professional scribe. He was probably a lot more used to writing in Semitic languages because from the time, as we saw this morning, from the time of his boyhood on, he was trained in Jerusalem wasn't he. And he was trained in the law, and surely he never became as fluid in writing Greek as he did in Semitic language. And so what he's saying in effect is this, you see I'm writing with great big letters. Do you read my concern? It's a laborious problem for me to get across to you and yet I'm painfully going through this myself to show you that I care about you.

There's a sense of urgency in it. But there's another thing that just jumps into mind as I see this. He in effect is not trying to follow any pretense of scholarship. He's not trying to put any great airs of being a sort of a literary genius and to make sure everything is correct and beautiful in terms of its outward appearance. And I believe that as he looks at those scrawly, scratchy, big, untidy letters, they become for him a kind of parable. And he sees inherent in this letters and in that letter to the Galatians the difference between the Judaisers and himself.

All the Judaisers ever care about is the outward appearance, right? The external, the show, and he cares only about the inside and what he's saying is look at all the chicken scratch I've written you and in his mind this is a parable. He could care less about what the letters look like it's the content that he's after, right? He isn't concerned about what the letters look like. There are some who only care about the outward appearance and that leads him right into verse 12.

"As many as desired to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised only less they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." He says I've written you in some big untidy, scrawly, scratchy letters, but I don't care. I'm not concerned about what it looks like. I'm concerned about what it says. However, he says, there are some in this world who care only about what the outside of everything looks like. They're only concern with making a fair show in the what? In the flesh, parading the flesh. Now beloved, he does something at this close of the letter that he hasn't done before as powerfully as he does it here. He has step by step, point by point destroyed the doctrine of the Judaisers already in the first part of the book.

I mean, he has just wiped out their doctrine. You know what he attacks now? Their motives. He spends the first section of the book just wiping their doctrine out and now in the conclusion he attacks their motives. Do you know why they taught you what they taught you? They desire to make a fair show in the flesh. In a word, they've got a problem with pride. Now watch, they glory in the flesh for three reasons and he gives them. He gives them three motives for what they do.

Number one, to show off spirituality. Number one to show off spirituality, verse 12. "As many as desired to make a fair show in the flesh." They want to put on a fine religious impression. They're very concerned with the outward, the external. Well, that's too untypical of today. They want religious popularity. Let me stop here for a minute and say that this is one of the motives of the legalistic Jews throughout history. And it's one of the motives today of legalistic religion. It's one of the motives today of a whole lot of phony pious people.

They want to put on a fair so they want to display their spirituality make everybody think they're so spiritual. All by the way they act, they've all a little spiritual faces that they put on, stances and little activities. Now, you know, this is what the legalistic Pharisees did all along. Listen to these, here's some of the things they did and you know these. In Matthew 6, "When you do your alms don't sound a trumpet before you like the hypocrites in the synagogues and in the streets." Whenever they came to give to the Lord, they had a guy blow fanfare, so everybody in town would know they were coming to give their money, big show, big display. I'm a great giver to God, aren't I wonderful?

Verse 5, "And when you pray, don't look like the hypocrites, they love to pray standing in the synagogue and the corner of the streets that they may be seen by men." They didn't care about God. They just wanted everybody know how religious they were. Wonderful spiritual people. Verse 16, "When you fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance. They disfigure their faces that they may appear to fast." You know, sometimes you might meet a Christian like that. What's wrong? You look so sick. Oh yes, I'm fasting.

See. Might as well gourd yourself as do that. I'm not sure that gluttony isn't a better sin than spiritual hypocrisy. There are degrees. Luke 16:15, "And he said unto them, you are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts." Oh ouch. Justify means you make yourself righteous. You are the ones who make yourselves to appear righteous before men, but God knows your hearts. "For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

Pretty strong language. Elsewhere in Luke 18:10, you get a good illustration. This guy comes to the temple to pray. He stands with himself in verse 11. Surely nobody else would stand with him. "He prayed with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, there's that tax collector over there. I fast twice in the week, I give all that I possess." God aren't I something? In Luke Chapter 20, verse 45, "Then in the hearing of all the people," you want to know

why Jesus wasn't too popular with scribes, "beware the scribes who desire to walk in long robes." Oh, have you ever seen people like that? Clergy like to flow in the long robes.

And they love salutations in the marketplaces. They love people to say "oh hello scribe." You know they love all those titles. And they like the highest seats in the synagogue. You know there were always those higher seats and they like to be on the high seats, because then they could sit there and the could make their pious faces and all would see. And they like the chief places at feasts. "Who devour widows' houses and for a show make long prayers. The same shall receive greater damnation." Serious. They love to walk in long robes. They love the religious falderal. And they love salutations, titles. They love to be called by titles, spiritual titles. That's the kind of thing that Paul is talking about. They want to make a fair show in the flesh.

Let me show you something interesting. Colossians 2, here's really a key passage. Paul says in effect, this doesn't belong in Christianity, not at all. Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." The rudiments of the world people means the ABC's, elementary teaching. It refers to Old Testament law, circumcision food and all the ceremonies of the mosaic system.

He says, don't let anybody trap you into thinking that all the externals matter. It is not the rudiments. It is not the ABC's, the weak and beggarly elements of Galatians 4:9. It is not the ABC's, the old things that have passed away in the old covenant, it is the things of Christ that matter. Verse 20, "Wherefore if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world." In other words, when you were crucified with Christ at the moment of faith, you died to all of that old system. He says to Colossians if you've died to that whole thing, why are you carrying it on. And you've got all your dumb little rules, "touch not, taste not, handle not."

They had a whole bunch of little diddly rules, which are to perish with the using. After the commandments and doctrines of men, "these things have indeed a shew of wisdom in self-imposed worship and self-imposed humility." And the rest of the verse means, "and are of no value serving only to indulge the flesh." All of those little picky rules and regulations and ceremonies that were hung on to by Christian Jews did nothing but serve to indulge the flesh in a false kind of self-imposed spirituality.

Now he says, if you've died to all that stuff, why are you carrying it on. It has no place. Drop the phony fasads. It's practical for today. Be what you are. Be what you are. Any religion which is unwilling to accept Jesus Christ as the only all sufficient Savior is an indulgence of the flesh. Anything that gives in to man's self conceit is an indulgence of the flesh. Christ accomplished a perfect work. He accomplished it absolutely. There is nothing left to perfect by your flesh, therefore, the Judaisers were completely out of whack with God's plan when they paraded circumcision as if it had to be a part of salvation.

They wanted to make a display. They wanted to appear to everybody to be very sanctimonious. They loved to make people think they were spiritual by external activities and rules and regulations. And they were calling for circumcision in the case of the Galatians. Parading the works of the flesh. So their first reason then for following the religion of works was to show off spiritually. And I didn't bother to gather a whole bunch of illustrations of this, but they're all over the place. You know, sometimes I turn on the television and I see some ceremony going on in some cathedral or something and I watch all these people parading around in all these robes, with all these titles, going through all this holy mogus or whatever it is, with absolutely no effect. Other than a self-imposed worship. A ritual display in the flesh that affects nothing. But to give everybody the impression that they are very holy people.

When, in fact, the Bible says that if they are not counting on the absolute total sufficiency of the cross, they are to be damned. And so I guess I run 90 miles the other direction from liturgy just to avoid any possible intersection with error. Now there was a second reason the Judaisers gloried in the flesh and that was to avoid persecution. They were cowards at heart. Hypocrites always are. You know that don't you? Because if they weren't cowards, they wouldn't be hypocrites. They'd just be what they were and take what came. So cowardous and hypocrisy are sisters.

Notice verse 12, "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh," they constrain you to be circumcised. They try to get you into a system of works. "Only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." So they do it to avoid persecution. The cross was a severe offense to the Jews. It says that they were going to suffer persecution for the cross. The Jews hated the cross, believe me. They hated the cross. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 1:23, it says, "The cross was a stumbling block," wasn't it? A severe stumbling block.

In fact, you know when Jesus in John 6 told all of those Jews gathered around, He said, "you know you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood." They went crazy didn't they? What is He saying? Then He looked at them and they thought He was talking literally, they said there's not even enough of Him to go around. And they were all so confused. It says, "many of His disciples turned and walked no more with Him." They said this is ridiculous. The cross offended them. The idea of death and bloodshed is offensive. In Romans 9:32 "They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, they sought righteousness by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone." As it is written, "Behold I lay in Zion a stumblingstone, a rock of offense and whosoever believers on Him shall not be ashamed." But for those who didn't believe He was a terribly offensive person because of the cross.

The cross is everything? Well, you know what the Judaisers were? They had identified with the church. Yes, the Judaisers had joined the church, externally. They had identified with Jesus as the Messiah. They'd accepted the cross. They weren't saved and I confidently say that because you

can't be saved unless you believe in the absolute all sufficiency of Christ and they thought you had to be circumcised too to keep the whole law, so that disqualified them.

But they identified outwardly with Christianity. Consequently the minute they did that, they were targets for the hatred of their own peers weren't they? The whole Jewish population would turn against them. Their families would turn against them when they identified with Jesus Christ. So in order to try to keep some kind of relationship with their families, they started to propagate salvation by circumcision thinking that they could win the favor of the Jews again and avoid getting persecuted with the rest of the Christians who were preaching the cross everywhere.

So they never said anything about the cross, they just kept telling people they needed to get circumcised hoping that the Jews would like them better and would hurt them. Now, when it says they wouldn't suffer persecution for the cross, it means all of the redemptive doctrine. It means the whole doctrine of salvation. When we use the term cross, we're not talking about two pieces of wood, we're talking about the whole act of the cross and everything involved in it and implied by it. So they didn't want to suffer persecution for the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Persecution for what the cross meant, so they started throwing back circumcision into the system in order to pacify the antagonism of their Jewish friends. By visibly identifying with the church, they were resented. They were considered traitors, heretics, they were supposedly teaching grace rather than law, so they hurried to make sure everybody knew they were still teaching law. They believed in salvation by works because they wanted to stay in good standing with the Jewish community.

You know what their big thing was, popularity and saved number one. Don't let anything get me in trouble. In back of the whole effort was Satan. Believe me folks, the cross always causes persecution. You know why? Because the doctrine of the cross, now mark it, the doctrine of the cross cuts across every other system of religion. It cuts across all works religion. So in Acts 5 when the cross was preached, the crowd went crazy and started to persecute. In Acts 13, the same thing. In Acts 14, the same thing, right on to the book of Acts. They preached the cross and violent reaction.

Why violent reaction? Because the message of the cross is this, you are helpless. You are a sinner. You cannot come to God. You are unworthy. You have nothing to offer God. Jesus comes, bears your sin, dies on the cross, accomplishes salvation, you simply believe it and it's given to you free. Because of your helplessness and hopelessness, God has to do it all. And you know something, that's unpopular because men are lost in the doctrine of Satan that you're good enough to make it on your own. And it violates their egos. It's always offensive, always.

Now you'll notice that in verse 12, it doesn't just say they didn't want to suffer persecution from the Jews. It says persecution in general. And probably in the back of their minds, they realize that the Romans allowed the Jewish religion in their empire, but they might get upset about Christianity,

which, in fact, they eventually did. And so they figured if we really identify as Jews, if Rome gets hot under the collar or hot under the tunic, whatever, about Christianity, if Rome gets uptight about Christianity, we'll be all right because we're really pushing Judaism. So they were trying to say their next...they were trying to get a passport to safety from the Jews and the Romans in case of persecution, and so they really pushed the hallmark of Judaism circumcision. That was their identification.

So what were their motives for glorying in the flesh? One, they wanted to display spirituality even though they had none. Secondly, they wanted to make sure they never got persecuted. There was a third motive. The third reason that they did this, this is most interesting, the third reason they gloried in their flesh was to cover up their sin. Cover up their sin. Boy this is really potent. I want you to listen to this. Religion is one of the greatest cover-ups for corruption there is. I dare say probably the most corrupt people around are in religion, because Satan's that smart. Religion is a fantastic cover-up for corruption.

Verse 13, "For neither they themselves who are circumcised," what, "keep the law." Isn't that amazing? Phonies, here they are imposing this whole system on a bunch of Gentiles and they don't even obey the law. But they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. See how many converts we've won. They were interested in convert statistics. Sort of like baptismal statistics in the church today. Well, sort of like, you know, you wonder when somebody comes up and is always telling you about how effective they are as a Christian. You know, what the back of my mind, what's always going on? Wonder what sin they're covering up.

You know, there's a certain humility that goes along with Godliness. Have you noticed that? When somebody is really trying hard to convince you how spiritual they are they're probably not. No, the Judaisers wanted to announce to everybody that they were winning Jewish proselytes. And of course, they thought they Jews would love them for this, but the amazing statement, they didn't keep the law themselves. The whole thing was a front. They were corrupt. They never even kept the law. But if they were super zealous, super busy making converts, fighting for the law, which they never kept, everybody would just assume they were godly, holy people.

Scares me to think about this point and push it too far, because it may be that some of the busiest people in the church of Jesus Christ are some of the most corrupt. They fail to keep the law, but boy did they ever keep the pretense. Man they kept that up relentlessly. You know there was one person who tore the cover off. I'm telling you he ripped the cover off and the whole thing was revealed. He just tore the fasad of spiritual fakery right off of them. And I want you to see how Jesus did it in Matthew. This has got to be the greatest, the greatest destruction of hypocrisy in the history of the world.

Here they were putting on their spirituality, fainting to be something, and Jesus just ripped them to shreds. And I want you to follow with me verse 1 of 23. "The spoke Jesus to the multitude," Matthew 23, "and to His disciples saying the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Now that means...and incidentally the synagogues may have had such a seat. They may have had an actual seat that represented the teacher of the law and he sat there when he taught. But they sat to teach for Moses and the Lord recognizes this. They did have a place.

"All therefore whatever they bid you observe." You do what they say He says, because they're sitting in Moses seat teaching you the law of Moses. "You observe that," this is before the cross of course, "and you do it, but do not after their works for they say and," what, "and do not." Now that's in itself an unbelievable indictment. "For the bind heavy burdens." And of course, the heavy burdens refers to the terrible wait of rabbinic laws that they made everybody keep. "Grievous to born and they lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

They make you keep all these laws. They bind these laws on you. The heaviest of all was salvation by good deeds. Could you imagine teaching all those people constantly that they were saved by their good deeds. Can you imagine the frustration of a man trying to save himself by his good deeds? And they relentlessly pounded that into those people. Terrible burden, terrible.

"But all their works they do to be seen of men," verse 5. "They do them to be seen of men." They were pre-occupied with a show, phonies. They make broad their phylacteries. You know what the phylacteries were? They were to take the statements of God in Deuteronomy and they were to put them in little boxes and the boxes were to be placed on their foreheads and they were wrapped on their arms. Sometimes you may see a Jew today walking on the street, if he's an orthodox Jew or a sort of ceremonial Jew in any sense, and you'll find a leather wrapped all over his in a special configuration. It has to go a certain way and it's a very technical way to do. And there's a little box on there and on that...inside that little box are these...you know what these guys did? They enlarged all of that so that they had these things going clear across their heads and huge big boxes on their arms. So everybody would say oh look at them, aren't they wonderfully spiritual?

And they enlarged the tassels on their garments. The tassels were the symbols of their order and the symbols of their profession. The symbols of their Phariseeism or the fact that they were scribes. They wore all of these little...and so they made huge tassels so everybody would know about it, conspicuous. All they want to do is have people see them. They love the uppermost places at feasts. They always sit at the head table, always up there. And the chief seats in the synagogues. Vanity and ostentation. And listen, and they love greetings in the marketplace and to be called by men, rabbi, rabbi. Oh they ate that up. Just loved it. Rabbi means master. They loved that. People would say my lord, my lord. And they would just go this is wonderful.

Now you watch this folks, this might shock you a little bit, "but be not ye called rabbi, for one is your master. Even Christ and all of you are brothers." Don't start using titles to separate people. "And call no man your Father upon the earth for one is your Father who's in heaven." Don't give titles that set people above other people. People always ask me why I don't want to be called Reverend MacArthur. That's why. Now you understand? What makes me reverent? That's ridiculous. Don't call me master either. Don't call me lord, don't call me some kind of father...and father doesn't mean father like dad or something, it means in terms of some great thing above you. Don't, no need for it. Just call me John or General MacArthur either one.

Verse 10, "Neither be ye called masters for one is your master even Christ." You see how our Lord Jesus Christ just knocks off all the titles. And you always hear the right reverend holy father. Now how could a person call himself father when it says in verse 9, "Call no man your father upon the earth." I walked down a high school highway one day and there was a new kid in our church and he said to one of his classmates, he said, "there goes our father." He said, you just come from Catholicism. No, well, Jesus said don't do that.

Verse 11, "But he that is greatest among shall be your servant. Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be a base and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." That's the principle isn't it? Believe me folks, if a man can't earn by his life the respect of people, he's not going to get it by a title. That's a false pretense. Well, He's not done with those guys. Verse 13, He really lets loose. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," and you know He's not giving this little speech in sort of a hidden cloister. This is public word. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men." You know instead of letting men into the kingdom they kept him out. When anybody teaches salvation by anything else, then faith in God and nothing more than faith, he shuts men out of the kingdom. Now if you want to know what irritates about false religion and false cults and all these things is just this, they are shutting men out of the kingdom instead of letting them in, they're keeping them out.

"For you neither go in yourselves," verse 13, "neither permit them that are entering to go in." The idea of them that are entering, people actually are moving toward God. These guys slam the door I front of them. Verse 14 is not in the best manuscripts. It's in some and not in some of the older ones. It says "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers, therefore you shall receive the greater damnation." It seems to be an interpolation from the other passage where it's used.

Verse 15 says, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte," now this was a time of great proselyting, that's why these Judaisers felt that if they could win a lot of converts and make a big display of all the converts they'd won, they'd be popular, because the Jews are really out making proselytes. So these guys are "compassing sea and land to make one proselyte and when he was made, you made him twofold more a child of hell than

yourselves." Boy what a serious indictment. "Woe unto you you blind guides who say whosoever shall swear by the temple it's nothing and whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he's a debtor."

In other words, some guy would swear about something and so oh you didn't swear by the temple. Swear by the gold of temple, it's okay if you don't swear...and they had all these little gimmicks. It's like saying it's all right, I know I swore, but I had kings X. They had all these little ridiculous ditties to get out of the vows. "You fools, you blind," verse 17, verse 19, "you fools and blind." Verse 23, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cumin." You know what that is? Little tiny herbs, plants, and seeds. They were taking ten seeds and giving one seed. Ten little herbs and giving one little herb. "And omitting the weightier matters of the law like justice and mercy and faith." Can you believe that?

Here they were doling out their little seeds. Didn't have the faintest idea about justice and mercy and faith. "You blind guides, you strained at gnat and swallow a camel." That's vivid. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you make clean the outside of the cup and the platter but within are full of extortion and excess." A fasad. "You blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you are like whited sepulchers which indeed appear beautiful outward and inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you're full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites because you build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous and say if we had been in the days of our father, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophet." They go and dust off the prophets' tombs. Nice prophets and they paint them and whitewash them and take care of those wonderful prophets. We would never have done that.

Verse 31, "Wherefore, you're witnesses against yourselves that you are the sons of them who killed the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your fathers." Go ahead and do it he says. Go and do what you're going to do "you serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" And you know what, they went ahead and did it didn't they? They killed him. And you say that's awful strong language, John. You're right. That's just exactly how God feels about hypocritical religion.

Of all the sins, mark it, of all the sins in the New Testament, Jesus condemns the sin in every case. In one case condemns the sinner and the case is spiritual hypocrisy. It's an old ploy folks. Talking about all you converts. Going through all your spiritual motions when your life is full of sin and it sickens God. I'll give you an illustration of how God feels about even in the life of a Christian. All you've got to do is go to Acts Chapter 5 and read about Ananias and Sapphira. They came and said oh we're going to give all we have to the Lord. Put they're money down there. God said, you liars. And God executed them. And they both dropped dead in front of the church. God does not take

kindly to hypocrisy.

You know what I believe in my heart? I thought about this a long time before I've decided to say it to you. I believe in my heart there are hypocrites at Grace. That's right. I believe there are probably hypocrites right here in this building tonight. You know why I believe that? Because I know Satan's sowing tares among the wheat. I don't know who you are. Maybe in most cases and in some cases maybe I think I know. But I believe there are hypocrites here. They'll always be around. In fact, you know something, I think we're going to have more of them now than maybe they did then.

You say, why do you think that? Well, I think it because 2 Timothy 3 says this, verse 1, "This know that in the last days perilous times shall come and men will have a form of godliness denying the power of it." Yes, in the last days there seems to be the idea that there will be a greater increase of people with a form of godliness, but with no reality. The Judaisers had one motive. Spiritual pride. A desire for religious popularity. Men are still like that. They glory in the flesh and not the cross. The cross tells you the truth about yourself doesn't it? It tells you you're a sinner. It tells you you can't save yourself. It tells you if you can be forgiven by your own good works, if you could be forgiven by circumcision, if you can be forgiven by law keeping there wouldn't be any cross, right?

You wouldn't need it. You see nothing in history cuts man down like a cross does. It pops the balloon of an inflated ego. At the foot of the cross you shrink to true size. And men don't like that. They resent humiliation. They prefer their comfortable illusions. They hate the cross that destroys their pride. So Paul says as he looks at his scribbly scrawly letters, they remind me he says, of people, corrupted people who care only for the show outside, not inside. I hope you're not glorying in the flesh. Let's pray.

Father, we're thankful tonight for the cross of Jesus Christ. We're thrilled that Jesus came and died for us, spent His life, His blood on the cross to redeem us. We're thankful Father for the fact that by your Holy Spirit for most of us You have revealed our inability and we've turned from glorying in the flesh and trying to save ourselves. We've come to the foot of the cross and we've had our ego destroyed and we realize that we're nothing. The cross is everything. Strip all of our hypocrisy Father, even those of us who are Christians sometimes tend to want to wear the titles and appear spiritual and to say the things that are going to make people think we're really holy. Strip us down so that we're real and then when we're truly holy it'll be obvious to Your glory not ours. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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