

**Galatians 6: 17; “The Marks of Jesus”, Message # 64 in the series –
“Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on February 8th, 2017,
by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.**

What a mighty epistle is the book of Galatians! There are so many subjects which have been defined in this book, which are essential to keep Christians from falling into legalism; both in regard to what the true gospel is, and also what living the Christian life is all about. Both the true gospel and living the Christian life have their focus on the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; our receiving His finished work, and living according to it. How thankful I am that we have been able to go all the way through this book, for it shows us that every Christian must keep their eyes on Jesus; remembering always that we are justified by faith, only by His grace, and not by our works. And further we must always remember that having received the Holy Spirit, we are not made perfect by the flesh; that is by the strength the Old Man. We cannot make progress by our simply being determined to make progress in holiness and righteousness. We must become men and women of prayer and faith; people who walk in the Spirit's power in order to keep the commandments of God. This evening, then, we want to take a look at Paul's parting exhortation to the Galatian churches. We want to see, 1st of all, what Paul meant when he said that he did not want anyone in the churches of Galatia to trouble him any longer. And 2nd – We want to see what Paul meant when he said that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. May the Lord help us to understand the power of Christ that was working in Paul's life, so that we might also be willing to suffer for Christ as He would lead us into it.

1st of all – What did Paul mean when he said that he did not want anyone in the churches of Galatia to trouble him any longer?

I believe that he was saying that he did not want to hear of any more trouble coming from these brethren over false doctrine. He was saying this because they had been deceived by false teachers into thinking that they needed something more than the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, in order to be saved from their sins. He was saying that he had now given them all the truth that they needed to see that these false teachers were actually heretics and false brethren. And that was the end of the matter as far as he was concerned. They needed to live by the truth of the word and not listen to those who taught what was false. The doctrine of justification by faith alone had been carefully and faithfully set before them, and they should now be able to go forward, unhindered, by these false teachers if they listened to him as their true apostle and father in the faith.

The lesson for us here tonight is to realize that combatting false doctrine does take time and effort. It takes patient much instruction and sometimes even rebuke from those who are in pastoral authority to bring people to the place where they will see how damaging it is to both individual Christians and the churches that they are a part of, when they allow false teachers and false doctrine into their midst. You can see this if you will turn with me over to Acts chapter 20, and verses 26-32. “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.” “for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of god.” “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” “And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word

of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

We need to understand the context here. Paul is speaking to the elders of Ephesus. He had been among them teaching and preaching for 3 years sometime before this. He is exhorting them that they need to watch against the “savage wolves” who would come among them after his departure. The savage wolves that he mentions are false teachers. They are compared to wolves because they are cunning and crafty, and greedy for power and money, and eager to lead people into truths which will lead them astray. Jesus says in Matthew 7: 15 – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” In other words, they may look like Christians at first, but you will know them by their teaching and by their fruits; whether they are morally upright and righteous and loving. In order to be faithful shepherds, Paul was saying that they needed to take heed to themselves and to all the flock. The Holy Spirit had made them overseers, Paul had not shunned to declare to them the whole counsel of God; every profitable truth and doctrine that he knew would make them strong and build them up. This is what he means when he said that he was “pure from the blood of all men”. He had held nothing back, and therefore they needed to be faithful to the truth which he had delivered to them.

This is the same approach that Paul used with the elders of Ephesus, he takes here with the churches of Galatia. He says, “Let no one trouble me any longer, or from now on. He is saying – I have clearly set forth the truth to you, O Galatians. Do not trouble me by not listening to me or by failing to believe and to act upon all the truth of the world of God which I have delivered unto you. We should learn from this that it is troublesome to a faithful pastor when the sheep of the flock that he is shepherding, fail to receive and act upon, or to live by, the truth that he has delivered unto them. It is troubling to his mind and heart; he who prays for them and wants the very best for them spiritually. This is why Paul says in Acts 20: 31 – “Remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” It was that important that they not listen to false teachers or believe in false doctrine. It was important enough that Paul cried over them, in his warnings to them. It is the same with our church. It is important that we see how needful it is to be sound in the faith.

Look at Romans chapter 16, verses 17-19. “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” “For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” “For your obedience has become known to all.” “Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.” This was the desire of Paul, and it is my desire as your pastor as well. The doctrine that we have learned together over the past 13 years is the doctrine which comes directly from the Bible. And the doctrine of the Bible is best expressed and amplified and explained by our 1689 Confession. This is why I urge you to read the Confession for yourself. For there are many people outside of our church who will try to make you believe that doctrine is of no great importance; when actually it is of the highest importance. In living to the glory of God, you must live your life according to truth. This is why our church has significance in this community and the communities that we represent. We are trying to teach the full counsel of God, and trying by the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live that truth out in the way that we worship God and the way that we live our lives. It is only trouble when a person who says that they are a Christian says that doctrine does not matter. Actually in the verses that I just read to you, Paul calls submission to the teaching of the good word of God – your obedience. And this obedience becomes known to all, when you hold fast the doctrine which you have learned.

Now 2nd - We want to see what Paul meant that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

“From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” The word in the Greek for “marks” is *στιγματα*. Paul was bearing in his body the stigma of identifying himself as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The marks of the Lord Jesus that Paul is talking about are those things that were done to him, by people persecuting him, to stigmatize him; to mark or to brand him as a disgraced man because he believed in Jesus. Because of this, he was considered by them as someone who should not be listened to, and who did not deserve to live. This was how the scribes, and Pharisees, and the rulers of the Jews had stigmatized our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at John 19: 5-7. “Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.” “And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the Man!’” “Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’” “Pilate said to them, ‘You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him’” “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because he made Himself the Son of God.’” When the soldiers put the purple robe on Jesus and jammed the crown of thorns on His head, what were they doing? They were stigmatizing Him as a false king; someone trying to take power to Himself which didn’t belong to him. They were branding Him this way, through their actions. And furthermore, what these wicked Jewish leaders were trying to do was to stigmatize Jesus; to brand Him as a blasphemer of God in calling Himself the Son of God. Therefore, they thought that He should die.

Paul bore the marks of the Lord Jesus in his physical body when he suffered at the hands of persecuting men for his identifying himself with the Lord Jesus and for preaching the gospel of Christ. Look with me at 2nd Corinthians 11: 18-28. “Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.” “For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!” “For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.” “To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that!” “But in whatever anyone is bold – I speak foolishly – I am bold also.” “Are they Hebrews?” “So am I.” “Are they the seed of Abraham?” “So am I.” “Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.” “From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.” “Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

The reason that I wanted us to read this is to show you how Paul was stigmatized by the false teachers and false apostles who were trying to sway the church at Corinth to believe in their false doctrines. 2nd Corinthians 11: 13 – “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.” He was stigmatized by them as being weak in his personal presence and his speech contemptible, it says in Chapter 10, verse 10. But to show the Corinthians what the grace of Christ had enabled him to do as a minister, he listed for them all the sufferings that he had gone through for Christ’s sake, and for the sake of the gospel. And it is a list which can hardly be matched by any Christian in any generation. These things that he listed were the marks that he bore in his body for the Lord Jesus; marks which all men ought to respect, for they attest to his true apostleship, and his faithfulness to the doctrine of free grace which he preached. He was beaten with rods three times, once he was stoned and left for dead, and effects of these punishments afflicted upon him, unjustly by the Jews and others who

stigmatized him as harmful to society and false; these things he wore as a badge of his distinction as a true apostle and faithful follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These marks of the Lord Jesus, he boasted in, because he knew that they were a fulfillment of the very commission that was given to him by the Lord Jesus when he was first saved. Let's look at Acts chapter 9, verses 15 and 16. The Lord directed one of his servants, a man named Ananias, to go and lay his hands on Saul of Tarsus, so that he would receive his sight. And Ananias protested, saying: "I have heard about this man, Lord, how much harm he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem." "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name." "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.'" "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

This was the basis of Paul's bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus in His body. It was Jesus' showing him just how much he would have to suffer for his name's sake. Let us not be afraid to suffer, if needs be, for the sake of Christ. "For if we suffer(endure), we shall also reign with Him," as it says in 2nd Timothy 2: 12. He Himself will lead us into it and show us very practically what it is that he would have us to endure; how much it is, that we will need to suffer for Him. It will be related to our identifying with Him fully in His sufferings. Look over at 2nd Corinthians 4: 7-12. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." "So then death is working in us, but life in you." This was what Paul was doing; he was always bearing about in his body, the dying of the Lord Jesus. He was suffering for Jesus sake, and thereby the bruises and wounds that he incurred in preaching Christ and Him crucified, served to bring the truth of the gospel to many who needed Christ. And it served to work life in those whom he was trying to teach about living a godly and fruitful life of service to Christ. For it is because of the life of Christ within us that we are enabled to suffer for His name's sake.