



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

LIVING IN FREEDOM // DEAD TO THE WORLD // • GALATIANS 6:11-18 •

MAIN POINT

We can experience true spiritual transformation only through the gospel.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What motivates you in your work? In your parenting? In your studies?

Are some motives better than others? How do your motives affect the work that you do in life?

What accomplishments in your life are you most proud of? Why?

Galatians 6:11-18 confronts us not only with two different doctrines, but two different ways of life. Previously, Paul has challenged the church at Galatia to choose between bondage or freedom, a life lived in the flesh or in the Spirit, and a life lived for yourself or for others. Paul now concludes his letter by presenting us with one last choice: we can live for the praise of people or for the glory of God. The Christian life isn't so much about what you do, but why you do it. By looking at Paul's motive, we will see the motive that ought to drive our ministry on our path of spiritual transformation.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Share an example of a time you did the right thing for the wrong reason.

Why do you think Jesus warned us to be careful about practicing "our righteousness before other people" (Matt. 6:1)? What temptation often lies

behind our public acts of service?

Why do you think Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ"? How could seeking to please men compromise the gospel or damage our testimony?

Paul has already spent much of Galatians warning the church against false teachers. As Paul closes the letter, he exposes the unbiblical motives of these false teachers. In so doing, Paul hopes to help the church embrace the glory of God as their ultimate motive in all of life.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:11-13.

What do you think tends to motivate false teachers today?

What does Paul say the false teachers in Galatia were motivated by (vv. 12-13)?

These false teachers wanted to "make a good showing in the flesh" (v. 12a). They cared more about how they looked to others than whether their ministry was honoring to God. Their motive wasn't the glory of God but the promotion of themselves. They also wanted to avoid persecution (v. 12b). The Jewish religion was an accepted religion in the Roman Empire, but being a Christian could get you killed. A third motive Paul identified was their hypocrisy (v. 12). Paul calls them out for not keeping the law themselves—a common mark of false teachers is that they pick and choose what issues they will be legalistic about. And finally, Paul says that these false teachers "boast in your flesh" (v. 13b), meaning they brag about their followers.

How might the gospel be compromised by teachers who are overly concerned with how their ministry appears to others?

How do you think Christians in our country might face persecution in the future? How can we be prepared to live faithfully for Christ in the face of persecution?

Are there certain areas of Christian freedom that you tend to be more strict about than others? How can we guard our hearts against hypocrisy?

It would be easy to ignore Paul's teaching because we aren't false teachers, however, the motives that Paul identifies in these false teachers are all things that can easily consume us. It is easy for us to get caught up in image management and pretending to be deeply

spiritual when in reality we are struggling. We want other Christians to think we are more spiritual than we are. Trusting Christ, however, means being willing to let Him expose our false motives so that we can begin living for the glory of Christ.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:14-18.

How was Paul different from the false teachers in verses 12-13?

What motivated Paul's life and ministry (v. 14)?

Why does Paul say that neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything (v. 15)?

Circumcision is an outward sign and such outward signs are meaningless. What counts is God changing us from the inside out. The message of the false teachers was powerless to change lives because they were only concerned with appearances. Paul, however, was concerned with the true spiritual transformation and growth that only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. That is why Paul only wanted to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ, because he recognized that his and anyone else's spiritual growth is the work of God. Because Paul believed, lived, and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, he did not take credit for the fruit of his ministry. Instead he rejoiced in the grace and mercy of God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Most of us would say that the glory of God is the motive behind our service and ministries, but is that always the case? Which of the motives of the false teachers (vv. 12-13) do you most struggle with?

Have you ever bragged about your spiritual growth or service in the church? How might bragging about those things actually point people away from Christ?

What in your life have you been bragging about that you need to confess to God? How can you start boasting in the cross instead?

How has Christ changed you since coming to faith in Him? How might you brag on Jesus to a friend this week?

PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer thanking God for the cross. Ask the Lord for forgiveness for the many times we have taken credit for things He has accomplished. Ask Him to help us boast in the cross this week as we seek to point our friends and families to Christ.

COMMENTARY

6:11. Paul concludes his epistle to the Galatians by contrasting the improper motives of the legalists with his proper motives. Paul now discontinues using a scribe. In Koine (common) Greek quotation marks were not used. So emphasis was conveyed by enlarging the letters of the words written. Paul personally picks up the pen and writes with "large letters" to emphasize his concluding words and to validate that the letter was genuine.

6:12. The fear of others may have been a significant motive of the Judaizers. They may have been trying to accommodate the gospel to the Jews to avoid persecution by them. By including the law, they made the converted Jews happy. In contrast, by preaching the grace message which excluded the law, Paul had experienced harsh persecution at the hands of the Jews.

6:13. Other than being circumcised, some of the Judaizers did not try to keep the law, but they wanted new converts to Christianity also to be circumcised because it made them look good to the other legalists. They bragged about the number of converts who were also circumcised.

6:14. In contrast to the Judaizers, Paul had pure motives. Paul's motive was to brag, not about himself or his merits, but about "the cross of our Lord Christ." The Judaizers gloried in the flesh (circumcision), but Paul gloried in Christ. The "world" was "crucified to" Paul and he "to the world." He looked at the world as if it were on a cross; that is, he considered the world as good as dead and he as good as dead to the world.

6:15. It is easy to get caught up in the externals (of circumcision or uncircumcision). Paul says that in all reality, the externals are meaningless. "What counts" is a new creation produced by a new spiritual birth (compare 2 Cor. 5:17). "What counts" is God changing us from the inside out. The message of the Judaizers was powerless to change hearts. What changes hearts is faith in Christ for both salvation and spiritual growth.

6:16. "Peace and mercy" are available to those who believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

6:17. "The marks of Jesus" are all over Paul's body. The word marks was used of the brand that identified slaves or animals. Paul had often been beaten for the sake of Christ, even in Galatia itself (Acts 14:19). Some of those who would be reading this letter would recall how Paul had nearly died to get the message of the gospel to them. Paul's stonings and beatings as an apostle of the message of grace are his final proof that he is a true apostle. These markings are his signs that he was a slave of Christ and not of the law. These physical scars were Paul's final credentials of authenticity. These signs of ownership indicated that his motive was to please God regardless of the consequences. Paul would rather fight for truth and grace than switch to falsehood and the law. These marks are Paul's way of saying, "Here me well. I've earned the right to be heard, respected, and obeyed."

6:18. Paul began his letter with the commendation of "grace"(Gal. 1:3). Now he concludes with that same blessing of grace. Throughout all the division and suspicion, Paul still ends with affection by calling them "brothers." With all of his godly logic and now his open love, how can the Galatians refuse the appeal of this letter? How can they continue to accommodate the theological atrocities of the Judaizers? We hear nothing more about these churches, and we are led to believe that Paul persuaded them to abstain from legalism and to affirm grace. For a short moment they thought about going back to the dark prison of legalism, but finally they came to their senses and stayed out in the bright sunshine of grace's freedom.