

**YOU GOT MAIL: A Journey Through Paul's Letters**  
***FOCUSED – Paul's Letter To The Church In Galatia***  
**Message for July 21, 2019**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

**Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)** – *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”*

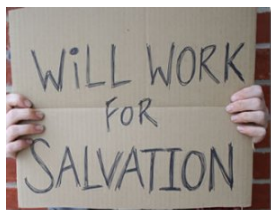
Paul had preached to the people in Galatia...



...on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14–14:23). Shortly after Paul left Galatia a group of Jewish believers arrived and insisted that the Gentile Christians submit to Jewish law, the Law of Moses. This group said believers would need to be circumcised, follow Jewish customs and dietary laws.

**Galatians 1: 6 (NKJV)** – *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.”*

In verse 7, Paul calls this false teaching that many Galatians were turning to, a “*perversion*” of the Gospel.



Zealous Jews were spreading the belief that in addition to faith in Christ, Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and follow Jewish laws and traditions to be saved. Due to the fact that they wanted to turn the Gentile Christians into Jews, they were called Judaizers.

Paul makes it clear in his letter, **Galatians 1: 11-12 (NKJV)** – *“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

The Gospel Paul preached is the true Gospel...”*it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ”* – Paul goes on, **Galatians 3: 1 (NKJV)** – *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you*

*should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”*

Paul then explains that our salvation is not based on what we do, but our salvation is based on what Christ has done. **Galatians 3: 3 (NKJV)** – *“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”*

Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to reiterate that we are saved from the penalty of our sins by accepting Jesus Christ’s payment on our behalf, on the cross, and nothing else.

Throughout his letter,



Paul explains the marks of a false gospel:

1. **Galatians 2:21** – Treats Christ’s death as meaningless
2. **Galatians 3:12** – Says **people must obey the law** in order to be saved
3. **Galatians 4: 10** – Tries to find favor with God by observing certain rituals
4. **Galatians 5:4** – Counts on keeping laws to erase sin

Paul teaches, throughout his letter to the Galatians, the marks of a true gospel:

1. **Galatians 1: 11-12** – Teaches that the **source of the gospel is God**
2. **Galatians 2:20** – Knows that **life is obtained through death**; we trust in the God who loved us and died for us so that we might die to sin and live for him
3. **Galatians 3:14** – Explains that **all believers have the Holy Spirit through faith**
4. **Galatians 3: 21-22** – Declares that we **cannot be saved by keeping laws**; the **only** way of salvation is **through faith in Christ**, which is available to all
5. **Galatians 3: 26-28** – Says that **believers are one in Christ**, so there is no basis for discrimination of any kind
6. **Galatians 5: 24-25** – Proclaims that we are **free from the grip of sin** and that **the Holy Spirit’s power fills and guides us**

Paul goes as far as to say, **Galatians 1:8 (NKJV)** – *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”*

Paul wants the Galatians to stay FOCUSED.



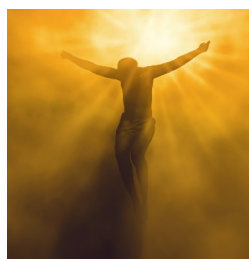
A reporter asked the great baseball legend, Babe Ruth, “How is it that you always come through in the clutch? How can you come up to bat in the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup> in a key game with the score tied, with thousands of fans screaming, the game on the line, and deliver the winning hit?” Babe Ruth answered, “*I keep my eye on the ball.*”

As Max Lucado, in his book, The Applause of Heaven, writes, “*There’s a thief... You know him... Oh you’ve never seen his face. You couldn’t describe his voice or sketch his profile. But when he’s near, you know it in a heartbeat. If you’ve ever been in the hospital, you’ve felt the leathery brush of his hand against yours... It was this thief who left your palms sweaty as you went for the job interview... It was this con man who convinced you to swap your integrity for popularity... He’s the Black Bart of the soul... He doesn’t want your money... He doesn’t want your diamonds... He won’t go after your car... He wants something far more precious. He wants your peace of mind... [He wants] your joy... He doesn’t want you to make the journey to the mountain. He figures if he can rattle you enough, you will take your eyes off the peaks and settle for a dull existence in the flatlands.*”

FOCUS. STAND FAST.

Again, Paul says, **Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)**, “***Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.***”

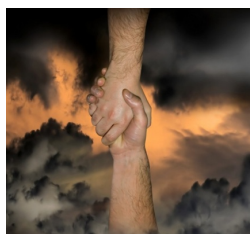
Paul explains to the Galatians that they have “liberty” – they have “*freedom in Christ*” – free to do what is right...



...and to glorify the God who sent His Son to die for each of them that they might have life, and life abundant.

Remember the question a while back that our confirmands and each person who joined the church were asked, **“Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?”**

Paul explains that the freedom and power we have to resist sin and do what is right is given to us, through the Holy Spirit, when we put our faith in Christ...we are saved and empowered by faith...by what God has done...It is God who lifts us up, not ourselves...It is God who gives us the freedom and power to live Godly lives...



Following God’s law, doing the right things, according to Paul, can never make us acceptable to God. The law still has an important role to play in the life of a Christian. The law...

- (1) **guards us from sin by giving us standards for behavior;**
- (2) **convicts us of sin, leaving us the opportunity to ask for God’s forgiveness;**
- (3) **drives us to trust in the sufficiency of Christ, because we can never keep the Ten Commandments perfectly.**

The law cannot possibly save us. But after we have become Christians, it can guide us to live as God requires.

Back to **Galatians 5:1** ([NKJV](#)), *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage”* or as Paul explains a bit later in verse 16, *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”*



Stay focused.

Paul describes two forces conflicting within us...



...the Spirit and the flesh.

When it comes to the flesh, Paul states that we must “*crucify*” these desires...we must stop attempting to live by our own effort and accept what Christ has done for us, His sacrifice, allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us and give us power over those desires that are not of God. He describes one who does not keep their eyes on Christ, gives into the culture, uses their freedom to sin and hurt others...

**Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)** – *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

We must daily commit our sinful tendencies to God’s control...daily crucify them...and draw on the Spirit’s power to overcome those desires of the flesh...

Thus, one who is being led by the Spirit will “*walk in the Spirit*”...their actions will be quite different from those who are using their freedom for their own gain...they will use their freedom to “*love your neighbor as yourselves*”...to give thanks and show gratitude for what Christ has done for them with their actions...their lives will display the fruits of the Spirit...

**Galatians 5: 22-25 (NKJV)** – *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*



Paul wants the Galatians to know that they must keep their eyes on Jesus and the rest will follow...**their actions, living Godly lives, is not the way to salvation, but their actions are an outpouring that flows from the relationship they have already found in Christ through faith...**

...their actions, living Godly lives, is not the way to salvation, but their actions are an outpouring that flows from the relationship they have already found in Christ through faith...

They are focused not on the world around them...they are not easily led astray...but are trusting solely in God's Word...



...focused on the fact that they have been redeemed out of the hand of the devil (Ephesians 1:7); their sins are forgiven (I John 1:9); they are continually cleansed from sin (I John 1:7); they have been made righteous, just as if they had never sinned (Romans 5:9); they are set apart for God (Hebrews 13:12); and because of Jesus they can enter into the presence of God with boldness (Hebrews 10: 19).

They are focused...standing fast in their relationship with Christ...accepting the freedom and power God gives them to do good, to serve and love others...they are walking in the Spirit, their joy coming not from their external circumstances but from within...from their relationship with the Creator...As the psalmist sings, *“In your presence is fullness of joy.”*



Paul is focused...**Galatians 6:14 – “As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead.”**

This is what Paul reiterates in his letter to the Philippians. **Philippians 3: 13-14** - *“I am focusing all my energies on this one thing.”*



FOCUS.

Three questions Paul's letter to the Galatians should cause us to think about...

1. **Are you focused on Christ or do you find yourself losing sight of Christ** in the midst of daily stress, endless tasks, and the false teachings of the surrounding culture?
2. **Do you ever find yourself feeling as if you need to earn God's love**, earn your salvation, that God cannot forgive you unless you check off an endless list of do's and don'ts? **Or have you claimed God's promise made to you in Christ**, salvation by faith alone?
3. **When it comes to the two lists in Galatians 5, where do you find yourself most days?** How would others observe your speech and actions? **Are you giving into the desires of the flesh or displaying the fruits of the Spirit?** Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to empower you to make the right choices or are you simply continuing to try and figure it out in your own strength?

Sit with God this week. Put your faith in Christ and Christ alone.



Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and help you fight against the desires of the flesh, becoming more like Jesus, as you display the fruits of the Spirit.

Stand fast. Stay focused.