

LSB Galatians 5:7-15

*The Horrific Mischief of False Doctrine and False Teachers.*

*7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view. But the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross would have been abolished. 12 I wish that those who are upsetting you would even mutilate themselves.*

Last week the summer doldrums hit me hard. Doldrums is an interesting word that captures the idea. When the only way to get anywhere on waterways was by wind power centuries ago, the area around the equator could be a trap.

It was possible to sail into some area and then be literally stalled for many weeks, waiting for the wind to blow. Just floating in the hot sun for weeks on end. Going nowhere. Stuck, as it were.

We humans can't help that feeling. We want movement. In fact we put too much value on pragmatism. Pragmatics is evaluating progress according to what "works". What do we need to DO in order to get the result we want. What can we do different in order to get this ship moving.

And you'll notice, or perhaps you haven't, that I rarely share my feelings about the progress or movement of this project we call TCC. And there's a reason for that. Pragmatism is the reason.

If I let out a deep sigh and say out loud, we're corporately circling the drain and getting closer to the hole is the only movement I can detect, the ideas quickly get shared;

You know, no one will keep coming if you insist on singing the old hymns.

Contemporary music would fix it. Or, you know, if you would quit hammering on particular cultural sins, people might not leave in droves. Or, you know, maybe if we got a giant TV screen and had some good visuals for us visual learners, that might be a jump start.

Maybe if pastor visited more. That one's probably the most legit of the bunch. But there are others here with far better gifts than I have for visiting.

Lots of ideas. We can't help ourselves. The problem is this. God grows the church. *Not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit saith the Lord.* Zech. 4:6 So we circle the drain while we obediently feed His sheep and wait for Him to do something according to His good pleasure.

The initial image of a ship trapped in the doldrums waiting for the wind to blow is a good one. No amount of pragmatism can make the wind blow. Those sailors are completely helpless floating out there at the equator. They can only wait for the wind.

Jesus used the same illustration speaking with Nicodemus. Nicodemus is in a quandary. What do I do? What do I do!!? He's as helpless as those sailors in the doldrums and Jesus has bad news for him. There's nothing he can do. At all. *The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.*" Jn. 3:8

I have a confession for y'all. I'm a Walter Mitty\* christian. I have dreams of grandeur. I figured it was only a matter of time until we'd have to purchase the old school buildings next to the Mormon church in order to fit everyone in. Why not?

(\*Walter Mitty was a James Thurber character, a silly dreamer ineffectual in real life, living as a hero in his daydreams. Danny Kaye, 1947 movie.)

I grew up in MacArthurs church where God honored His word by exponential growth. I experienced that explosion. It was all God's doing and it was the same word and same method as we have been faithful to

exposit here. You'd go each week and your sunday school room had been moved somewhere else to accomodate the bigger crowd.

The youth group ended up out in an old chicken coop building that was an old pig of a building with a lot of lipstick. The chicken shack. For us it was exciting to see what God would do next. It was a thrilling pace.

Last week there were 8 of us, and our beloved music chairman was in Sitka Alaska and we didn't have a clue so 8 of us sang acapella. If Carmen hadn't been here I would have ditched music altogether. Doldrums. Circling the drain getting closer to the hole.

What did Jesus say? ***I** will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.* Mt. 16:18b

Or how about Acts 2:47b *And the **Lord was adding** to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Or slightly more obscure, what do you think Jesus meant when He said; *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.* Mt. 11:12

Listen, the theme of the book of Galatians is the deadly mischief brought against the Kingdom of God by men who refuse to wait on God to accomplish the Kingdom and force the issue by doing it themselves.

God promised an heir. Abraham waited a long time on God. Abraham floating in the doldrums going nowhere. Wasn't happening. Pragmatism kicked in. Hagar might be a solution. We'll give God some help. God said Abraham would be the father. He didn't say anything about Sarah. Or did he?

13 years later when the angel of the Lord visits Abraham and announces that Sarah his wife will give birth to a son by this time next year, Sarah laughed to herself over the impossibility of it. And Yahweh calls her on it.

Why did you laugh. Is anything too hard for Yahweh?

Pragmatism got us Ishmael and the arab nations that surround Israel breathing slaughter to this day. The mischief of not waiting for God to build His church.

Pragmatism nearly destroyed the infant church at Galatia. Paul is wrong. Paul didn't get the memo. You need to DO stuff to help God out in all this. Why, look at the jews. God's chosen people. They have the law of Moses to DO. Righteousness is something you DO to achieve part of your salvation.

Mischief. We don't like the speed God is moving or the apparent direction He's going so we take matters into our own hands. Pragmatism. Do stuff. See what works.

I remember some years ago when Mike Farris asked me to be an elder at the Baptist church. I obliged. The first thing Mike did was give me several magazines produced by evangelicals and southern baptists and the theme of every article in every magazine was; What's working. What's the latest thing. What's the latest method that's producing results.

That was 10 or 11 years ago and if you investigate, you'll find the numbers have diminished by somewhere around 40% in those years. So much for pragmatism. So much for what's working.

Now Satan is a smart fellow and he has an agenda to undo everything God does. He wants to be god and thinks he could do a much better job apparently than God. And Satan understands fallen human nature. And one of his many many sub-agendas in his grand agenda to win the war on God is to recruit humans into participating in his agenda.

And he's so subtle and clever that often, the people who he's using to his best advantage are duped. They don't understand that Satan is actually using them for his advantage.

The judaizers who had come from Jerusalem with some claimed connection to the christian church at Jerusalem, and perhaps even to James, the Lord's brother who led the church at Jerusalem. They actually thought they were doing God's work. They were on a mission to fix all of the damage that Paul was doing, going from gentile city to gentile city presenting a gospel of grace plus nothing.

Paul was teaching that God had made a way for gentiles to be adopted into His family by merely believing in the finished work of forgiveness purchased through death on a cross of one man, Jesus, God's only Son, who died and then proved His efficacy by rising again from the dead.

And God for His part was pouring out His Spirit on all who would repent of their former sinful life and embrace the Saviour. The gentile believers were experiencing regeneration by the indwelling Holy Spirit. New life had come. And all who believed and received the Spirit were enjoying a vibrant and real relationship with God. Totally apart from Judaism.

So Satan is suffering loss. Every time someone believes, they effectually leave Satan's armies, and are called out of this world, the kingdom authority of Satan, and are freed from the curse of sin that held them prisoners in his realms before. Now they belong to God. Now they are adopted fellow heirs with God's son.

So Satan goes on the warpath against God's elect. God's called out ones. Damage control. If he can't regain the true believers, he can distort the gospel enough that his losses will be cut. Incorporate a new gospel that really isn't a different gospel, it's just distorted enough to cancel out any further new life.

And beloved, Satan has been using that tactic effectively for 2000 years. Distort the gospel so that there is enough confusion within christendom that most of the so-called christians, aren't christians at all. Matthew 13:24 - 30

*24 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. 26 But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""*

Jesus tells us Satan's strategy before the church is even born. Christians who aren't christians. Confusion. False teachers with distorted gospels that produce tares in the wheat field.

With that simple introduction, Paul's words to the galatian believers makes total sense. Paul goes to war against Satan's duped emissaries who have brought a distorted gospel that can only result in tares. Confusion. Christians in name and claim who are devoid of conversion, devoid of new life, devoid of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Faith is replaced with a self generated righteousness by some formula of good works. In this case jewish laws.

Faith is void. Christ is cancelled. It's pretty simple, if you're supplying the righteousness by your own works of your own flesh, faith in Jesus is cancelled. Your faith is in your own good works. Self righteousness. It's identical to the phariseeism that Jesus loudly refused and rejected.

*7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

The first order of defense is to identify who the combatants are. How do you stop the spread if you don't identify the sources. False teachers have

come and introduced deadly doctrines that hinder and limit the church. Make the church impotent. Then wait for the demise. Who is it. Identify the source.

You know John MacArthur is in constant controversy because he names names. He identifies false teachers by name. Shocking behaviour? Really?

*7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

The metaphor of a race. You're running and doing well. Suddenly someone throws a 2X4 into your legs and you tumble into a crippled heap. Hindered. Effectually stalled. Out of the race.

You were a healthy organism reproducing in kind and growing exponentially until something hindered you. Health vanished and sickness replaced it. Next verse is critical.

*8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.*

Jesus said something very simple. Axiomatic. Jesus was big on simple axiom's that stick with you. You know a tree by it's fruit. Mt. 7:15  
*"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits.*

Evidence and conclusion. *7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?* You were in a foot race and someone dropped a net over you and the running stalled. That's the evidence. The conclusion is simple.

*8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.*

It's the old tree and fruit thing. God caused the running. A false teacher caused the running to stall. Add it up. *8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.*

What's to be done? Again, very simple.

*9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

Leaven spreads cellularly. Permeation. Each cell infects the cell next to it until every cell is affected. Sometimes that's good. The Holy Spirit causes life and we go around spreading life everywhere. If the leaven is the Holy Spirit and the true gospel that brings life, we want every cell to infect every other cell it comes in contact with. Good leaven. Healthy organism.

But in modern times, we understand cancer. A cell goes mutant. Destructive. And like leaven, it spreads from cell to cell until the whole organism is sick and death ensues.

In Paul's use here, the leaven is the distorted gospel that is spreading like cancer and killing the organism. You were running well. Someone brought a cancer. The organism is dying. Cancer spreads and ultimately kills. That's Satan's brilliant plan.

What do you do!?? Cut out the cancer. Cut out the cancer. Someone came, brought a disease that's spreading and killing the organism. We can tell from the fruit that this isn't from Him who called you. It's caused your running to falter and fail. It's spreading like a cancer and the organism will die if it is allowed to remain.

Identify the source and cut it out. Remove the cancer. We've got people all over the place who are missing bits and pieces of their bodies because a cancer was identified, and it could be cut out and removed before it spread and ultimately killed the person.

Beloved, that has to happen in the church also. Satan's going to send the false teachers. You can count on it. We need to know our books well enough to spot false teachers and cut them out like cancers.

If pragmatism were the only measure of success, you folks should fire me.

I can't make the wind blow. But fwiw I do a couple of things well. The record of what has been taught from this pulpit is posted on line. I can say with Paul, I did not fail to declare unto you the full council of God.

And a second thing which I haven't had to get out the guns much so far. I feed the sheep and I protect the sheep. False doctrine will meet fierce resistance from this pulpit. But, I can't make the wind blow.

*10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view.*

We have 20 centuries of church history to reflect on what Paul says here. Satan is relentless. We don't have the exact record of the church at Galatia after Paul's letter.

Two possibilities. Everyone recognizes the error and the runner gets stood back up and continues his run.

Or; much more realistically since we understand ahead of time that Satan is going to come out swinging and spreading his tares among the wheat, what normally happens, and you can study church history and watch the process thousands of times, a correction is made and there is a dis-agreement. A split.

A thousand different attacks on the nature of Jesus have come and gone over the years. Church councils beginning in Acts 15 and ongoing for 2000 years.

*10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view.* And here we are, in 2023, aligning ourselves with Paul. studying his letter to the Galatians.

In March, I attended the Shepherds conference. MacArthur was recovering from surgery and an injury from a fall. He was pretty beat up. He's 83 now. But he made it to the final session and spoke of some of the battles he has waged, trying to use his influence to steer the church back on course.

One christian using all of his influence to correct the church and keep it on course. He mentioned several battle fronts in his lifetime that God has used him as a corrective influence. Among them are The Lordship Controversy. Is it imperative in salvation to accept Jesus as Lord, or is that optional. You can have Him as Saviour only and not be under His Lordship.

Next was the ongoing reality check with the whole charismatic movement. He has written 3 books so far combatting the errors of charimatics. Did the sign gifts cease after the church was founded in the first century?

Then he's written a book or two about pragmatism. Ashamed of the Gospel. The mischief of forcing the kingdom to come by your methodologies. That's what the judaizers were doing. Forcing a phony spirituality by our flesh. Duped by Satan to *do* works to cause harm.

*But the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.*

This is a promise. A frightening promise. God is furious with wolves who come and slaughter His lambs. If there are magnitude measurements of the seriousness of some sins compared to others, this sin of harming God's elect, of slaughtering His sheep is right at the top of what is most fearful.

People who do this are building up horrific judgement. James warns anyone, like me, who is called to teach;

*Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, since you know that we who are teachers will incur a stricter judgment.* James 3:1

True teachers are worthy of double honor, according to Paul. But James warns that principal works both ways. Teachers incur a magnified portion from God. Double honor for good and useful teaching, and stricter judgment for poor teaching. How much more so for false teachers? Here's a clue;

*6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. Mt. 18:6*

False teachers that cause God's little ones to stumble would be better served by chaining themselves to a cast iron engine block and taking a deep dive. Drowning is better than disturbing God's elect. Tie a V8 crankshaft to your leg and find some water.

Teaching magnifies the blessing and magnifies the judgement. Because harming God's little ones incurs His fierce wrath. Helping and protecting His little ones brings double blessing.

*11 But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross would have been abolished.*

When we first met Paul, what was he doing? Our first glimpse of Paul was at the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts ch. 7. The jews who murdered Stephen laid their garments at the feet of one Saul. Before he was a christian, Saul was leading the charge persecuting the church. He was crushing the church out. Trying to extinguish the church.

There were enemy lines of demarcation between religious Israel and Christ's church. The church was distinct from Judaism and at enmity with it. If that sounds strange, consider that Israel, because of long centuries of traditions of the elders had drifted far from the simple love relationship with His people by faith that God intended. Judaism was nothing more than a worldly works righteousness system. It had become a false religion.

The church was distinctly separated from religious Judaism. True religion opposed to worldly false religion. God's separated called out kingdom opposed to Satan's cosmos. There is always a sharp distinction between Satan's cosmos, his works righteousness religions, and God's called out from this world church. Distinct.

Jesus calls us salt. Salt is a distinct flavor separate from whatever it's being used to make better. Light in darkness is distinct. We are a city set on a hill. A bright distinct light separated from the darkness everywhere else.

In vs. 11 Paul makes that distinction. Those judaizers who had come were second wave attack on christianity. First wave was outright persecution and elimination of christians. Second wave is a combination a marriage with judaism that effectively cancels christianity. It becomes indistinct with the world.

Hey, if you can get the gentiles to become the equivalent of the jewish false religion with a few christian words attached, the whole thing is neutered. Impotent christianity. Christ steps away from it, just like God stepped away from a judaism that was based in works righteousness. Impotent religion.

This impotent false religion that the judaizers have brought effectively cancels out the stumbling block of the cross. The cross of Christ becomes a masthead on the wall that means nothing. Like the elk heads at the Lodge.

How interesting that Satan's tactic never changes. He effectively neuters the church by having it drop the distinctives. Join with the world and pave over that stumbling block. Ecumenicalism. Christians and \_\_\_\_\_ working together. You fill in the blank. Get rid of whatever the world stumbles over. Join the world. Close the gap. Adopt their music. Adopt their morality.

The war is over. And christianity is impotent. The cancer kills it. Satan wins. What does Paul think about that option?

*12 I wish that those who are upsetting you would even mutilate themselves.*

This is incredibly strong language softened for us by our various english attempts at translation. The word mutilate here is the word used for amputation. Emasculation. I'll let your imaginations run wild, since the

discussion in verse 11 involved circumcision. Paul says I wish they wouldn't stop short. I wish those guys who are disturbing you would . . . emasculate themselves.

It's the same word Jesus used when He said, if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. Pretty graphic. It's also the same word used when Peter cut the gaurd's ear off and Jesus put it back on for the guy. The word describes amputation.

I can't help myself right here but to speak to a current issue. A little side bar. In so-called christendom in our modern world we have the "tone" police. Self appointed christians who tell us to throttle back our tone. You can be a christian and it isn't necessary to trigger every snowflake with your harsh tone. Don't make people mad or uncomfortable on purpose. Ease back on the harshness.

The christian tone police. Twitter folk. Actually there is a biblical call for such a thing. In Ppn. 4:5 *Let your considerate spirit be known to all men.*

The NASB says *forbearing spirit*. NKJ *gentleness*. ESV *reasonable*. We are to temper our speech. In Col. 4:5,6 Paul says; *5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time. 6 Let your words always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should answer each person.*

It's OK to exhort each other over our tone with those outside the faith, and of course even more so for those who are our beloved brothers and sisters. We can back that up biblically.

But, when heresy and false teaching comes into play, the gloves come off. Paul bursts into the scene swinging furiously in the first few verses of this book. He kicks in the door and the guns are blaring. When heresy and false teachers are endangering the sheep, you don't take hostages, you kill the cancer. How's that for mixing metaphors.

It's like what the police have learned about mass killings at schools. Your first job is to neutralize the person with the gun. Apologize later, but for the children's sake, take the gunman down.

Paul expresses perfectly what his wishes are for whoever had brought this danger and destruction upon Christ's sheep. His instinct is perfect. Neutralize the threat. Apologize later.

*12 I wish that those who are upsetting you would even mutilate themselves.*

We do well to copy Paul's passion when it comes to false teaching. Satan never relents. As soon as this threat is crushed, another one will come. Something different from a slightly different angle. Satan has a million of them. Read the history of heresies in the church. Satan just keeps lobbing them in. Like the Palestinians lobbing rockets into Israel.

Listen to Paul's words to the elders at the region of Ephesus, just north of this region of Galatia in Asia Minor. He was on his way to prison. He knew that these beloved partners in the gospel who were gathering in Christ's bride along side of him would never see him alive again in this world. These will be his last words; Acts 20:

*28 Be on guard for yourselves and for 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. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*

Satan never relents. That's his job. He lobbs in bomb after bomb after bomb. And beloved, the war is still in full engagement. In fact it seems to me that the war is heating up.

American evangelicalism is busy trying to achieve peace with this world by diplomacy. Listen to a quote from our State Department.

*"diplomacy has been critical to our nation's security. The Department of*

*State, as the nation's first line of offense, leads the effort to build and maintain relationships, coalitions, and alliances that help create the conditions for peace"*

That's good statesmanship for a nation, but christianity cannot adopt that strategy. Modern Evangelicalism along side of liberal christianity is all about adopting diplomacy with Satan. Build relationships, coalitions and alliances with Satan.

Beloved, that isn't what Paul did at Galatia. We never adopt Rodney Kings quote when it comes to Satan's war against Christ's bride. "Can't we all just get along." When we compromise with Satan in this war, he wins, we lose.

We are to be wise as sepents and innocent as doves. We are to be like Daniel was in Babylon. Everyone who got close to Daniel prospered. Until the day they asked Daniel to do something His God didn't allow. Like bow down to the king.

Then Daniel separated himself and took the consequences. We are separate from this world, this cosmos. We belong to another King. We are prudent. We are circumspect. We are cautious. We are vigilant. We are to be wise as serpents so we can be innocent as doves.

Beloved, that requires some knowledge. If you don't know what this book says, how are you going to be anything but vulnerable.

Tip for the day: "The Chosen" TV series. Pics on the back lots locations of the filming show gay pride flags waving. Be prudent.