

LSB Galatians 6:11 - 18 Paul's Final Arguments

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand! 12 As many as are wanting to make a good showing in the flesh, these are trying to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 16 And those who will walk in step with this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

This morning we come to Paul's closing comments to the Galatians. And as usual for those of us who have studied Paul just a little, the closing words are just as potent and full of depth and promise as all the others. Astounding truths in this final paragraph.

Now the first thing to consider and question, if we are to believe and teach that this book is the inerrant and inspired God breathed authority over every human life, which is exactly what we teach here, the first thing to consider is authenticity.

We know that Paul wrote at least 4 letters to the church at Corinth. We can only account for two of those 4. 1st and 2nd Corinthians. The others are lost to us. So we know Paul wrote things that we don't have, but what about the other possibility? What about people in the first century writing false doctrine and sending that, claiming to be a letter from Paul, so apostolic and authoritative.

Paul alludes to that possibility in his second letter to the church at Thessalonica.

2 Thess. 2:1 *Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

A letter as if from us. Authenticity is important to document because Paul's words hold the authority of an apostle. He is in the rarified group of people that God has used to bring into the world, direct inspired God breathed revelation.

Pauls letters hold the authority of God's commands for the church. Actually over all flesh. Just because the rebellious world rejects God's authority doesn't change the ultimate authority, it only changes the outcome.

So when Paul says, in 1 Tim. 2:12, *But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.* , we may not like it, and it's becoming the downfall of the southern baptist denomination as we speak, but the fact that Paul said that means it bears scriptural authority over christians. We need to understand the context and we need to be obedient. If Paul wrote it, it's authoritative over christians.

So it's important to have some credentials of authenticity. The authority depends on the authenticity. We need to know this letter didn't get to us outside of God's tributary of authoritative revelation.

And it's interesting that during the downgrade of christian liberalism in the last 200 or so years, this is an area that Satan used. Something called "higher criticism". Oooooohhh. That sounds lofty, doesn't it. Higher criticism. Critics above my level. Higher criticism attacked the voracity of the authority of scripture, in many ways, but one of their arguments is that this stuff didn't get written by the authors that it claims. Or in the time frame usually accepted.

That's a direct attack on authority. Oh! Paul didn't write this. Then I don't need to concern myself with authority. Authority is bound up in apostleship. So if Paul goes out the window, so does authority. I can pick and choose what I want to believe and obey.

How interesting that no one questioned authorship until 18 centuries after things were written. It's like Satan knew he couldn't get away with that nonsense at the git go, but it'll fly later on in the 1800's.

How do we know? If authority is actual and required, and indeed, soon it will be the line in the sand for persecution of christians, how do we know these words are the real deal.

My answer isn't going to boost faith in non believers. The answer is that the same God who breathed out His revealed truth to mankind, in many portions and in many ways, is also the God who sovereignly oversaw the transmission of those scriptures, accurately, down through all of the centuries. Opposition to scripture and God's authority would say, "that's a circular argument" and dismiss it. But we accept that by faith.

He spoke it in the first place, and He got it to us, in the 21st century, intact. That's called transmission, and it's a giant area of study for those who are interested. The transmission of the scriptures. Authority is intact because God sovereignly oversaw the accurate transmission of His inspired word, down through all the ages.

And isn't it interesting that Paul always sounds like Paul, and Peter always sounds like Peter, and John always sounds like John, Matthew like Matthew, etc. The voice and personality of the different men God used is present in the writings, but, it's God's inspired Words. Divine inspiration.

And what Paul wrote in 56 AD is in perfect accord with what John wrote, in isolation, on an island, in 96 AD. God breathed.

But another affirmation of authenticity is that 22 or 23 years after Jesus

death, when Paul wrote this, the church was already thinking about the credentials of apostolic authority. And in his first letter, Paul gives us the credential that this is authentic. He IS the author. This IS the real deal. This letter bears with it apostolic authority that requires our obedience.

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand!

Paul had a distinctive way of writing that was his signature. Physically signatory. This is authentic Paul. You can tell by the big ugly scribbly way I write. This is from ME.

Earlier he had said that when he first came to them, because of some weakness, some limitation physically that he stopped there and preached the gospel to these folks, that they received him with such value and sympathy that they would have gouged out their own eyes and given them to him, if that were possible.

Maybe we read too much into that, but it kind of makes sense, that perhaps the reason Paul writes big is because of an eye disease. We know that many of his letters are dictated to an amanuensis who does the writing, and Paul signs his name in big letters at the last, as an authenticator.

Fake Paul's, stand down. If it doesn't have the big scribbly authentic Paul signature, it's suspect. That's one way we have assurance that these authoritative writings had authentication.

At the final salutation to the Thessalonians, Paul writes this; *16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually give you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! 17 The greeting is in my own hand—Paul, which is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.* 2 Thess. 3:16,17

This is important because this first of Paul's letters is a direct response to what? Phony apostles. Fake apostles, who claim they have come from James, who they claim has higher authority than Paul.

Paul didn't get the memo. We're from James. Paul isn't a full apostle. James is. blah blah blah. Phony apostles with phony authority bringing false doctrine that wreaks destruction in the church.

In this final paragraph, Paul is going to summarize for us what real apostleship and real christianity looks like as opposed to phony religion. In just a few words, we get a picture of real and fake. Truth and error. False religion and real relationship with Jesus. This is a summation of his polemic.

12 As many as are wanting to make a good showing in the flesh, these are trying to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

These false teachers, false apostles are after trophies. A good showing in the flesh. Trophies for the false apostles.

Their entire false replacement religion was all about outward show. A form of modified phariseeism that has Christ's name attached to it in order to confuse the vulnerable new christians.

Become jews. Including circumcision. Become like the pharisees. Outward show, devoid of the Holy Spirit. Outward self righteousness. Adopt jewish ceremonial and civil law. In order for Jesus to accept you, you need to become as Israel is. Jew first, then Jesus. And the model is the pharisee's.

The motive is complex. It's in verse 12. *these are trying to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.*

Paul's version of christianity that he was taking to the gentiles was

completely removed from judaism. The church was the church. The jews were the jews. Two diametrically opposed groups that had nothing to do with each other.

God had set the jews aside, after the murder of His only Son. The curtain in the temple that set the holy of holies apart was torn asunder. God has left the building. Access to God is through the risen Christ. The temple was void. Judaism was empty. Gutted. Actually completed in Jesus, but the Jews wanted none of that, for the most part. So God has departed from Israel as an elect nation.

Not only empty, but within half a generation from when this was written, the Romans would come and obliterate the jewish religion. The temple would be torn down, stone by stone, as Jesus had said. And the records of the jews would be obliterated. Wiped clean. Israel would literally run for their very lives.

God was dealing with the church. Israel was out in the cold. So the whole premise here is to join the church to Israel. To make these gentiles, and the church of Jesus, indefinable from Israel of old. Christians would be a sect of judaism. Pharisees, Helenists, Saducees, and christians would just be different sects and ideas within the larger tent.

After Pentecost and beginning almost immediately, the jewish nation took offense to the christians and persecution began. We meet Paul in Acts and he's a zealot for what? Killing christians. Stamp out the christians.

But 20 years later, the christians haven't gone away. New tactic. Blend them into judaism. Make then just another sectarian group within judaism. Persecution hadn't gotten rid of them. Make them respectable. And take the new blend to the gentiles.

You want to be a christian? Great. Christians are just a sect of jews though. You need to be circumcised and become a normalized jew if you want to have Jesus. Begin with circumcision and then adopt the whole law

of Moses, including all of the washings and ceremonies and Sabbath worship, and become like the pharisees, in order to have Jesus. Christians are jews. Just another sect within judaism.

Paul says, that's another gospel, and it's anathema. Accursed. You didn't need any of that stuff in order to receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of the risen Christ. Not only that, if you do go down this road of flesh generated self righteousness, Jesus is of no use to you. Hey, you're doing it yourself. You don't need Jesus.

Part of the motivation of the judaizers was this blended judeo-christian religion that avoided the persecution of being separated and distinct from judaism.

Paul would land in some town, go into the jewish synagogue, preach Jesus, son of God, rejected and murdered by the jewish nation, and Rome, but rightful King and Lord through the resurrection from the dead, and the jews would throw him out and have a riot.

Paul's gospel caused riots. He'd get pummeled by the jews everywhere he went. This new blend, by the false apostles, was jew friendly christianity. World friendly christianity. You don't make enemies with the world. You compromise and the world becomes accepting.

What a great idea. Wonder if Satan will try that strategy again?

The judaizers came to galatia, sold this blended religion of self generated righteousness through jewish law keeping, and paraded their circumcised trophy gentile converts around like prizes. Win win. No persecution required, and christianity and judaism is all one big happy family.

these are trying to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves,

but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

These judaizers are hypocrites. They don't keep the law. But they want to put that yoke around your necks.

They are devoid of the Holy Spirit, and without the Spirit, ultimately, after the outer show is removed, under the fleshy showy mask, are the deeds of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit only happens in people who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them.

The judaizers, like the pharisees, are all outward show but inside they are rotting flesh. They can't keep God's law. But they compel you to be circumcised so they can parade you around like trophies while they boast in your flesh. Phony religion. Phony righteousness. Filthy rags according to Isaiah 64:6 *For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;*

The judaizers had taken souls cleansed by the precious blood of Christ and turned them into filthy rags. If that was possible. Then they parade the filthy rags around like trophy's of judaism. Gentile converts to some quasi christian sect of jewishness.

14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

This is the ultimate true - false comparison. Paul says the judaizers are boasting in their trophies of formerly redeemed people turned into filthy rags. And Paul says, the only thing I've got to boast about, is the cross of Christ, which turned my filthy rags self righteousness religion into redemption.

We don't boast in anything this flesh accomplishes. Our only source of boasting is in what Jesus, who purchased us and owns us, accomplished for us, at the cross.

The cross is divisive. It stands as a barrier. The world is on one side of the wall of the cross. And redeemed people purchased out of the world by the shed blood of Jesus are on the other side of the wall of the cross. The cross is the dividing line between two armies at war with each other. Two opposing kingdoms. The authority to reign of Satan, in this fallen world, and the authority to reign of Jesus, the rightful owner of this world.

We are rescued out of this world. The entire world is condemned. Jesus rescued us out of that condemnation. There is a sense then that the world, back on the other side of the cross, is crucified to the redeemed, and we are crucified to the world. We don't compromise spiritual truth with this world.

The cross is a barrier. You're either on one side, or the other. Condemned or Redeemed. No middle ground. Paul says, I'll boast about that. I'll boast that Jesus loved me and died in my place. He took the punishment I deserved. He shed His blood to pay the debt of my sins. He died, so I could live.

And I'll boast some more, that after He accomplished that, He arose from the grave, and I will spend eternity, in His presence. He did it all. I did none of it. So if there's any boasting going on, I'll boast about my Saviour.

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

This is the summary of the entire message of the book. New creations are something. Everything else is nothing.

Your own flesh transforming the outside, is nothing. But God, dwelling in you, regenerating your dead spirit to life, quickening you from the dead, making you alive together with Jesus, through the indwelling Spirit of God, that's something.

Being filled up with the Spirit, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, things in

your life, changed, that only God can change, from the inside out. That's something.

Being connected to the vine, so that life flows through me, to others; That's something. Having real joy and real peace and real love generated in my heart, by the Holy Spirit living in me, apart from whatever this world is throwing at me, that's something.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2Cor. 5:17

Regeneration. Transformation caused by the quickening from the dead of my spirit that is made alive joined with Christ Jesus, in my heart is the result of Paul's simple gospel of repentance of the sin of this world and belief in the purchasing power and redemption of the risen Christ.

Religion that results in a true regenerated, quickened from the dead, new creation is the single source of real christianity.

It's interesting to compare the case study of the galatians with a later form of liberal christianity that J. Gresham Machen fought against 100 years ago in 1923, with today's call for "progressive" christianity.

Originally published in 1923, "Christianity and Liberalism" is more relevant than ever. In that particular version of the never ending war, Machen compares historic biblical christianity with the modern liberal christianity of 100 years ago and says, whatever it is, it isn't christianity.

The theological liberals of 100 years ago were trying to salvage christianity from itself. They argued, no modern man, sitting in the light of an electric light bulb, can accept and believe the miracles of the Bible.

That stuff was obviously written by goat herders who didn't have the sophistication to know better. So they set out to "de-mythologize" the Bible, and what they ended up with, was a religion devoid of the Spirit. A

religion respectable to the world, with no miracles, including the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is only a great teacher, an example for us.

What you end up with is the same as what the galatians ended up with after the judaizers came and cancelled out the effectual work of Jesus on the cross, and returned those gentiles to a judaistic false religion of works. Dead self generated religion devoid of the Spirit.

Paul declares a distinct line in the sand for all who will effectually abandon his gospel and move to a false gospel that isn't good news at all!

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace! Gal. 5:2 - 4

In Machens day, it's the same thing. False teachers come offering a different gospel in order to make christianity respectable to a modern world, and the result is . . . not christianity at all.

It kept some of the lingo, but the Savior who rose up out of the grave is turned into nothing but a good example for us to emulate. No one is regenerated by that empty powerless gospel. Liberal christianity is sub christian because it stops short of regeneration. New creation.

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Now then, 100 years later, we have all the same things re-packaged in new names. Progressive christianity is trying to make a christianity that is respectable to our 2023 culture. Culturally inclusive christianity.

Again, the progressives are trying to save us from ourselves. Modify christianity before everyone leaves and nothing is left.

But instead of cancelling the miracles in order for christianity to be sophisticated enough for moderns, what progressive christianity has done, indeed the only possible route it could have taken, is to cancel out the authority of the Word of God to say what it crystally clear says.

The result is the same. Jesus is the Book, the Book is Jesus. If you cancel the book, you've cancelled Jesus. No regeneration. What you've ended up with is something short of true regenerative christianity. Progressive christianity is not christian. Those are mutually exclusive terms.

This week we learned that in Oxford England, a student group there at Oxford, published a guide to rate the local churches that are close enough to the college that students might find themselves visiting any of them.

The rating is a "safety" rating. Green green. Green. Yellow. Red. Red red. Green light being safe, and red light being danger. And the basis of the safety is LGBTQ++ friendliness, where a green green church is one that is run by gay people, mostly attended by gay people, and might have a few progressive and accepting cis-gender people in the happy mix.

A dangerous church is one like ours that accepts all of the clear words in this book as the very Words of God, including what they deem as the clobber texts, those that would threaten any and all absolute personal autonomy by suggesting that someone else, is Lord and has authority over your choices. A church that thinks LGBTQ++ is sin that requires repentance in order to become a christian. DANGER!

The bottom line is what Paul just stated in his closing words to the galatians; *15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*

Call us what you want, we will not modify so-called christianity in order to be world friendly, culture friendly, and in so doing, embrace something that falls short of a christianity that requires and causes, a new creation. At

least not on my watch.

The next verse is as if it were written expressly for what I just stated! This is so good for us to hear. We want to march in line with Paul. The words are as fresh to the issues before us today, as they were to the issue Paul was in combat against 1970 years ago.

16 And those who will walk in step with this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Peace and mercy. From God. We desire to be at peace with God and to receive mercy from God. How do we get that Paul? *16 And those who will walk in step with this rule, peace and mercy be upon them*

What's the rule, Paul? The rule is a gospel that results in a new creation. A gospel that doesn't stop short of regeneration. The rule is the simple gospel that Paul arrived with, that upon hearing and believing resulted in repentance, forgiveness, and a relationship with the Trinity by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jesus is Lord of everything. Jesus died, on a cross, for my sins, to pay my debt. Jesus rose from the dead and not only takes my sin to the cross with Him but having risen from the dead, He applies His righteousness to my account.

Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of Christians who have repented of the sins of this world, and believed in His effectual sin bearing and resurrection, He gives us His Spirit as the downpayment for eternal life with Him in the next world.

Repent, believe, follow in the power and help of the Holy Spirit. That is the rule that Paul wants us to walk in step with. Peace and mercy are the results in the regenerated hearts of new creations.

And then Paul can't help himself. He has to take one last poke at these

would be judaizers. I like that about Paul;

, and upon the Israel of God.

Those who walk in step with Paul, those are the real Israel. Not the false religion of phariseeistic jews in Jerusalem. A quasi-christian jewish sect that returns to a false self righteousness of dead empty outward religious show.

That's not the Israel of God. The Israel of God, are those of us who have been adopted into God's family, who are brothers by adoption, with Jesus, and sons by adoption of Abraham. That's the Israel of God who enjoys this mercy and peace that Paul alludes to.

The church, in this age, by adoption, is the Israel of God. The true Israel. That isn't replacement theology. That's the theology of adoption into the elect family. I'm a son of Abraham adopted into the family of Jesus, and made a brother and an heir, with Him. In the church age, I am the Israel of God.

But when the church age is ended, abruptly, at the rapture, God will again deal with His chosen people, Israel, who have survived intact, until this day. In this age, they are not the Israel of God, unless they embrace Jesus as their Lord. They come in the same way we do.

But God has promises to that nation, apart from the church, that will be realized, during the tribulation period. It's exciting to see God's plan unfolding before our very eyes. The jews are nationally intact as a distinct race and people. Waiting for God's judgement, and for a remnant, God's blessing, when they see their Messiah, coming in the clouds, to rescue and save that nation.

17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

The premise of the judaizers was; Paul's not a real apostle. We're sent from James and the apostles at Jerusalem. It was a lie. But never the less, it was their entrance. With a false gospel.

Paul says, you want to see what a real apostle looks like. Let me show you the scars. From countless beatings and 39 lashes. From days and nights lost in the deep. Battered, bruised, and beaten because of Jesus. This is what a real apostle looks like.

Therefore, don't ever cause me any more trouble saying I'm not an apostle and you are. Real apostles bear the brand marks of Jesus, bodily. Battered, beaten, bruised and left for dead. That's the apostle I want to walk in step with.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits, brothers. Amen.

Credentials, Real and Phony Trophy's, real and phony. red, light, church, danger, dangerous, lgbtq++, progressive, christianity, j, gresham, machen, liberal,