

11.03.24

Chapter 6 - Spirit Not Flesh  
Radiates Grace in Sacrifice (vs.17-18)

**Galatians 6:17-18:** From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Well, we come to the end of this wonderful epistle; it is an epistle written to those that were concerned so much with what other people were thinking. Paul is wanting to set us free. The Spirit of God is wanting to set us free. Christ Jesus came to set us free. Galatians 5 is very clear in verse 1 about that, and it begins to speak to those that are held in bondage by the considerations of so many people. The fact of the matter is that we all long to be accepted; we all want to be affirmed. We have this desire to be recognized and perhaps even praised by others, but if you're a follower of Christ, that has to go, not only for the sake of following Christ, but for your own sanity because the more you are concerned about what everybody else thinks, the more it will cause you to go into oblivion. Your mind and your thoughts will begin to go into places, and it will actually put you on a roller coaster ride most of your life because depending on how the people respond to you on any given day will be that which defines whether it's a good day or bad day for you. You don't want to live that way. You don't want to live in the bondage of what everybody else is thinking. So, this wonderful book of Galatians is written so that we would come to the point of following only one, that is Christ, our Lord and Savior. It takes us out of the realm of religion; organized religion, as we would put it, or as Colossians 2 would call it, "self-made religion." As man begins to develop his own ideas about what everybody else should be doing and oppressing them, it was one of the great concerns that Jesus had about the Pharisees in particular, as you come to Matthew 23. He begins to convey that here are those that love to walk in the streets and be noticed by men and they love to wear particular garments so that men would praise them and recognize them as such. They love to sit in the seat of Moses, and they love to make those wonderful judgment calls, and they love to be condescending and critical towards everybody else. It is interesting to me that the people that are the most critical, the people that are the least willing to serve, they are the people that are the least willing to sacrifice; these are the ones that will oftentimes point their finger. Unfortunately, there are whole groups of people that are so unscrupulous that they would exploit the weakness of those that are so concerned about what other people would think. So, in a way, the book of Galatians is written not only to the people that are battling this sense of acquiescing to what everybody else is thinking but also speaking to those that are trying to control people. I mean, control goes all the way back to the garden, doesn't it? Clearly, I've oftentimes thought about the whole scenario with Samson and Delilah, and you don't have to necessarily be in a high position of authority to control people. Delilah looks at Sampson, and goes, "You don't love me. If you don't tell me how to kill you, you don't love me." So, Samson right away sees through it and falls for her. It just shows how easily people are manipulated and how concerned they are, and even people such as David was an individual that was very much concerned that Saul, the king at that particular time, would love him, would care for him, would perceive him as maybe an asset in the kingdom. When Saul begins to try to run after him and kill him, David even turns to Saul's son and says, "What did I do? Why is your dad mad at me?" And you can hear even David when he yells out to Saul, "Why don't you like me?"

People that are so focused on everybody else liking them, ultimately, live a miserable life. It was the grace of God in David's life to bring literally almost everybody in his life that would surround him to reject him. Jonathan was one of the few that wouldn't and God separated him from Jonathan, and what God was doing in David's life was causing him not to put his trust in what everybody else was thinking, but to come and embrace God, and out of that come the wonderful Psalms. We see the passion of the Psalms in which David says, "I realize that all men are liars, but God, You're true." And God oftentimes will do this in our life because He knows our tendency to do this, and the very thing that we think is going to bring us happiness and joy is the very thing that's going to bring us great misery.

The ministry itself, the proclamation of the gospel, is unique. It is a gospel that is not of man. At the very beginning of the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes this, and if you look with me in verse 1, just to remind you, it says this,

(Galatians 1:1) "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)."

What he's wanting to make clear as he goes on in Chapter 1, is that this is not a gospel of men. This is not a religion. This is not of men, because if it was of men, it would be highly manipulative. Men exploit men. They just do that, but this is a gospel of God's love. That's why the word "gospel" literally means "good news." It is a good message. It's not only a gracious message; it is not only a benevolent message but is a virtuous message. It is the goodness of God in every respect, and that's the message that we proclaim; not the goodness of men, that would be religion, but the goodness of God. We point to God. He is the author and perfecter of faith, and He's the focus of our lives. We set our affections on things above; we set our affections on Him. He will keep us in perfect peace if our mind is stayed on him and focused on Him. This is a different way of living. Everybody else in the world is so concerned with what everybody else is thinking and they run their life in that course, but as believers, we've decided to follow Christ.

If you look with me, as long as you're in Galatians 1, he emphasizes this as well, and he says, "Look, I'm amazed that you would leave this wonderful message for a different gospel because somehow, you've become drawn into listening to men again. Because when you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, you said, "I've decided to follow Jesus," as sometimes we use the song, "and I'm not going to turn back." There is a commitment that you made; there is a desire that you had, and you embraced the love of Christ. What happened? All through the book of Galatians, Paul will say, "What happened? What happened? What happened? Did somebody bewitch you? What happened?"

(Galatians 1:6) "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you [fn]by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

(Galatians 1:7) which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

(Galatians 1:8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

(Galatians 1:9) As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

(Galatians 1:10) For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? ..."

And what this message is doing and what our gospel does is it gets us on track with, "Who am I seeking to please? Who am I serving?" Our faith is a faith in God, and it's a relationship with Him. It is not something that we do because somebody else is watching; it's not something we do because maybe somebody else applauds us. We don't

do it for the accolades of men. If in fact somebody is doing what they're doing because somebody is responding to them in some way, they're doing it for the wrong reasons. The one thing that you see, and the one thing that always clarifies whether somebody is following God or not, is that they are consistently following God, no matter whether they get, "atta boy," "good boy," "great job," or they don't get anything. It doesn't matter. Sometimes people will get criticized for doing the right thing, but they continue to do what they know God wants them to do, and in that there is the great peace as well as the great fortitude, because it literally is the Spirit of God that has moved our hearts, that has changed our hearts. If in fact you're listening to man, you're walking, as Paul will say in Galatians, according to the flesh. You're only concerned about how things look on the outward appearance; you're walking according to the flesh, but if in fact you do it with heart, you're genuinely convinced it is the Spirit of God that is moving you, then now you're walking in the Spirit, and he begins to emphasize this.

As we come to this book, we understand that by following Christ we are going to have people that try to manipulate and oftentimes, once again, try to exploit our weakness and our desires because quite frankly, there are people that get very upset when they hear the gospel. I remember thinking, "Why in the world would somebody be upset about good news?" I just never could really fathom that, but then you begin to realize that if in fact, the good news is telling you that you're a sinner, and that good news says you can be saved, but you have to admit that you're a sinner; you have to then humble yourself. If you don't want to humble yourself, then all of these things are going to be repulsive to you. If in fact, you're elevating yourself, you're going to be repelled by the very nature of the gospel, which says, "God is good, not you. He can save, not you, and He loves, not you." And once you begin to accept that wonderful news, then there is true freedom in your life, but people began to be hostile towards these things and they become critical about the very people that are bringing not only the message, but the messenger themselves. It's one of the reasons why you, as a believer, cannot be concerned about what people think. You cannot live there. If in fact you're going to be a witness and a testimony for Christ, you have to say, "That I'm pleasing Him, that's enough." And a wonderful truth that God will not only strengthen you, but His glory will rest upon you, as Peter will say.

So, as we go through this book, Paul begins to stimulate and encourage the people, "Don't listen." In fact, in Chapter 2, he clearly says that there are people of reputation and people from esoteric elite groups that are very condescending and critical on people, and if you look with me in Romans 2, how bizarre it is that oftentimes those very people that are very critical obviously are the very people that are sinning the most. The very people that are pointing out your sins are the people that are living in that sin. In Romans 2, Paul makes that statement. His statement is, "Look, you who are critical about everybody else, you're without excuse. Why are you living the way that you're living?"

(Romans 2:1) "Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself..."

You say something is wrong, but you're doing it, then you condemn yourself.

He makes the statement, if you look a little bit further in Romans 2, as he says,

(Romans 2:20) "a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

(Romans 2:21) you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

(Romans 2:22) You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

(Romans 2:23) You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

(Romans 2:24) For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU" ..."

Here again, you're going to have whole groups that are very hostile towards the kingdom of God and going to be very critical. I have found that the people that are critical of the church are the people that are trying to subvert the gospel. It is that criticism. Look, we know that the church in and of itself is fallible, that it can fail in so many ways, but you're to build up the church. Scripture will always say, "Build up the body of Christ and build up the church." What is interesting is that one of the things that Paul is dealing with specifically are these attacks. He's going around setting people free and people are getting angry because he's doing that. What you do is you need to listen to God. You need to walk according to His Spirit. You need to live according to His way. Oftentimes, people come up to me and they'll say, "Pastor, what do you think I should do?" I say, "I'm not going to tell you what to do in that particular situation. I'll tell you something that's right or wrong. If something's wrong, I'll tell you, 'That's wrong. You don't want to do that.' but in living your life, you need to turn to the Lord. I shouldn't run your life. The Lord needs to run your life, and you need to walk in such a way that you're listening to Him in everything that you do." This is a walk of freedom. If I gave you a list of "dos and don'ts," you'd be under law and under bondage. Once again, Paul's trying to free them from this.

His emphasis in Galatians 2 is, "There were those trying to subject you; they were trying to compel you to do certain things," and he said, "That they're of reputation makes no difference to me. Stop worrying about what everybody else thinks." Paul had to deal with this, and I want to show you an interesting point or a couple of passages.

One is found in 1 Corinthians 9, as you can hear Paul defending himself, and that's one of the things I want you to see within the text. You can hear him defending himself in many of these passages.

(1 Corinthians 9:1) "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?"

(1 Corinthians 9:2) If to others I am not an apostle..."

Which obviously some were saying, "I don't think he's an apostle." We read about Paul, and we have a history of so many of the epistles and our thoughts about Paul, that our thought oftentimes is that Paul never had any problems in the sense of being accepted as an apostle, but he was always battling that because he was saying things that were going against the status quo, was going against religion, so to speak. It is the fundamental way that God has always worked. He has not, and rarely if ever, worked within the realm of the organized and the status quo. He works in the realm of, well, let's see, He calls on John the Baptist; this guy is eating locusts and wild honey and doesn't even like cities. So, here he is in the middle of nowhere, and God goes, "You're going to be the perfect guy to announce Me." And then, when He calls men to come alongside of Him be His disciples, who are the men that He calls? I mean, He literally passes the ivory towers, and He goes 70 miles, maybe to the north and goes into the region of Galilee, and He says, "You fisher guys." When God has the announcement of the Christ child being born, who does He announce it to? Shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. I mean, the wise men are still trying to figure it out, "Where is He going to be?" These are the smart guys, and I can just see the shepherds, "Oh, we saw him about a year or so ago." That would be kind of embarrassing, but all the way through, you see God working in such a way. I mean, even His parents, He's going to have them live in Nazareth, which can anything good come out of Nazareth? Everything that God uses, and Paul will state this in 1 Corinthians 1, "God chooses the weak and the foolish things to confound

the wise; the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no man should boast." Because man would boast in his wisdom; he would boast in his strength.

So, if you look at 1 Corinthians 9,

(1 Corinthians 9:2) "If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."

His point clearly is, "I know that I'm not recognized by a lot of people." We wouldn't think that Paul was having a battle with that.

If you go a little bit further in 2 Corinthians 10, you'll see that same kind of difficulty that he's wrestling with, and he talks about the fact to the Corinthians, these are Greeks, they're very lofty in their perception of the physical. So, God had Paul beat up, dragged out, looked a mess; oftentimes when he's with Greeks, you know who love the physique. So, you just see this guy humped over, barely walking and all beat up, and he goes, "I've got good news for you."

(2 Corinthians 10:10) "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.'"

Not because he was not a good spokesman, but probably because his mouth was so distorted by all of the beatings.

(2 Corinthians 10:11) "Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present."

Paul is saying, "I'm the same person." But man looks so much at the outward appearance that it's difficult for him to see beyond that.

So, you come to 2 Corinthians 11, and he begins to talk about false apostles that come in; deceitful workers. Of course, they disguise themselves and they come in highfalutin and oftentimes very critical and condescending and hurtful.

(2 Corinthians 11:18) "Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also."

(2 Corinthians 11:19) For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

(2 Corinthians 11:20) For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face."

Here again, I always thought it was interesting, I took some courses out of Cal State, things like that, and I go in these classes and some of these professors were so full of themselves, and they just loved embarrassing the students and showing themselves to be far superior to everybody else. When they would do that, all the students go, "Isn't he great?" I'm going, "I don't get it. Why do you like this guy so much?"

He enslaves you, he devours you, takes advantage of you, he assaults you. He hits you in the face.

(2 Corinthians 11:21) "To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison..."

"Because I actually cared for you. I actually showed love for you. I was kind to you." "Oh, we don't like Paul. He's too nice." But he goes on, he says, "But you know my tag is not these things." "Well, what is it that you're recognized by Paul?"

(2 Corinthians 11:23) “...in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

(2 Corinthians 11:24) Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

(2 Corinthians 11:25) Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.”

I don't know if you've ever been in the ocean in the middle of the night, it's not a fun feeling.

(2 Corinthians 11:26) “I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

(2 Corinthians 11:27) I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Oh, is that all? I mean, what he's conveying is that there's a different standard of recognition when you follow the Lord. The whole issue as we come into this is that man likes to develop these kinds of hoops that you jump through. If you join this club, if you look like this particular group, if you wear these particular garments, then you're accepted; if you've given this much money; if you've helped in this particular way, they give all these standards and these hoops that you jump through you; you have to say so many “Hail Mary's.” You have to do these kinds of things and all the way through, what religion does is it builds hoops for you to jump through, and the thought is, “So, I have to do that in order to be a follower of God.” And what man does is he allows man to define his path. I oftentimes tell people, “Get in Scripture. Find out what God wants you to do.” Should you submit to authority that's in the church? Absolutely, as long as they're following Christ and pointing to Him. But in Galatians, the concern was that people were telling people to do things that were only going to hurt them, and only a way of manipulating and using them in this.

So, as you come to Galatians 6, and we look at the closing arguments of Paul and the way that he actually closes the book, it initially sounds almost like he's saying, “Leave me alone.” It almost sounds like he's saying, “Enough! I've had enough of you guys.” Because the way that it reads is,

(Galatians 6:17) “From now on let no one cause trouble for me...”

Yeah, that's what it sounds like, but it couldn't be him just giving up; it couldn't be him throwing in the towel; it couldn't be him going, “That's enough. Leave me alone.” Because it would go against what he actually has already said in Galatians 6,

(Galatians 6:9) “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap...”

So, it couldn't be him doing that. The point is, what is he actually saying in this? What we see clearly given to us in this passage is he's revealing how manipulative man can be in telling him what you have to do in order to be right with God rather than pointing the person to the Lord and to His way. People oftentimes they ask me, “How do I know I'm following the Spirit? How do I know I'm walking in the Spirit and not walking according to the flesh?” Well, here again, you go back to Galatians 5, if in fact there's immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, you know, I don't care what somebody says, if they're walking around angry all the time, they're not walking in the Spirit. If they're walking around criticizing people, they're not walking in the Spirit. If they're not serving people selflessly, they're not walking in the Spirit because the evidence of the spirit is,

(Galatians 5:22) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

(Galatians 5:23) gentleness, self-control...”

I mean, there's no need to tell anybody to do anything. There's no law anymore because they're walking according to the desires of Christ. It is interesting the way he ends this chapter,

(Galatians 5:26) “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

See that, envying, challenging; some people are just upset all the time. They're just miserable people, but the reason they're miserable is because they're not in the Spirit of God, not being directed and led. The point of the matter is that man has his way of trying to tell you what it looks like to be religious and it might be that he might say, “Well, you attend this church, you do this many things,” and he has a list, perhaps, that he gives you, but the true standard is very different than what man tells you.

There's an interesting passage in Luke 7, if you turn there with me. My hope is after Galatians to go in the Book of Luke, we're actually going to take a short sabbatical in the sense that I really believe we need to go through a short series dealing with the battle for the mind because there's so many things battling for our minds and our thoughts, and we're going to be going into that and then we'll go into the Book of Luke. But if you look with me in Luke 7, one of the things I appreciate so much about the Book of Luke is that humility and the necessity of it, and we oftentimes use the phrase, “nobility through humility,” as you go through the Book of Luke, and you begin to realize that it is the humble that God exalts.

(1 Peter 5:6) “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you...”

So, Luke 7 really kind of capsulized this in this Gospel of Luke all the way through. So, as you come to Luke 7, it starts off with this centurion that has a slave and there's a need, there's a concern for life and he's been involved with worshipping the God of the Jews. He even built a synagogue for the Jews. So, he sends many of the Jews to go to Christ and say, “At least appeal to Him for me.” So, they go, and they tell Him, “This is a good man. Would You heal this guy that he wants to be healed?” And Jesus starts heading in that direction. He then sends another group of people and says, “You don't need to come. You just say it and it'll be done.” And Jesus goes, “In all of Jerusalem, I haven't seen this kind of faith.” Now, the reason why Luke puts this in this chapter is he wants to reveal that it's faith in Him that He's looking for. It's not the whole religiosity, which you're going to see a lot of religiosities in Jerusalem, but it's somebody that will put their trust in Him completely with all their heart. So, he's going to start off with the centurion. I mean, this guy is Roman, he's not even in the family, so to speak.

It goes on and you see this literally being the theme of the book. Here again, you see Him curing many people and their afflictions of all these things. John the Baptist then kind of sends out an entourage and goes, “Look, I just want to make sure that You're the guy.” So, he sends out this and pick up in verse 18,

(Luke 7:18) “The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.

(Luke 7:19) Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?”

(Luke 7:20) When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’”

(Luke 7:21) At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.

(Luke 7:22) And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM."

Now, the point of the text is clearly one of the things that John was hoping for and looking for is that the Messiah would come on that great horse and literally upturn all of the evils that was there in the world, especially the Roman Government and Herod, I'm sure, was part of it, that He would make things right. I think initially our thoughts are, "Let's just get the bad guys out," you know? But God says, "The affirmation that I am who I am is revealed by what I do and the fruit that I bear." Jesus will say you'll know them by their fruit. Well, the world is already given standards, what you should do, what it looks like to be religious. It doesn't look like anything that they're saying. Stop listening to man. What you need to do is look like Christ. If you're following Christ, the work that you do will actually bear fruit. You see some people there in church, I've seen some people, they've had opportunities disciple people, but they never really disciple anybody. They had opportunities to lead people to Christ; they never really led those people to Christ. They might say that they're very religious and very much a follower Christ, but I'm going, "I don't see it. I don't see it." You will know them by their fruits. So, Jesus says, "Just tell him what you saw. Tell him what you see." One of the statements that He makes in the Gospel of John, He says, "The works that I do should be enough testimony; the things that you see Me do." It is in this context that we realize that the tendency of man is once again to perceive what people should be doing and what religion should look like and what godliness looks like, but we don't think right.

So, it drops on down and it says in the passage,

(Luke 7:30) "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves..."

They were refusing to repent.

"...not having been baptized by John."

And Jesus says this,

(Luke 7:31) "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?"

(Luke 7:32) "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'"

In other words, "You didn't beat by our drummer. So, you must not be religious."

(Luke 7:33) "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!'"

(Luke 7:34) "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

In other words, the way of the world is that they want to define what's best for you, and people that are so bent on pleasing others are easily swallowed up by these kinds of people, these that demand, "You've got to fit into my way of thinking, and if you don't, then you're not really following God." You're never going to be free if you're watching man and concerned about what he thinks. What's wonderful about this chapter is it ends with this woman from the streets. A loose woman comes in and she begins anointing the feet of Jesus with her tears confessing her sins before Him. Jesus turns to the Pharisee, whose house He's eating at, and He says, "Look, I walked in the door, and you didn't do anything to wash My feet or care for Me. You haven't shown really any affection towards Me, but this



woman since the moment she walked in has not stopped.” He ultimately ends with, “The one who's forgiven much, loves much.” and that's how he ends the passage.

(Luke 7:50) “And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Now, the passage is telling us what God is looking for. He's looking for that heart of faith. He's looking for something genuine.

Simon the Pharisee, in this particular passage, is full of pomp and circumstance, but he has no heart in him. He has no desire to love God. God is looking for those that will love Him with all their hearts and be willing to go no matter where for Him; they would give up everything for Him. It is that point that Paul brings us to, and if you come to the end of Chapter 6 and as we come to the end of this wonderful Galatians, we begin to realize that Paul is calling us to not listen to what everybody else is saying and he turns to the people, and he says, “Stop telling me what makes me legitimate.” That's fundamentally what he's saying, “Because I know what makes me legitimate before God. First of all, He sees my heart.” But then he gives this interesting picture, so to speak, because we're called to take this flesh and use it for God. We don't walk according to the flesh; we walk according to the Spirit.

In fact, just to remind you, go back to Galatians 2:20,

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

In other words, my flesh is directed by my Spirit. The world is moved by the flesh to do what they do. So, it's the flesh that actually directs their spirit, but it's the Spirit of Christ that makes us different. It's the Spirit of Christ that directs us to proclaim Christ in our flesh, so that Romans 12 would say, you present your bodies a living sacrifice, and Paul will say to the Corinthians, “Therefore, now glorify God in your bodies.” What he's stating by that is, though the world has these hoops that you jump through and tells you what you should do in order to look righteous or good, God says if you have the Spirit of God within you, the evidence will shine forth from you. I mean, look, everybody needs proof. They need evidence. They need proof that what you're saying is true. It's that proof that literally draws them to Christ. The Spirit of God uses us to be a light to shine. So, by virtue of our flesh doing something. So, the question is, well, what exactly does our flesh do if the Spirit is in control?

Here's the answer. Look with me in Galatians 6:17,

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

Ah, evidence. Proof. What is the proof? What is the evidence? Well, he uses the word “brand-mark,” which is the word “stigma”. The word “stigma,” sometimes taken in other categories, “stigmata” or “stigmatized,” but it actually comes from a root word, which refers to being pierced or actually, perhaps, cut. It has the sense of making an incision or a scar. Now, one of the things we read in 2 Corinthians was that Paul had suffered hardship, he'd been beaten, been stoned. So, I could just see him, I mean, he's a walking advertisement. You could probably walk up to Paul on any given day and maybe accuse him of not being sincere, he'd go, “Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah?” So, he bears on his body the brand-marks. What makes this interesting is that the word “stigma” was more used for people that were either servants or in the armed forces. So, if they were a soldier, they would be actually branded or marked on their forehead or on their hand, and it would actually say on their forehead or on their hand who their commander was for the soldiers; for the servants, it would say, who their master was, and they'd have them branded.

One of the things that you read in the Old Testament, I think it's Leviticus 19:28, that it'll actually say you cannot have tattoos. Well, what it's actually talking about are these kinds of incisions, and you can't cut yourself. Well, what he's talking about are these incisions that were made because people would sometimes voluntarily mark themselves with the god that they worshipped. So, Leviticus is not necessarily talking about tattoos in general. What it's talking about is you've marked yourself as a follower of these gods by virtue of putting their name on your hand or your forehead. So, his statement is, "By virtue of me suffering for the sake of Christ, you could see very evident who I follow." A person that is genuine and his whole heart is in something would be willing to suffer. There are some that are unwilling to suffer.

If you back up,

(Galatians 6:12) "Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ."

Yeah. They're afraid to be persecuted. So, they're going to go the easiest route to be accepted as righteous. I mean, if Paul were to come up to us today and stand up at the pulpit, and go, "Come follow me. This is the life you're going to live." How many people would say, "That's for me"? But that shows the sincerity of his heart; it shows the desire of his heart to be willing to sacrifice and only the Spirit of God could do that. I'm not talking about cutting yourself. I'm talking about being abused by others for the sake of the cross. There's a big difference. Clearly, religion would do all the whole cutting themselves and all those kinds of things that would demonstrate or holding back food from themselves, or we can think of all the things that monasteries do, but that's religion. Our faith is that we'll follow Christ, even if it costs something and sometimes that cost or brand-mark will be that the people around you are not going to like you anymore. I mean, for some people that hurts more than a bruise, but you're going to follow Christ. You're going to obey Him. Look, you're going to bear brand-marks upon yourself.

There's a passage in Revelation that gives a parallel to this, and if you look with me in Revelation 13, we have the day in which one is going to come rule on the earth, the great deceiver, and he's going to require that you have a brand-mark. The way that it reads, if you look in the passage,

(Revelation 13:14) "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life."

(Revelation 13:15) And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

(Revelation 13:16) And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead."

What's the question? "Who do you belong to?" That's what that is.

(Revelation 13:17) "and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell..."

I see a lot of people cave when it comes to their groceries. I see a lot of people cave when it comes to income. Some cave to health care, but it's amazing what we're unwilling to give up for doing the right thing.

"And he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name."

(Revelation 13:18) Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six."

"666," which once again, is a fullness of testimony, 3 sixes, which demonstrates that no matter how much man tries to elevate himself, he'll never be seven, he'll never be God, and you begin to see clearly the weakness.

But I want you to follow up on this,

(Revelation 14:1) "Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads."

"Don't bother me. I bare the brand of Christ Jesus on me." You go, "What was that brand?" It's that brand that says, "I'm willing to die for this." Because this is actually happening in the middle of this evil when taking control of the earth, and they stand up on the Mount of Zion and they begin to sing. "Why aren't they afraid? This one controls the earth. He already says, 'You're going to die if you don't have my mark,' and yet they're singing." I oftentimes thought, what an easy target. I mean, it's one thing maybe they sing in a little cellar, "Jesus loves me," it's another thing you get on the mount, and you begin to sing, 144,000 of you. I mean, it's just a really easy target, but they know they're safe and it doesn't matter because they're with the Lamb. That's the Spirit of Christ. Paul says, "Don't bother me anymore. Don't ask me to jump through your hoops. I'm not going to jump. I follow Christ. I'm willing to suffer for Him, are you? I'm willing to die for Him, are you?"

Come to the end of 2 Corinthians and in many respects, Paul touches upon this as well, and really, I would say even ask us to ask ourselves. One of the great things about 2 Corinthians 12 is Paul is conveying that the thorn in his flesh is so that he would not exalt himself.

(2 Corinthians 12:7) "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself..."

He had seen so many great things but taken up to the third heaven, I mean, who could say that? His Ultimate declaration is, "It's through my sufferings that I'm identified as a follower of Christ." What would it take to stop you from following Christ? See, that would be your mark. That would be the mark, if in fact you stopped, of the world, but if you wouldn't, that would be a mark identifiable that everybody could see.

Paul will write this,

(2 Corinthians 12:14) "Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you..."

That's a mark of being a Christian. He's not concerned about what somebody else is going to do for them. They're not upset because somebody doesn't do something for them. He's following Christ, the only person he wants to please is Christ. He wants to build up; he wants to help others. Look, I know as parents, you probably love to hear your kids go, "Thank you, mother and father. You're so wonderful. Everything you do for me, I can just see how sacrificial you've been throughout my three years of life." But the bottom line is that you are parenting them regardless of whether they do that or not. That's what a parent does. His statement is,

(2 Corinthians 12:14) "...for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children."

(2 Corinthians 12:15) I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?"

The world is saying you need to look up to people that are beating up on you, that are demanding things from you and Scripture says, "Why don't you love people that love you? Why don't you follow those that follow Christ?"

He says this,

(2 Corinthians 13:5) "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"

How would you fail the test? You're not willing to sacrifice. You're not willing to follow Christ no matter what, you're not willing to give of your life for the people of God, you're not devoted to the body of Christ. Romans 12, "Present your body as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God. Be devoted to one another in love, without hypocrisy." That's the love of Christ. That's the mark of Christ on you. Test yourself. Do you have the mark? Paul says, "Don't bother me anymore. The mark is clear. I'm willing to die. I'm willing to suffer." He states that to the Ephesians, "I've been imprisoned for you." He states that in 2 Timothy 2 to Timothy, and he says, "Join and follow me. Suffer with me. I do all the suffering for the sake of those that are God's children." And that's the heart of Christ. That's the evidence that Christ is in us. We have the Spirit of Christ in us, and when there's the Spirit of Christ, the expectations of man don't bother us anymore. They just don't.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us and Your willingness to suffer in our place; even though You were despised and rejected by men, You would come to earth and say, "It is My will to do the will of My Father." We clearly see that You are not motivated by what others think, but only what is right, and only what is good before Your Father. Scripture tells us that we now have the Spirit of Christ within us that cries out, "Abba! Father!" We have this desire to only please You. We're not seeking to please men, and we have the scars to prove it. We have the fidelity to prove it. We have the consistency to prove it. We have the manifestation of love that never quits, no matter how people respond, to prove it. We let the scars prove themselves. They speak for themselves.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Scripture is asking you to stop listening to man, to stop worrying about what everybody else thinks. We have a good news. It's spoken and given to us by God alone, and God says, "If you'll live this way, if you'll follow Me, if you'll receive Me, your life will change. I'll be with you. I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I'll bless the things that you do, and I will literally cause all things to work together for your good. You're going to go through hardship, but I'm going to see victory in it." Do you believe that? It's a different way to live. Discard these things of man. Embrace the love of God.