

THE RIGHT STUFF

GALATIANS 6:11-18

GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. DEFECTIVE CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE THEMSELVES.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH (VS 11)

A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE IS POWERFUL.

- A. IMPORTANT ADVICE
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II. THE SELF-INDULGENT TOUCH (VS 12-13)

DEFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS SELF-SERVING.

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AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IS SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP.

- A. ALIVE IN CHRIST (14-16)
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The Right Stuff

Galatians 6:11-18

Here we are at the end of Paul's letters to the churches throughout Galatia. I think we can safely say that the major themes in this letter are: 1. We are saved by grace through faith. And 2. We are now free to love and serve God and one another.

In other words, everything that we think, say, and do should be done out of our love and gratitude for what God has already done for us. The Christian life is a love response to God's love for us.

Paul summarizes these thoughts in the closing part of this letter. However, he seems to do this by again trying to lay out for the local churches what is at stake. Remember, he has been contrasting what life according to the flesh looks like with what life according to the Spirit looks like. In other words, he has been contrasting the bondage of the flesh with the freedom in the Spirit.

In his closing remarks, he is going to take one more run at convincing his people not to give up their freedom to false teachers. And so, he will contrast authentic Christian leaders with false leaders.

It takes a lot of humility, love, and sacrifice to be a good authentic Christian leader. Too often, leaders and teachers are as immature as the people they are trying to shepherd.

You all remember that church I used to pastor, the one that was so tough. (How tough was it?)

It was so tough that the leaders and teachers were as immature and uniformed as the congregation.

The very first week I arrived at the church, I went to visit the children's church. Trying to engage the children, I said, "Who tore down the walls of Jericho?"

After an awkward silence, little Timmy shouted out, "It wasn't me!" I didn't panic, and quietly I repeated, "Come on now, who tore down the walls of Jericho?"

The teacher took me aside and whispered to me, "Look Pastor, Timmy's a good boy. If he said he didn't do it, he didn't do it. I believe him."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Later that day, I told the Christian Education director what happened. He frowned and said, "I know we have had trouble with Timmy in the past. I'll have a word with him."

By now I was totally distraught. I went to the chairman of the deacon board. I told him the story and how the teacher and the Christian Education Director responded.

The deacon listened patiently and smiled, "Yes, Pastor, I can see your problem. But I suggest we simply take the money from the general fund to pay for the walls and leave it at that."

Good leaders need to be humble but they also need to be informed as to the truths of Scripture. Paul is going to lay out for us what authentic Christian leaders look like.

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Usually, when Paul signs a letter, he usually just gives a little blessing. But his closing in this letter is a lot more involved. He is going to take a run at these false teachers one last time and he is going to passionately plead with his congregations not to be fooled by them. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. DEFECTIVE**

CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE THEMSELVES. This is an interesting strategy. Paul is going to try and expose the danger of the false theology by exposing the motives of the false teachers. It almost seems as if Paul was calming down, but now he gets all fired up in closing.

In verses 11, he adds a little bit extra of the personal touch. **A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE IS POWERFUL.** In Army chaplain training, the instructors used the phrase, "ministry of presence." If you wanted to be an effective chaplain, you had to be where the soldiers were. If you were with a field unit, you should be out in the field with them. Good chaplains lived wherever their soldiers were. I was stationed with good units and bad units. What happened in the bad units was that the Generals and Colonels would abuse their power and influence by directing the operations from a hotel or a place of luxury while their soldiers were living in tents in the field. In the good units, the generals, colonels, and entire leadership team spent the time in the field with their soldiers. When I had the opportunity, I always packed my tent and hiked out to the field with the unit I was assigned to. Being there, with the soldiers makes it easy to minister to them because you understand their situation first hand.

It is the same with good pastors, teachers, and leaders. They spend time with their people. Paul had visited these churches and spent time with them.

In the first half of this verse he lets them know that he has some important advice for them as the letter closes. Keep in mind that Paul used an amanuensis to write letters. In other words, Paul usually dictated the letters to a personal secretary. He would write the letter for Paul, and Paul would put a little personal touch in the end. Here Paul says, "See what large letters I use." There are two possibilities here. Either he is writing in bold letters because his eyesight is failing badly or he wants to emphasize what he is writing. It would be like us typing in all capital letters or boldfaced type. I think it could be either one of those options or both. We he is going to say is extremely important and we know he was suffering physically. At any rate, what he has to say here is important.

That is reinforced by the fact that in the second half of this verse he adds his personal note. Usually what would happen at this point in the dictation process, Paul would take the pen from his amanuensis and write, "Love and blessings, Paul." That's would it would look like in our day.

However, Paul picks up the pen to sign off on the letter, and then a wave of emotion suddenly comes over him. Impassioned, he takes the pen and he starts to write furiously. He is like a parent dropping off their child at college. The child is all settled in and as the parents get ready to leave the child and go home, all sorts of things run through our minds. And like a flurry, all sorts of advice, thoughts, and emotions come out of our mouths. Paul picks up the pen to sign the letter, and then all sorts of thoughts and emotions overwhelm him.

Good pastors and leaders love God and love one another. I don't know if you sense it, but each week I get up here and preach, I want to convince you of God's love for you and the importance of living a holy life. I enjoy spending time with all of you. I want to know you, your stories, and your families. **A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE IS POWERFUL.**

The first thing that crosses Paul's mind is that his people are in danger of being enslaved to false ideas of religion. And so in verses 12-13, he emphasizes that the only touch they will receive from these false teachers are a self-indulgent touch. Paul wants to prove to his people that these false teachers are not genuinely

interested in them. The bottom line is that **DEFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS SELF-SERVING.**

Look just how self-serving they are in the first half of verse 12. If we read this too quickly, we may miss this point. The method false teachers use is usually heavy-handed. The NIV says these teachers are trying to compel the people to be circumcised. Other translations say the teachers are trying to force the people to be circumcised. One of the ways you can identify a false teacher or a legalistic Christian is that their method is dictatorial. They want to force their view on everyone they come in contact with.

And when people are trying to force you into something, it is usually not for your benefit but for theirs. Look how verse 12 starts out. The reason they try to force others to think and behave according to their wishes is so they can make a good impression on others. These false teachers wanted people to look at them as if they were righteous, holy, and very pious. Since they were probably Jews by birth, they were already circumcised, and they probably ate kosher from a very young age. So they wanted to force their cultural, social, and religious laws on to all these new Christians. And so they would emphasize the fact that they were circumcised and kept kosher. They wanted people to be in awe of their religious commitment. The problem was that they appeared to be really committed Christians. What they were in reality were phonies.

Look, there are many false Christians and Christian leaders that fit into this category. They do and say things in order to impress others with how spiritually superior they are. They keep some rules themselves and they judge everyone else on how well they obey these rules. They would like nothing better than to have a lot of little clones of themselves running around the church. I think that one of the biggest threats to the health of the church is a lot of people running around pretending to be holy and then forcing others to keep certain rules of behavior.

It can be hard to identify these people as false teachers or hypocrites because from the outside their actions look really religious. What you don't see is a lot of humility in them. You don't see an attitude that values the other's Christian journey. They don't exhibit a lot of grace. They are not very good at extending mercy to others. They are absorbed with what offends them.

The next motive Paul wants to expose concerning the false teachers is their motive of self-preservation in the second half of verse 12. Not only are they motivated by a lust for recognition, they are motivated by fear. In this particular case, they are motivated by fear. They don't care how much suffering they put others through; they just don't want to suffer much themselves. Here was the issue in the churches of Galatia. Jesus had been crucified as an enemy of the state. The Romans persecuted new religions. But Judaism had been given a legal religious status by the empire. For the time being, it appeared as though people looked at Christianity as a sect of Judaism. Circumcision was one the main distinguishing marks of a Jewish community. It was so noteworthy that the Romans kind of looked down on the Jews for being circumcised. So out of their fear, these false teachers wanted to have the whole community circumcised so that they would not draw attention to the fact Christianity was actually a new religion.

Secondly, there were Jews going around persecuting Christians as heretics. They said that Paul was preaching against Judaism. Paul said that circumcision could not save a person. In fact if a person was getting circumcised for the wrong reason, it may actually alienate them from God. These false teachers were not part of the church in Galatia. It seems as though Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians were

getting along nicely before these legalistic guys came along. These legalists did not want to face the persecution of the hardcore Jewish zealots.

They did not want to suffer for their faith. What are we afraid of? Fear of who or what keeps us from publicly living out our faith in Christ? Are we afraid what others may say about us? Are we afraid people may look down on us? Are we afraid to be humble and admit that you are not as holy or righteous as we lead people to believe? In other words, are we afraid people see us as we really are? If that's the case, we should really question whether we have faith in Christ at all and absolutely, we should not be leaders.

In verse 13 Paul continues to expose the motives of false teachers by pointing out they are all about self-promotion. We have said this time and time again that pride will do us in quicker than we can imagine. False teachers and fake Christian leaders are not interested in helping people become more Christ-like. They are interested in promoting themselves. It seems that these teachers were not really interested in true religion. They were only concerned about the outward appearance. They were forcing people to be circumcised and keep kosher. Perhaps they were forcing them to celebrate Passover and other Jewish holidays. But nowhere do we read about these false teachers encouraging people to take care of the poor, forgive those who have wronged them, or extend mercy to those who are not so acceptable. No, they were interested in forcing people to outwardly conform to the Jewish laws. They got a lot of joy in comparing with others, how many they forced to submit.

Look, it's the same in the Christian life. Most legalistic, immature, false teaching Christians want to promote themselves. They may even couch it in religious language. Here is how a pastor may phrase it, "We feel so blessed that we have added 100 new people to our church." I'm sure that I have to be very careful how I speak of ministry because it is very easy to get caught up in talking about God and promoting myself.

This is not always the case, but it happens often enough to point it out. Look at the first phrase in verse 13. Paul says, "Not even those who are circumcised obey the law." It has been my experience over the years that legalistic Christians, false teachers, and leaders in the church with wrong motives, almost always get caught up in some sort of sexual immorality or mishandling of money. They appear to be humble but in reality are very arrogant. It is this arrogance and pride that allows them to justify their own bad behavior while at the same time demanding others live perfect lives. I am amazed to see how many times Christian leaders end up in sexual immorality and stealing money. I guess I understand it, but not really. One thing I have personally noticed is that the sin I hate the most in others is usually the sin that I struggle with in my own life. For example, proud people can't stand people who come off as proud. And what is even more amazing is that when caught, the false teacher becomes even more proud and sounds more religious. They say they repent, but I'm not so sure true repentance takes place, because they have a very wrong view of Who God is in the first place.

If we find ourselves in a leadership position, then we need to very visibly accountable and humble. If we catch ourselves focusing on other's behavior or sin, then we should be frightened. The most frightening thing is when we get a few people to follow us; we are even able to fool ourselves. Genuine humility, accountability, the readiness to extend grace, mercy, and forgiveness, are qualities that can lead us to avoid becoming false Christians. The point for Paul is this.

DEFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS SELF-SERVING.

In direct contrast to the false teachers come the true teachers. Just as we could identify false teachers by the methods and motives, so too can we identify true leaders by their attitudes and motives. In verses 14-18 we are introduced to believers who have received the Jesus touch. In other words, **AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IS SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP**. True believers are solely motivated by love for God and love for people. In verses 14-16 we see they are thankful to be alive in Christ. Watch the difference in motive and method here. In verse 14 Paul points out that he has nothing personal to boast about and there is nothing more for him to gain personally. The only thing Paul would boast about is that Jesus accomplished everything for him on the cross.

This really is a new concept for us to grasp. We may affirm it verbally, but it really is a hard concept to swallow. Can you more than mouth the concept that we are dirty, filthy, good for nothing sinners headed for hell? Can we truly look at ourselves and see how evil and unacceptable to God we really are? Can we honestly say there is nothing good in us? Or do we want to say, "I'm not that bad? I'm not so evil? Yes I have my faults, but I'm not so bad." Unless we come to understand and accept how utterly evil we are, ... unless we come to understand and accept how utterly hopeless we are to escape the bondage of sin, Satan, and death, ... we cannot ever understand the message of the cross. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. That's not just some figurative statement by Jesus; that is reality. Paul understood that all his education, all his social, religious, and political accomplishments were garbage. Unless we can say that, then we can never understand the beauty, the power, and the magnitude of what Jesus did on the cross for us. We have a huge cross that hangs in our sanctuary. In fact, it is the focal point of the sanctuary. The cross of Jesus Christ is what gives meaning to every portion of our life. I have several academic degrees. I have had a very successful career. I have received many awards. It's all garbage. The only one thing that matters to me in life is that Jesus died, ... and that He died for me. Here is the bottom line for me. You could take away anything from me and life would still make sense. You could take away my degrees, my accomplishments, my money, even my friends and family. Life would still make sense. But throw the body of Jesus into the street and prove that my Messiah did not raise from the dead, and nothing in life would ever make sense for me. If Jesus didn't really die for my sins and raise from the dead, I really don't want to live anymore. Life would be meaningless for me. That is the only anchor I have.

I'm guessing it was the same for Paul. He goes on to say that in the cross of Christ, the world was crucified to Paul and Paul was crucified to the world.

Here is what Paul was saying. First of all, the world could no longer provide Paul with any sort of meaning. The world's evaluation of him didn't matter. It didn't matter that the world would have judged Paul to be extremely influential and powerful and successful. Paul didn't care. The world no longer had any control over Paul. He rejected the world's ideas and evaluations.

And Paul was dead to the world. Paul considered himself to be dead to the lusts of this world. What would a dead man do with money? What kind of appeal does a dead man have to the opposite sex? Dead people don't need sex, money, pleasure, or accolades of any kind.

The world had no hold over Paul and Paul had no interest in the world. That is true of us too. When we placed our faith and trust in Christ, the world's evaluation of us means nothing. Christ has judged us to be righteous and part of His royal family. And because we have kingdom minds now, the things of this world have no hold on us.

Those are facts. However, we can become confused if we allow the world to evaluate us. If we buy into the world's standards and assessments, we will become confused and desire the things of this world and the approval of this world. Good Christian leaders have a firm handle on the fact the world is crucified to us and we are crucified to the world. I say that very emphatically, while realizing this is no easy task. We who are Christian leaders must constantly remind one another that we are dead to the world.

In verse 15 Paul reminds them that being religious doesn't mean a thing. It's all about being a new Creation in Christ. I don't care if people are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, or whatever. That is not the question. In fact, it doesn't mean anything if you come to Devon Church, were baptized, and participate in all the programs. Those things do not mean a thing. The only thing that matters is if we have given our lives to Christ in faith. If we have, then we have received the Holy Spirit and have new hearts. Listen to how Paul describes it in his letter to the Corinthian church:

¹⁷What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

¹⁸All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him" (II Corinthians 5:17-18 / NLT).

Let's get back to that question we posed weeks ago when talking about salvation by grace through faith. Someone may say, "Well if you have received Christ, then you can go ahead and sin all you want?" The real answer comes in the form of another question, "Why would you want to go on sinning?"

If we do not grasp what Jesus did for us personally on the cross and how that event applies to our lives every moment of every day, then we can never be grateful. And if we cannot be grateful, then we cannot truly love God. And if we cannot truly love God, then we have never become a new creation in Christ.

If I truly love God, every moment will be lived out of gratitude for what He has already done. How we start to gain victory over sin is when we live in love. We ask ourselves, "How could I commit this sin when Christ has already died for me and loves me?" Love is the characteristic of a new creation in Christ.

People who live in love and acknowledge the full impact of the cross of Christ in their lives live with peace and mercy oozing out of them. They are able to enjoy an incredible amount of peace in their lives no matter what circumstances they find themselves in because they know they are right with God and that God loves them.

They are able to extend incredible amounts of mercy to those around them because they know how much mercy God has extended to them. The principle is the more we recognize God's love and mercy towards us, the more we love Him and the more love and mercy we are able to extend to others. The measure of an authentic leader is how much he or she is motivated by love and how much mercy they are able to extend to others.

In verse 17 Paul reminds us that authentic leaders are identified with Christ; not just generally identified with Jesus but specifically identified in the sufferings of Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His love for us sacrificially. Paul was tormented, tortured, beat up, and bounced around so that he could bring this beautiful message of freedom to people. Jesus died so that we could be free from the bondage of sin, Satan, fear, and death. Jesus came to make us right with God. He paid the price and the only

way to be free is to place our faith in Jesus. Paul gave up everything to bring the beautiful Gospel message to these churches in Galatia. And now people were coming in trying to confuse them and lead them back into the slavery of fear and religion. We can imagine Paul taking off his shirt and seeing all the scars he had from beatings and saying, "You have caused me enough trouble." I have given everything I have to set you free. I can't do any more. Jesus suffered so you could be forgiven. I have suffered to make sure you got the right story. There is no more I can do. Make the right choice.

He ends the letter in verse 18 by offering them the love of Christ. He ends by saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters." That is what the letter to the Galatians is all about. It's about grace. We are saved by grace through faith. In other words, we are made right with God when we receive the finished work of Jesus on the cross for us. We live by grace through faith. In other words, the Holy Spirit will manifest His fruit in our lives as we surrender to Him. For authentic Christian leaders, it's all about Jesus. **AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IS SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP.**

Live free. Living free is all about gratitude. Jesus was having dinner with some religious people. All of a sudden, a prostitute enters the house, starts weeping, and pours perfume on Jesus' feet. The religious people become indignant. Here is how Jesus responds:

"⁴¹Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—five hundred pieces of silver[□] to one and fifty pieces to the other. ⁴²But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"

⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said. ⁴⁴Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. ⁴⁶You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. ⁴⁷I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love" (Luke 7:41-47 / NLT).

As we allow ourselves to realize how much we have been forgiven of and continue to be forgiven of, the more we fall in love with Jesus. The more in love we are with Jesus, the more we will be able to love others. **GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. DEFECTIVE CHRISTIAN LEADERS SERVE THEMSELVES.**

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul has encouraged us to live according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. George Goodman tells this story:

"A father and his little son were walking in the springtime when the display of early beauty was at its best. 'What is gravitation, Dad' asked the boy. 'Gravitation son, is the law or principle of nature by which everything is drawn to the earth. If you drop a stone or an apple, the earth draws it down and so it falls, as the say, to the earth.' But Dad,' objected the lad, 'look at these lovely tulips. They all go upwards. They are not drawn down.'

'True, my boy; but that is because another law is at work in them, the law of life, which is stronger than the law of gravitation and has freed them from it as long as they live. If I destroy the life of one by cutting it off, it falls to the ground.'

We were dead in our sins. The laws of sin and death were at work in us. When we placed our faith in Christ, we came alive. As long as we continue to live under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit, we will continue to live: eternally, ... and never die.