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Sermon Notes

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The True Israel: God's New Creation

Galatians 6:11-18

What a stunningly beautiful world we live in! How ravishing are its beauties!

I have seen some amazing scenery in my life:

The rocky coastline of Maine, especially the rugged beauty of Acadia and Mount Desert Island where you can see Bar Harbor and its lobster boats from the awesome perch of the Precipice Cliff

The crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean on the northern coastline of California—Pacific Coast 1, with a dramatic highway running atop rocky cliffs that seem to overhang the shoreline

The imposing Redwood Trees—the tallest named Hyperion, measured at 379 feet high—stand in awe-inspiring majesty; some redwoods living to over 2000 years old

The Japanese coastline is similar, with the fascinating Uzoshio Naruto whirlpools swirling around

The Karakoram mountains are the second highest in the world, on the border between Pakistan and China... I've seen K2 from the air, and many peaks over 20,000 feet high; the Hunza valley may be one of the most breathtaking I've ever seen—surrounded by these mountains, irrigated by water from the Hunza River which flows through it

I've seen the power of a typhoon lashing the coastline of Japan in

I've seen the quiet understated beauty of an old apple farm in the Smokey Mountains of Western Carolina in the fall, with its radiant foliage glistening against a piercing blue sky of autumn

I've seen the towering majesty of the Swiss Alps, snow-capped year-round, and the terrifying rocky north face of the Eiger on which many skilled rock climbers have met their fate

I've seen the half-dome of Yosemite, and the belching of steam from Mt. St. Helens four years after it erupted

I've seen the piercing blue waters of the Florida Keys south of Miami, near where my father grew up... and the white sands of St. Martin in the Caribbean

I've seen the silent heat of the Rift Valley in Kenya, and a similar landscape in Arizona as we drove to see the Grand Canyon

I've felt the mist that hovered over the Niagara Falls and drove for hours through the rolling grassy hills of South Dakota... those grassy hills looked a lot like far western China in the hours that we rode a rattling bus en route to Kashgar

This magnificent planet is full of the glory of God... full of the evidence of the wisdom of God in its creation—the earth is BEAUTIFUL... but it is also under a curse from Adam's sin:

Romans 8:19-22 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

The creation is waiting to be brought into the GLORY of the New Heaven and the New Earth—the glorious liberation of the NEW CREATION.

The New Creation is God's final masterpiece... a perfect world where there will be no death or corruption; no futility; no decay; no devastation of earthquakes or volcanic eruptions or hurricanes or landslides or tidal waves or tornados or droughts or erosion or global warming or global cooling or floods or any of the myriad plagues that scar the present creation

The NEW CREATION cannot be seen with the eye when it comes to the planet... but it is already happening in God's children who have heard and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

This is the final sermon in our series in Galatians... and we come to some amazing words from Paul...

Centerpiece of this passage is a new definition of Israel... and the understanding of who this new Israel is

I. Peace and Mercy Promised to those Who Walk by a Rule (vs. 16)

A. Infinitely Rich Treasure: Peace and Mercy with God

1. The gifts of the gospel can be summarized in many ways...
2. Here Paul chooses two precious words to sum it all up: PEACE and MERCY with God

Galatians 6:16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

3. Peace with God: immeasurably valuable!!

a. The opposite is to have Almighty God as your ENEMY... as we once did

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

b. We hated God and God hated us in how we were thinking and living

Romans 8:7 the mind of the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

c. BUT NOW... God has reconciled us in Christ and has poured out His wrath on Jesus as our substitute...

d. We now have PEACE WITH GOD... God is at peace with us!!!

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

e. How valuable is it to not wake at night in terror that the sovereign God of the universe is out enemy, seeking to destroy us, to cast us down, to bring us to justice for our sins

f. How does a fugitive from human justice sleep at night? How terrified are the most wanted list of the FBI as they lie down to sleep at night? Do they wake at the slightest sounds? Thinking that all the resources of the Federal Government's crime-fighting agency are against you is daunting...

g. How then to think that the God who controls everything in the universe is your enemy?

Deuteronomy 32:35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them

Daniel 5:23 you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

Isaiah 37:28 "But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me.

Psalm 139:7-8 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

Amos 9:2-3 Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down. ³ Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from me at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them.

- h. But instead of sudden terror, now there is PEACE WITH GOD!!!
 - i. God is no longer hunting you down!!
 - j. When you wake in the morning, you find peace
4. Also MERCY...
- a. How valuable to experience the MERCY of God... that God will not repay you what you deserve
 - b. That God will actually HEAL YOUR DISEASES and RAISE YOU FROM THE DEAD!
 - c. That God will grant you mercy after mercy

Lamentations 3:22-23 Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end. ²³ They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!

- 5. What is PEACE and MERCY from God worth to you?

^{ESV} Matthew 16:26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

- B. It's Given to those Who Walk by a Certain Rule
 - 1. According to this verse, Peace and Mercy are given by God to those who walk by a certain rule
 - 2. To "walk" = to live every moment, to live out your daily life
 - 3. The "rule" = "kanon" in Greek, standard of measurement
 - 4. There is a pattern by which we must live our lives if we are receiving peace and mercy from God
 - 5. There is a certain MINDSET leading to a certain KIND OF LIFE that results from and result in PEACE and MERCY from God
- C. Understanding that Rule is the Key to Understanding Galatians
- D. Two Religions: Salvation by Self-Effort or Salvation by Grace

1. In the end, there are only two patterns of religion in the world!!
2. There is salvation by self-effort along the pattern of some moral/religious law
3. Or there is salvation by grace as a gift from God

John MacArthur:

“Those two approaches to salvation are the only two that exist, the only two forms of religion that man has ever known. There is grace/faith/Spirit religion known as Christianity, and there is law/works/flesh religion, which identifies all the rest. God’s way is the way of grace, working through man’s faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. All other ways, no matter how seemingly different, are an attempt at salvation by fleshly works of the law. It is as if, on the market shelf of world religions, there are hundreds of attractive packages with a great range of shapes, sizes, labels, claims, and prices. But inside all of them is the same tasteless, nutritionless sawdust of WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

E. Immediate Context: Understanding that Circumcision Means Nothing... Only a New Creation

1. The “rule” that characterizes those who receive God’s peace and mercy:

Galatians 6:15-16 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. ¹⁶ Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

2. Those who live by the rule that circumcision and uncircumcision are SPIRITUALLY MEANINGLESS have forsaken forever salvation by law... they have turned their back on GLORYING IN THE FLESH... they glory in the cross of Christ... they put all their trust in Christ’s work on the cross... they walk by grace through faith; by the power of the Spirit, they are living as NEW CREATIONS... for so they are; they know that PEACE and MERCY were given them as gifts of grace at the BEGINNING of their Christian lives... and they will receive them every day of their lives as continual gifts of grace
3. That’s the RULE by which they live
4. We will find out at the end of the sermon that they are the ‘Israel of God’... God’s chosen people in this world

F. Focus: In What Do You “Glory”??

1. “Glory” = to boast in... to exult in... to celebrate and to trust in
2. Either we will glory in the flesh or we will glory in the cross of Jesus Christ

II. Glorifying in the Flesh (vs. 11-13)

A. Paul's Large Letters

Galatians 6:11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

1. Scholars have noted that this was probably because of his poor eyesight
2. It was customary for Paul to dictate his letters to a scribe, a secretary, who would write his thoughts for him
3. Perhaps at this moment, he grabbed the pen and put his personal seal of ownership on the letter
4. He does this same in 2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 3:17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

5. This letter had been pouring out of the passions of his heart; he wants the Galatians to know how personally invested in these truths he is!!
6. He finishes with the same passion

B. Paul's Final Passionate Attack on the Judaizers

Galatians 6:12-13 Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.

C. Essence of their Doctrine: "Those Who Would Force You to Be Circumcised"

Acts 15:1 "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:5 "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

1. Compulsion to be circumcised... compulsion from underestimating the work of Jesus Christ on the cross
2. Christ's death on the cross was insufficient for salvation

D. Glorifying in the Flesh (vs. 13)

1. The Judaizers were boasting in the flesh
2. "flesh" = aided human self-effort

3. It means to BOAST that you SAVED YOURSELF by your own efforts to obey the law
4. Legalism is using present or future obedience to the Law to pay for past disobedience to the Law
5. God HATES all this self-effort because it results in arrogant boasting in his presence!

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Zephaniah 3:11 On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill.

6. ALSO: They would boast because they had won them over, converted them to their view; it would confirm their own arrogant work-righteousness!!

E. Goal #1: Make a Good Appearance

Galatians 6:12 Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

Like all legalists, they are playing to a human audience... not to God

They must APPEAR GOOD... since they are not actually perfect

Matthew 23:25-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. ²⁷ ¶ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

So legalistic people have to LIE about their obedience to the standards, because no one can keep them perfectly

Legalistic communities are all like whitewashed tombs... on the outside they appear to people as righteous, but inside, they are full of corruption

But God searches the HEART:

1 Samuel 16:7 Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

Revelation 2:23 I am he who searches hearts and minds

F. Goal #2: Avoid Persecution

Galatians 6:12 The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

1. The legalists are the bitterest persecutors
2. And if they are not celebrating you, they will ATTACK YOU
3. These zealots are the ones who hated Paul and his doctrine

G. Reality: They Don't Obey the Law Either

Galatians 6:13 Not even those who are circumcised obey the law

The Law is PERFECT, and any violation of it means condemnation by the justice of God:

Galatians 3:10 "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

All the Law... All the time... or you are CURSED!!

III. Glorifying in the Cross (vs. 14)

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

- A. Paul's Serious Pledge: "God forbid!!!"
- B. Long Meditation on this Last Week
- C. Every Good Thing... and Bad Thing That God Uses for Our Good is Cross-Bought!!
- D. "I Don't Deserve This, Lord!"
- E. What Does It Mean to Glory in the Cross?
- F. Who "Glories in the Cross?" Crucified People!

G. How Is the “World Crucified to Us?”

H. How Are We “Crucified to the World?”

IV. All That Matters: A New Creation (vs. 14-15)

Galatians 6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

A. This Is the Essence of Galatians: Salvation By Sovereign Grace

B. The Link Between Galatians 6:15 and Galatians 5:6

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith working through love.

1. Circumcision and uncircumcision are now SPIRITUALLY MEANINGLESS
2. The command to circumcise boy babies on the eighth day is now OBSOLETE
3. This is a symbol for obeying the ceremonial laws of Moses... the very thing the Judaizers were seeking to force the Gentile converts to Christ to do
4. So... what does count spiritually in the sight of God?
 - a. 5:6 “what counts is faith working through love”
 - b. 6:15: “what counts is a new creation”
5. These should be seen as EQUIVALENT... a different way of saying the same thing
6. The sequence in salvation of these is this
 - a. Gospel message proclaimed
 - b. Hearing the gospel
 - c. Regeneration: NEW CREATION!!!
 - d. Faith: a new heart, able to “see” the invisible light of the glory of God
 - e. Justification: God declares the sinner not guilty... God imputes the sin of the sinner to Christ, and the righteousness of Christ to the sinner
 - f. Adoption/Indwelling by the Spirit
 - g. Faith working through love: that means a transformed character resulting in a lifetime of WORKS done in obedience to the MORAL LAW of God

(love God with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself)... but done
IN LOVE BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT!!!

7. Simply put... SOVEREIGN GRACE RESULTS IN A NEW CREATION,
RESULTING IN FAITH RESULTING IN LOVE RESULTING IN WORKS
8. This is the Astonishing Power of the Cross... the Power of a New Creation by
God

C. "New Creation": Already and Not Yet

1. Old Creation: God's intelligent and beautiful design... damaged to the core by
man's rebellion
2. New Creation: God's plans to build a new universe around redeemed people
from every tribe and language on earth
3. Already: Our redeemed souls... evidence is the indwelling Spirit and a
transformed life
4. Not Yet: Our redeemed bodies and a redeemed world

a. Predicted by Isaiah

Isaiah 65:17-19 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

Isaiah 66:22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure.

b. Predicted by John

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:10-11 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

c. Yearned for by all Christians

Romans 8:18-24 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?*

5. This is the consummation of the NEW CREATION God will make by the power of the cross...

D. Has This Happened to YOU??

1. If you are a Christian:

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2. Same as being “born again”:

John 3:3 *Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

1 Peter 1:23-25 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever."*

3. God has made your soul as fresh and clean and pure as the New Heavens and New Earth will be

a. The New Earth will be radiant with the glory of Christ... shining and glowing; it will be this earth, I believe, only completely free from sin and decay; it will have hills and mountains, growing things, the beauty of flowers and trees and lakes and rivers; the aroma of fragrant gardens, and the expanse of vast valleys filled with produce; you will stand on hills and just gaze for long periods of time at the breath-taking beauty of the New Universe God has made as a home for you

b. So also the New Jerusalem will be radiant... shining with the glory of God in Christ... clear as crystal, with spectacular order and beauty, colors beyond description

- c. The people of God will be there, from every ethnic group on earth, glorious, shining like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father
 - d. God will dwell in the midst of the City on a throne, with the River of Life flowing clear as crystal down the center of the street
4. Our SOULS are as beautiful to God NOW as the New Heavens and Earth will be then
 - a. God sees justified believers as NEW CREATIONS in Christ... perfectly righteous in His sight
 - b. We are morally pure positionally in our justification... we are radiant with the imputed righteousness of Christ, and to God, we are perfectly beautiful!!
 5. Has this happened to YOU?? Are you clean in the sight of God through faith in Christ? Are you glorying in the cross of Jesus Christ alone? Have you abandoned any hope of salvation by works? Are you disgusted by the mere idea of glorying in the flesh... in self-effort to earn God's favor by your achievements? Do you see that you really do deserve HELL, and that Jesus has given you everything you enjoy in life by the purchase of His precious blood?
 6. Do you know that you are a New Creation in Christ???
 7. If not, COME TO CHRIST NOW!!!

V. An Amazing New Definition of "Israel" (vs. 16)

^{NIV} Galatians 6:16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

- A. Incredible Statement by Paul to Close the Epistle: The Blessings of "Peace and Mercy"!!
- B. Working Through the Translation Issues

1. Option #1: Paul is defining the "Israel of God"...

^{NIV} Galatians 6:16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

In other words, in the New Covenant, the true "Israel of God" is made up of people who follow the rule that circumcision means nothing, but a new creation in Christ is everything...

So... Gentile believers are members of the "Israel of God"

2. Option #2: Paul is giving separate blessings...

ESV Galatians 6:16 And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

OR... a little different:

CSB Galatians 6:16 May peace be on all those who follow this standard, and mercy also be on the Israel of God!

C. Why I Think Paul is Giving a New Covenant Definition of “Israel”

1. Paul has been advocating a whole new way of life in Christ... and a whole new understanding of the people of God
2. Essential to that is that justification is by faith alone, apart from works of the Law
3. That means that Gentile believers in Christ are already acceptable to God by simple faith... they don't need to become Jews, they don't need to be circumcised
4. Conversely, Jews who put their trust in obeying the Laws of Moses are no better than pagans!!

Galatians 4:9 But now that you know God-- or rather are known by God-- how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

[“Gentile believers” who were converted out of paganism by the true gospel, who were then turning to the Judaizers’ false gospel were “turning back” to what they were doing before... unbelieving Judaism is PAGANISM in God’s sight]

5. Key assertions:

Galatians 3:6-7 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 4:28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

6. Supporting statements in other epistles

Ephesians 2:14-15 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh

the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace

Romans 2:28-29 *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.*

Romans 11:17-18 *If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸ do not boast over those branches.*

7. Also... Paul calls them “the Israel of God”... I suppose to contrast with “the Israel of the flesh”

D. Implications: All Believers in Christ (Jew and Gentile) Are the “Israel of God”

1. All the beautiful and as yet unfulfilled salvation promises made in the Old Testament to Israel are fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 1:20 *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.*

2. We are now God’s people... every bit as much “children of Abraham” as are the ethnic Jews who are believers in Jesus

3. So when we read awesome promises made in the Old Testament, we can take them as our own:

Jeremiah 31:31 *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*

Jeremiah 31:33 *"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

This is spoken of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews

E. Yet... God Still Has Purposes for Ethnic Israel

1. Have to be careful not to go too far!

2. Paul shows that God still has plans for ethnic and as yet unbelieving Israel

Romans 11:25-27 *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it*

is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

VI. Final Words from Paul to Us (vs. 17-18)

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

A. Paul's Life of Suffering Took a Toll

1. He speaks of the actual wounds he had in serving Christ
2. His list of sufferings in 2 Corinthians is staggering:

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

3. These were real beatings and they left both physical and psychological scars
4. But Paul considered these sufferings to be LIGHT and MOMENTARY compared to the glory that will be revealed in him!!
5. BUT he uses the credentials of his suffering to silence his critics!! LET NO ONE CAUSE ME TROUBLE!!
6. And he calls his wounds the "marks of Jesus"

Colossians 1:24 I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

B. Paul Yearns for the Grace of Christ to Be With His Brothers in Christ

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

1. Grace is God's settled determination to do us good in Christ who deserve eternal wrath
2. Like in all his epistles, Paul ends by praying that God's grace would be with them... the continual flow of God's power to finish their salvation

C. Final Applications:

1. Come to Christ!!
2. Walk by the rule that all that matters is a New Creation
3. Continue to be vigilant against legalism... AND license!
4. Understand that the New Israel are believers in Christ... both Jew and Gentile...and that all the promises made to Israel are fulfilled in us
5. Thank God for all the courageous suffering that was necessary to get the gospel to us
6. Grace be with you all!