

Three Traits of Christian Service

Galatians 5: 7-9; 13-15

The epistle to the Galatians was actually written to several churches in the region of Galatia. Many believe that some of these were among the first churches that Paul established on his first missionary journey. It is evident that Paul held a strong desire for the church to prosper.

The churches in Galatia had become influenced by the legalistic teachings of the Jews. They had begun trading the liberty of salvation for the demands of the law. Paul expresses his displeasure in their reversion to legalism and abandonment of the true teachings of the gospel, [1:6-7 – I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: \[7\] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.](#) They had once been a shining light for the glory of God, but now were entangled in the mire of false doctrine.

The problems the Galatian believers faced may differ from the problems of today, but the remedy for these problems remains the same. In the verses we've read, Paul gives instruction for avoiding the lure of drifting from the truth of the gospel. He describes [three traits](#) that ought to be found in every believer. If we can ensure that we possess these [traits](#), our lives will be much richer and more prosperous for the Lord. I want to preach on: [Three Traits of Christian Service](#).

I. The Longevity of the Believer (7-9) – These churches were built upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, but their doctrine had become tainted with the views of false teachers. It is important for every generation to hold fast to the truth of the gospel. Anything that isn't consistent with the gospel of Christ must be forsaken. We deal with much of that in our day, (legalism still exists, the ecumenical movement, denial of the deity of Christ and His blood atonement, etc.). We must do all we can to ensure the longevity of our service unto the Lord. Let's see what we can learn from the Galatian churches.

A. A Past Remembrance (7a) – [Ye did run well.](#) Paul remembered a time when the Galatian churches were successful and prosperous for the Lord. He likely remembered a time when they were sold out unto Him, with the church being filled with believers. They were known to serve the Lord consistently regardless of outside influences. Their lives were consumed with a zeal for the Lord and the church was a mighty influence in the world, reflecting the grace and mercy of God.

- Can you remember the excitement of being a new born babe in Christ? You were so overwhelmed with what Jesus had done for you that you wanted the world to know. Life now had a different perspective and you couldn't imagine every growing weary of the race or letting up for

the Lord. That type of zeal and commitment is essential if we are to continue for the Lord. If you ever lose it and are unable to regain it, your service will suffer, and likely fade away.

B. A Present Reproach (7b) – [Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?](#)

A once prosperous and vibrant church had faded into obscurity. They were no longer a significant influence in the world. The testimony of truth they once held was no longer evident. What could've possibly happened to hinder their work for the Lord? Paul was amazed that in such a short time the churches had turned from the truth and were heading in the wrong direction.

- We must be careful to avoid the hindrances of life in our walk with the Lord. This has the idea of *“being cut off in a race, or having our path obstructed so as to interfere with our progress.”* I wonder if we are running the race that we used to. Are we as committed to standing for the truth of the gospel and the glory of God as before? Have we compromised our stand to gain the favor of the world? What does Jesus see as He looks upon the race that we are running?
- I don't want to allow the lure of the flesh or the pressures of life to hinder my walk with Christ. I don't want someone to say, “Wasn't he a preacher once? Didn't he used to go to church and talk about the Lord? I wonder what happened to the man he used to be!” Consider where you are right now.

C. A Persuasive Reminder (8-9) – Here Paul reminds them of their obligations. Their concern was not of this world. He reminds us of:

1. Our Calling (8) – [This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.](#) They were reminded that the doctrine they were following and their lack of service was not of the Lord. They were part of the body of Christ and were expected to uphold the truths of His gospel.

- This is a great reminder for us as well. We have not been called of the world. We are not here to please the world or submit to its demands. We belong to the Lord and are obligated to live for Him every day and in every way! All that we are and all we ever hope to be is in Christ and Christ alone. [Acts 4:12 – Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.](#)

2. Our Consecration (9) – [A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.](#) Paul then speaks of the nature of leaven. It is always mentioned in regard to sin. Once leaven is introduced, it spreads throughout the entire loaf. Sin cannot be played with or dabbled in. It always defiles, even if it is perceived as a small amount. Once sin is introduced, it spreads until it contaminates the entire body.

- We are called to be a holy people, separated from the world and unto the Lord. The longevity of our service will be greatly hindered if we fail to live consecrated lives! [Col. 2:8 – Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.](#)

I. The Longevity of the Believer (7-9)

II. The Liberty of the Believer (13) – Paul now turns his focus to religious liberty in the Lord. This is a doctrine that is wonderful for the Christian, but it must be shared in its proper context. Notice:

A. The Delight of Liberty (13a) – [For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty;](#) Paul reminds them of their relationship to Christ. They are born again, [brethren](#) of the faith. The Jews were teaching a doctrine of legalism under the law. The matter of circumcision was still being taught as mandatory for acceptance to God. He wanted to remind them of what they had in Christ the Lord. They were no longer under the law, but under grace.

- The law declared that man must do something for God and grace reveals that God did everything for man. I rejoice that I am no longer bound by the law, but have been set free in Christ my Lord. My righteousness is dependent on the blood of Jesus rather than my ability to maintain the law of God. We would never be able to keep the holy law of God. [Jam.2:10 – For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.](#) We are free indeed in Christ!

B. The Danger of Liberty (13b) – [only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,](#) Along with the encouragement of liberty must also come a warning against its abuse. Believers have liberty in Christ. We are no longer bound to live under the law, but that liberty must not be used as an occasion to sin. The grace of God is no license to indulge in carefree sin.

- Many have the attitude that they can do as they please and as long as they ask forgiveness it will be OK. This is a dangerous philosophy. One who believes and teaches such doctrine practices heresy. Salvation cost the Lord His own life. He gave His very best upon the cross for our sin. If we are truly saved, there will be a desire to please the Lord and live for Him.
- It is impossible to live above sin, but the Christian cannot indulge in sin and feel good about it. Clearly one is not in a right relationship with the Lord if he feels as if the grace of God is just an opportunity to indulge in sin. Paul dealt with this in [Rom.6:1-6.](#)

C. The Duty of Liberty (13c) – [but by love serve one another](#). Rather than using liberty as a license to sin, it must be used as an opportunity to serve. Rather than a desire to satisfy the flesh, there should be an overwhelming desire to serve the Lord and others. We have been set free from the bondage of sin and are expected to use that liberty as an occasion to be used of God.

- Can you imagine the world that we would live in if everyone had a desire to serve others above the desire of pleasing themselves? I have received the truth of the gospel. Jesus now dwells within my heart. I am pardoned and set free from condemnation. It is my obligation to do all I can to share the love of Christ with those who remain in bondage to sin.

- If my life isn't lived in light of Christ and His saving grace, then the liberty that I engage in will only bring greater bondage to those who are lost. Think of the lost who never darken the door of a church because of those who abused the liberty of God.

I. The Longevity of the Believer (7-9)

II. The Liberty of the Believer (13)

III. The Love of the Believer (14-15) – The believer ought to desire longevity in Christian service, use liberty in a way that pleases God, and also love as commanded of the Lord. The call to love is not something that is optional. The Bible says [thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself](#). What can we discover about the love that believers are to possess.

A. It is Universal – [For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself](#). We are to love our [neighbor](#). This is a broad term, taking in a multitude of people. I was reminded of the lawyer who asked the Lord, “[And who is my neighbour?](#)” To this question the Lord responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

- Our neighbor is anyone we meet in life, regardless of their social status, geographic location, or religious affiliation. We are called of God to love all we meet. This is the love that God had for us. Aren't you glad that God's love wasn't reserved for Israel or the Middle East, but it was offered to whosoever? Believers are to possess a universal love. Also we find that:

B. It is Sacrificial – We are to love our neighbor, whoever we meet, as ourselves. The same love and devotion that we reserve for our own needs must be offered to those whom we meet in life. We have dealt with the idea of sacrificial love many times, and yet we fail to possess it. This is contrary to the flesh. It is not within our nature to love and care for others as we do ourselves.

- Clearly Jesus offered sacrificial love. It was His love that took Him to the cross. Had He not loved us as He loved Himself, He would've never bore our sin, our shame, our suffering, and our death upon the cross. Jesus gave the utmost in love for mankind.
- If we are to serve Him as we should, we must learn to love sacrificially! This kind of love will place the needs of others above our own. It will cause us to consider them just as we would ourselves. Our lives would be lived much differently if we would learn to view life from another's perspective.

C. It is Beneficial (15) – *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* Paul warns the churches of Galatia of the results of a lack of love. When love doesn't exist, people literally devour one another. I know that we don't devour each other in a physical sense, but many have been devoured due to a lack of love. Churches have split because love has been withheld. Homes have been destroyed because people failed to love. Where love ceases to exist, destruction and ruin are certain.

- If our lives are to reflect the God we serve, love must abide in our hearts. If this congregation of believers is to continue, love must be shared among its members. We will never benefit each other or reach the lost for Christ without love. If I could challenge you to do one thing today, it would be to love more than you ever have. If we could determine in our hearts to seek to love others as Christ did, we would see great things happen around here. Many of the problems and hurts that we deal with would no longer exist.

We have considered some powerful truths in this passage. No doubt we all could do better in ensuring our longevity for the Lord and taking full advantage of our Christian liberty in a way that pleases Him. I am certain that we could all love more than we do. Has God spoken to you today? Why not come and allow Him to work within your heart?