

Is This Of God? - Galatians 5:1-12 – October 22nd, 2017

- I chose to title today's teaching in the form of a question, which is, "Is This Of God?"
- Here in chapter five of his letter to the Galatian churches, the Apostle turns a corner of sorts in addressing the matter of grace.
- One noted, chapters 1-2 are personal, chapters 3-4 are doctrinal, and now chapters 5-6 are more practical in their application.

- It's important to remember that the churches in Galatia were riddled with false teaching from Judaizers, as they were called.
- The false teachings from them was chiefly as it relates to the finished work on the Cross being insufficient for ones salvation.
- As such, they added the requirements of the law, namely, that of circumcision in order for someone to be assured of salvation.

- It's for this reason that the Apostle Paul is seemingly so blunt and harsh with them. Simply put, he knows what's at stake here.
- Thankfully, woven into the fabric of Paul's bluntness are some questions we can ask ourselves lest we fall prey to a similar fate.
- What follows are the questions that become a litmus test in discerning whether or not someone or something is of God or not.

1. Does it create an unbearable burden? – (Verse 1)

- 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.
- Here in verse one, it's almost as if the Apostle Paul is pleading with the Galatians to not let themselves be burdened again.
 - It's interesting to note that Paul refers to this burden as a yoke of slavery, given that this is exactly what was happening to them.
 - Not only were they burdened under and enslaved by this yoke, it was a burden that they, nor those before them, could bear.

Acts 15:10 - Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?

Matthew 11:28–30 (NKJV) — 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

1 John 5:3–5 (NKJV) — 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

2. Does it put the onus on me? – (Verses 2-3)

- 2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.
- In verses two and three, Paul makes it very clear in no uncertain terms, that if they do this, Christ will be of no value to them.
 - This is what I call a textbook, "either or" scenario in the sense that it's either freedom in Christ, or a yoke of slavery to the law.
 - If it's the latter, then the onus of obligation and responsibility is on those who are under the law, to obey the letter of the law.

3. Does it distance me from Jesus? – (Verse 4)

- 4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.
- Paul takes it further and tells them that if they try to be justified by the law, they're alienated from Christ and fallen from grace.
 - To me, this has to be one of the most, if not the most telltale signs of whether or not something or someone is of God or not.
 - The question I ask myself is this, "does this, or do they, draw me closer to the Lord, or does this distance me from the Lord?"

4. Does it cause me to stumble? – (Verses 5-8)

- 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. 7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.
- In verses 5-8, asks them the rhetorical question of who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth and running the race?
 - In other words, you were doing so well, but somehow, someone cut into your lane, and caused you to stumble and even fall.
 - Verse 8 catches my attention because Paul says this kind of persuasion does not come from God who chooses and calls us.

5. Does it create confusion? – (Verses 9-12)

- 9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. 11 Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!
- Paul true to form, cuts to the chase, telling them that he wishes those preaching circumcision would emasculate themselves.
 - The reason being is that it only takes just a little yeast of confusion to work through, and spread to, the whole batch of dough.
 - However, Paul communicates his confidence in the Lord that they'll take no other view, and those confusing them will pay for it.

Psalms 73:16–18 (NIV) — 16 When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. 18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.