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*One Thing*  
**Galatians 6:11-18**  
**May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Jeff Germo**

Today we are going to look at the last bit of text from Galatians. It's been a fantastic journey for many of us. I've heard from several of you that this series has been life changing and it's helped you change some old thinking preventing you from growing in your faith. A few people actually told me they felt free for the first time in their lives. And that's what Galatians is all about. It's about living in the freedom Jesus purchased for us on the cross two thousand years ago. It's about walking with the Spirit minute by minute, day by day, as opposed to living by a set of obligations, rules, and religiosity.

I can really see God is doing a work in many at CRBC, myself included. For some of us it's a very long lesson because we've been living in an old performance paradigm for so long, and as they say, "old habits die hard."

A few years ago I went to a birthday party for a friend of mine in Vancouver. I went alone because Ruthie was busy with another engagement. The venue was a beautiful house on top of a hill in the west end of Vancouver with a exquisite view of the city. I'm sure the property alone, not including the house, must have been worth a million and a half dollars. Most of the others at the party seemed quite wealthy as well.

I didn't know anybody else at the party, and I'm not really a party guy at the best of times and especially when I don't know anyone else. I did ok though trying to have meaningful conversations with people I would likely never see again. Now, men, in situations like this, typically ask each other certain questions. And these questions are designed to gauge who they are up against. What's the first question men usually ask each other? And it may not be the actual first question. They may ask a couple introductory questions, in a sort of dance to get to the main question, but they will undoubtedly be thinking about how to get to the real important question. What's the question? "What do YOU do?" And then based on the answer to that question, men judge each other's worth. It's quite stupid really.

Well, I hadn't been at the party long before someone asked me the question. "What do YOU do?" "I'm a pastor," I said. Now, depending on the context when I'm asked that question, it can be either a negative or positive response I get when I reveal what it is I do.

For instance, I once went golfing with a couple guys I didn't know. They didn't ask me what I did until we were on about the fourteenth hole, which is quite unusual. And so for fourteen holes of golf my two new friends were having a great time cussing, using every curse word known to man. I never let that kind of thing bother me because I don't expect an unbeliever to live according to my values any more than they would expect me to live according to theirs.

Anyway, when I told them what I did for work there was a very uncomfortable pregnant silence on their part. And I knew what was going to come out of their mouths next. It happens all the time. After the silence and a clearing of the throat they very sheepishly said, "Oh...I'm sorry for the bad language I was using." I've gotten used to it, and in a sort of twisted way I enjoy seeing them squirm, but I always tell them I'm not their judge and they shouldn't feel obligated to change because of me.

Back at my friend's party though, all the guests were fine upstanding Christians. Their language was pristine. They sinned in other ways than bad language. After I told the gentlemen who asked what I did that I was a pastor, what do you think his next question was? "Oh, very good," he said, "Is it a big church, or small, or...?"

Now, he was probably just curious and it was likely a totally innocuous question. I don't want to judge him, but, I have to admit the first thought I had was, "What difference does it make how big my church is? You're just going to judge me based upon the number I give you." I didn't say what was on my mind, but several years ago, in a less mature stage of my life, I probably would have.

You see, we judge each other based on our performance. It's like we're in an Olympic event and everyone else is the judge giving us their evaluation based on our performance. That is what we, as human beings, do. We judge others and they judge us. And it is wrong. Jesus taught this over and over. And Paul teaches the same thing in the passage we are going to look at this morning. If we live like that we will constantly be looking over our shoulders wondering, not only if we measure up to God's standards, but if we live up to the standards of others.

Before we moved to the island we would take vacations here every year. We started that while we were still living in Alberta about 15 years ago. A couple years ago, while we were living in Tsawwassen we were on one of our vacations to Ladysmith to stay at a retreat centre. Some friends of ours from Alberta needed a place to stay while they were in Vancouver so we let them use our place while we were gone. We gave them the security code for our front door and told them to make themselves at home and use our bedroom to sleep in. We had a bit of a dilemma because we know this couple very well and we've been to their place many times, and they are impeccably tidy. We aren't. We keep our place clean, but not like they do. So, as we were cleaning before leaving I was continually wondering if it would be good enough for them—as if they are our judges. And that's really silly because we know this couple is very gracious and I don't think they would judge us just because they are better at keeping house than we are.

But, that's what a performance based life does. It perpetually wonders if we are good enough for other people whom we hold as judge over us. And it could be anyone: the Jones' next door; your friends; classmates; your family members; or people driving the car next to you on the road who you don't even know.

Now, Paul, in this last passage of Galatians sums up what he's already said several times. This is so important he wants to make sure his audience understands these things completely.

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**Galatians 6:11–18 (ESV)**

*<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*

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In ancient times writers would hire scribes to do their writing. These were people who were professionally trained to write quickly, neatly, and small enough to fit their script into a small space. And Paul used a scribe as well. But, when he gets to the final comments he gives his scribe a break, holds the writing utensil in his hand, and takes on the task himself.

*<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*

What do we do when we want to emphasize something in our writing using a computer today? We might bold, or italicize, or if we want to demonstrate we are serious or mad, we would use all caps. What Paul did when he took over the pen from his scribe was to write in extra large script. And he didn't just write in large script. He drew attention to the fact that he was writing in large script. "Look, in case you haven't noticed. I am writing in very large letters. That means the thing I am writing is important — so pay attention."

(4)

***<sup>12</sup> It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.***

Paul is talking about the Judaizers. He says the only two reasons they were trying to pressure the Galatian Christians to get circumcised were so they could add them to their scorecard, and to keep themselves from being persecuted or judged by other Judaizers. They could go back to Jerusalem with a good report about how many converts to Judaism they had.

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This is a temptation for any church. What is our motivation for the things we do? Why do we have our outreach programs? Why do we put so much effort into our children's ministry, and soccer camps? Why do we put such an emphasis on baptism? Why do we try to improve our worship ministry and our Growth Groups? Is it so we can show a good scorecard to the Fellowship Convention (Impact), or so we can boast about how successful we are?

All of those reasons for ministry and serving are from our sinful nature, or, as Paul would say, from the flesh. They are about self-aggrandizing, or puffing up our egos. The staff and board have been celebrating the ways God has been working as of late. He has been opening so many doors for the Gospel. He has been leading Adrian, Steve, Leora, June, Bob, Lisa, Gina and all their volunteers to reach outside our walls. We are seeing God work. It is so exciting. I don't think I've ever been so excited about ministry as I am right now. Those are good things to be thankful for. We need to continually celebrate what God is doing by telling these stories.

In the book of Acts, the day after Pentecost, Luke said there were 3000 people added to the church in that one day after Peter preached his first sermon. Luke didn't tell us that to boast about the numbers. He recounted it to boast about Jesus, to make *his* name famous. Look what God did. That's what we should be doing at CRBC. Look at what God is doing, not look how wonderful we are.

But, it is so easy for me as pastor to feel good about myself when things are going well and bad about myself when things aren't. And when I, or any of us do that, we set ourselves up as little gods and controllers of our lives. We are looking for glory that only belongs to God.

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***Why we do things is a gauge of the condition of our heart.***

Jesus said in Matthew 6,

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**Matthew 6:21 (ESV)**

***<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

What things are most important to you? If your reputation is more important than obedience to Jesus how will you respond when someone criticizes you for your belief in Christ? What is in your heart will come out. We think we can hide it, but it will come out when pressure is applied.

It needs to be noted that our motives will never be totally pure. I've heard people say things like, "I'm not going to serve until my motives are 100% pure." If we wait until our motives are 100% pure before we serve we will never serve. And we will live tormented lives. We simply need to become aware of our motives and, in humility, surrender them to God and ask him to redeem them and help us to serve him for the right reasons. To not serve because your motives aren't pure is to sin twice.

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*<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

All boasting is out, Paul says, except to lift up the name of Jesus. That is what we should be about as a church and as individuals. We should be all about making the name of Jesus famous. We should be all about establishing our lives in such a way that the reputation of Jesus remains intact. And sometimes that means, as Jesus said, the world will hate us because we will say 'no' to some things the world sees as normal.

And as I have pointed out in previous sermons, sometimes when Jesus and Paul talked about the world, they were not talking about the people outside the church walls, they were talking about the religious people inside the church walls. It's the religious who will judge us the most if we are following Jesus the way he said to live. Those outside the church walls will be the recipients of his love working through us.

How do we present ourselves in the workplace, or in school, or in our neighbourhood? Do they see the love of Jesus through how we live?

Jesus said in John 14:15,

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**John 14:15 (ESV)**

*<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

That's what following means. It means the reputation of Jesus is more important *our* reputation.

Next, Paul once and for all, demolishes the arguments of the Judaizers.

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*<sup>15</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*

Now, to the Jew, this would have seemed like blasphemy. Circumcision was *the* sign for the Jew that they were God's people, and here Paul says very plainly that circumcision is not the issue. **There's only one thing that counts.**

Go back to Galatians 5:6.

[11]

**Galatians 5:6 (ESV)**

***<sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.***

Now, it sort of seems like Paul is saying two different things here. In 5:6 he says the only thing that counts is *“faith working through love.”* In 6:15 he says the only thing that counts is *“a new creation.”* So, which is it? It sounds like he’s talking out of two sides of his mouth. Logically, it can’t be both.

**Is “the only thing” that counts *faith working through love*, or is it *a new creation*?** The answer is ‘yes’. It is through the new creation that faith works through love. The old system of the law the Judaizers were living by was all about obligation, rules, and religion. It was an impossible dead system. It did not lead to freedom, or love, or faith. It led to slavery, bondage, and death. Jesus came to satisfy the law. He told his disciples he had come to give them a new law, a new covenant, or a command that would supersede all the other commands. What was that command?

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**John 13:34–35 (ESV)**

***<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

We come back to the motives of our hearts now. Why do we do the things we do? What is the driving force in our lives? I have to ask myself that question often. Why do I do the things I do? Why do I get up here and preach on Sunday mornings? I continually assess my motives to make sure they are in line with the things God values. It’s important you get to know your own heart motives because it’s not always so simple.

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Paul said **there is only one thing that counts – a new creation in which faith works through love.** If you have placed your faith in Christ **you are that new creation.** You have been and are being recreated by Jesus. We, as a church, at CRBC, are that new creation. It’s a new way of living. We are to live our lives in faith and dependence on the Holy Spirit who is living in us, and as we do that he will love other people through us in very practical ways so they too can be welcomed into the kingdom of God. That’s why we reach out to our community. That’s why we spend our time, energy and resources to serve.

That is why we do our Growth Groups. We do not meet simply to get more knowledge about the Bible, or about God. We do not just meet to fellowship, or enjoy each others' company. We meet in our Growth Groups to work out our salvation, so Jesus can transform our minds and hearts to become more like him. That is why we are investing in Island Adventure Camp and in the River Kids Soccer Camp so we can take this message of hope into our community.

When we live that way God has something very special for us.

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**Galatians 6:16-18 (ESV)**

***<sup>16</sup> And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.***

Nobody who lives their lives to glorify themselves has peace. It’s impossible because people whose lives are all

about self-gratification, self-justification, and self-glorification are restless. They are never satisfied with what they have. They are always looking over their shoulders wanting to be noticed by others.

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**Peace and mercy are only possible when we live for God by faith serving and loving others.**

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*<sup>17</sup> From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*

Paul finishes off this letter saying, “Look! All of you who have doubted my integrity, motives, or ministry in any way, please stop. Get off my back. I have worked hard and experienced unthinkable pain in my life, not for my own gain, but for the sake of Christ, so his name can be made famous, and so his gospel can be advanced. We are not in competition. We are on the same team.

*<sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

Paul ends this letter with a grace benediction. I would think, after he had spent most of his time and energy in the letter expounding what true grace is, this benediction would have been packed with meaning. This was truly his prayer for his Galatian brothers and sisters, that they would understand and experience the grace of God in immeasurable ways.

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That’s my prayer for us as a church as well. My prayer is that we would grow more and more in the grace of Christ, that we would grow, and learn day by day what it means to walk by faith in the Spirit, so we, and others, would see the fruit of the Spirit growing abundantly in us and so they would want to experience Jesus for themselves. I see that happening at CRBC and it is so exciting. I see it in each of the ministries, from the children, to the youth, to Young at Heart, to the women, the men, the worship ministries, Freedom Session, Growth Groups, our outreach ministries, and every area of our life at CRBC as we learn to walk with Jesus and allow him to teach us minute by minute, day by day. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through us in love.**



**ONE THING**  
***Learning to Walk in the Freedom of Christ***  
**Galatians 6:11-18**  
**Week of May 10th, 2015**

**Objective of this study:** To understand at a heart level that **the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through us in love.**

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Ephesians 3:14-21 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

**Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)**

What's this silliest thing you've done, trying to impress someone? Were they impressed?

**Word/Work (60 - 75 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Galatians 6:11-18
  1. What does Paul say are the reasons the Judaizers pushed circumcision and other laws on new believers? What were their motives?
  2. What are some ways, in our contemporary world, that we, as evangelical Christians, might be tempted to impress others?
    1. What are some results of living in such a way that we either set others up as judges over us, or ourselves as judges over others, or see life as a competition? Don't rush this.
    2. Read Matthew 6:21. How does this relate to the above?
  3. In Galatians 6:11-18 what does Paul say really matters? Read also, as cross references, Galatians 5:6, John 13:34-35.
    1. What are some ways this can be expressed in your life? Be specific.
    2. What are some ways it can be expressed in your group?
    3. What are some results of living like this?
  4. Brainstorm as a group about what the future could look like, as individuals, as a group, as a church, and as a city.
  5. Spend some time praying about these things. Ask God to change your "ought to's" to "want to's".