“Motives in Ministry”  
June 26, 2011  
Text: Galatians 6:11-13

[Read text]

Today in the Word is Moody Bible Institute’s radio program.  
The following is from one of their 1989 broadcasts=>

He made free use of Christian vocabulary. He talked about the blessing of the Almighty and the Christian confessions which would become the pillars of the new government. He assumed the earnestness of a man weighed down by historic responsibility. He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to the church papers. He showed his tattered Bible and declared that he drew the strength for his great work from it, as scores of pious people welcomed him as a man sent from God. Indeed, Adolf Hitler was a master of outward religiosity—with no inward reality!

The subject of our text today is the sincerity (or insincerity) of religious leaders’ motivations.

Jesus often exposed the false motives of the scribes/Pharisees. In Mt 23, He repeatedly called them hypocrites.

In verses 3-4, He even told His disciples=> “Do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. / And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. / But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men.”

In verses 6-9, Jesus pointed to other examples of the scribes and Pharisees’ hypocrisy=> They always sought places of honor at banquets and in the synagogues; They also loved the honorary titles of “Rabbi”/“Father.” Jesus told His own followers that they were not to address anyone by these titles, except God Himself.

These weren’t simply bad habits that they needed to overcome. They were symptoms of far deeper spiritual problems within these religious leaders’ hearts.

So in Mt 23:27, Jesus told them=> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. / Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (27-28).
Virtually any role of spiritual leadership entails some danger of temptation to pride/hypocrisy/insincerity.

* Although we don’t stand on street corners praying, in order that others will see us (as the scribes/Pharisees did), we do stand before others as we pray, leading them in prayer.
  And we know people are listening to us and watching us.
  So it too can be a mere performance.
  Unless we check our own hearts, we too can be doing nothing but making a speech that is ostensibly addressed to God, but is really intended to tickle people’s ears, or impress them with our godliness.

* We don’t wear phylacteries on our foreheads as the scribes and Pharisees did (little leather boxes that contain Scriptures).
  But we can certainly try to create an impression of holiness & righteousness, to cover up our inner spiritual coldness.
  Imagine a spiritual leader stopping in the middle of his prayer & saying,
    “Excuse me, folks, I’ve got to stop for a moment.
    “You think I’ve been praying, but in reality, my mind has been wandering all over the place.
    “So before I offend the Lord any more, I need to ask His forgiveness, and then start over.”

In our text today, Paul is going to expose the true motives of his opponents—the Judaizers—comparing them with his own motivation for ministering to the Galatian Xns.

According to Acts 15:5, the Judaizers were ex-Pharisees.

Paul is going to show that=>
  * He was motivated by sincere concern for the Galatians’ spiritual wellbeing;
  * The Judaizers’ motives were far less noble=>
    desire for popularity, self-interest, insincerity, pride.

* Paul’s Motive: Sincere Concern for the Galatians

[Galatians 6:11] (Paul)=> “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”
Paul is coming to the end of his epistle. His custom was to dictate his letters to a secretary called an amanuensis, who actually wrote them down.

E.g., at the end of Romans (16:22) we read=> “I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.”

Here the amanuensis stuck his own note into Paul’s letter (undoubtedly with Paul’s inspired consent).

But Paul also had another custom=> to take the pen from his amanuensis at the end of each letter and write a greeting, a benediction, or an exhortation in his own handwriting, to authenticate the letter.

E.g. in 2 Thes 3:17 he wrote=> “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.”

Paul had to protect himself against forgeries of his epistles.

Earlier in this same letter he mentioned that the Thessalonians had been disturbed by=> “a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come” (II Thes 2:2).

Someone had forged a letter in Paul’s name, saying the day of the Lord had already come, but the Thessalonians had been left behind— and that had shaken them.

However, the point in our own text is not that Paul again wrote a closing salutation (as usual), but that he wrote it in such large letters.

The question is why he would do that, and why he would call attention to it.

Commentators have a number of hypothetical answers for these questions, and no one can answer them dogmatically.

But in my view, Paul wrote in large/bold strokes here for the same reason John Hancock wrote his name in such large letters, on the Declaration of Independence.

In both cases it was the author’s way of saying=>

“Listen to this. I sincerely mean what is written here!”

Paul is providing indirect insight in the purity, sincerity, and fervency of his own motives, in writing this letter.

There are no personal pleasantries at the end of Galatians, as there are in most of his other epistles.

But there is a clear indication that Paul had written out of deep/sincere concern for the Galatians’ spiritual welfare.
He emphasized this by writing with unusually large letters, as if underscoring his words.

Now, by contrast, Paul is going to begin exposing the Judaizers’ *false motives for teaching their false doctrine of salvation*=> God’s grace plus the good deeds of man.

*The Judaizers’ Motives: Desire for Popularity, Self-interest, Insincerity, and Pride.*

Before we condemn the Judaizers too harshly for such false motives, we need to examine our own hearts.

We too may find that the Xn image we present (or don’t present) to others is also affected by our own desire for popularity, self-interest, insincerity or pride.

1) Desire for Popularity

[Galatians 6:12a]⇒ *"Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised,"*

The Judaizers’ concern was not for the Galatians’ souls, but for their own popularity/acceptance among their fellow Jews.

“Good showing” lit. means “to put on a good face.”

It might be described as making a good appearance and impression.

**The Judaizers wanted to make a good impression on their fellow Jews, to keep their good standing among them.**

They didn’t want to lose the good will of old Jewish friends, colleagues, and family members.

Back then, & still today, some Jewish converts are formally expelled from their own families w/ a mock funeral for them.

Jesus warned from the very beginning that Xns should be ready to make such sacrifices, in order to be His disciples.

He required that we be willing to do so, out of commitment to Him and love for Him.

In Mt 10:37 He said⇒ *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. / And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me”* (37-38).

The Judaizers didn’t love Jesus enough to lose popularity for His sake, among the people who were most important to them.
They wanted it both ways—associating w/ the Church while still maintaining their old Jewish associations through=⇒ “a good showing in the flesh.”

“The flesh” here alludes to Jewish ceremonies by which Jews expected their Jewishness to make them righteous and to insure God’s acceptance.

It involved external rites, rituals, liturgies, & religious acts of obedience to God’s ceremonial Law.

Ultimately, as Paul has often shown in Galatians, religion like that—based on the flesh—demonstrates a person’s trust in himself (not in God) for his salvation.

The flesh prefers religion that knows/keeps its place, & confines itself to superficial, external matters—rituals that everyone enjoys as beautiful, traditional, and impressive, and which supposedly have beneficial effects on the soul.

This avoids the real problem of sin, which can only be resolved by the cross of X;

It attempts to change people’s conduct/behavior without changing their hearts.

The Judaizers chose that, as a way to avoid losing popularity, among their fellow Jews, wanting a compromise by which they could associate w/ Xns, & yet maintain their Jewish contacts and their own Jewishness thru the Law.

Because the Jews had rejected Jesus, talk of His having died for men’s sins made them furious, so Judaizers didn’t talk about that.

They talked about circumcision & observance of the Law.

It’s natural for fallen man to avoid the truth about X’s atonement for sin, adopting instead a more comfortable religion with demands that are external (instead of dealing w/ the heart) & ceremonial (rather than believing in X as Savior and obeying Him as Lord).

But a true Xn can’t do that, because his is a religion of the heart, not of outward ceremony.

God has never been willing to accept anything less than wholehearted love/worship.

Clear back in the days of Israel He protested (Isa 29:13)=⇒
"This people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, & their reverence for Me consists of tradition."

They would not let God touch their hearts.

Man always—has/always—will try to confine his religion to superficial external matters, leaving his heart untouched, and free to do as he pleases.

He far prefers the beauty of stained-glass windows, ornate robes, the smell of incense, and solemn/stately ceremony, than having to deal with the ugliness of his own depravity & his spiritual neediness.

This is esp. true when a church says what he wants to hear.

This is the way it has always been, & the way it will always be, until X returns.

In Jer 5:31, God protested=> "The prophets prophesy falsely, & the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?" (will their lies protect you from judgment?)

II Tim 3:1-4 describes the depths of sinfulness to which man will fall in the last days.

Then verse 5 explains how/why this will happen=>

They will be=> "Holding to a form of godliness, although they [will] have denied its power."

The outward forms of religion will thrive during earth’s last days, & they’ll leave man’s heart utterly corrupt, untouched, and damned.

Right up to the bitter end, external ceremony will eclipse inward spiritual reality, because that’s what sinful man wants.

Every manmade religion—every religion but Xnity—is based on man’s doing something to improve his lot, spiritually.

It’s a hopeless/useless exercise in law/works/fleshly-effort.

The only religion that doesn’t fit this mold is the true Xn faith.

It’s a religion of grace/faith/the-H.S.’s power touching and changing a person’s heart, bringing man to God, crying, “Lord, I can’t save myself in my own power no matter how hard I try, & I now realize how desperately I need to be saved.

“Please save my soul on the merits of Your Son’s death on the cross.”
The Judaizers had taught that instead of trusting in X alone for salvation, a person had to add the religious ceremony of circumcision, to faith in Jesus. In doing so, they nullified faith in X altogether, leaving them unsaved compromisers who were really neither Xn/Jewish. To make matters even worse, they even “compelled” Gentile converts to join them in this heresy of compromise, thru circumcision. Their selfish desire to maintain their popularity among unsaved Jews had motivated them to compromise the gospel truth.

The question for each of us to ask ourselves is this=> Have I compromised the truth for the sake of acceptance/popularity? * Have I substituted some outward work such as baptism for heartfelt love/faith (because my friends/family expected that of me) instead of becoming truly born again? * Do I trust X alone for my salvation, do I trust my own efforts to save me, or have I (like the Judaizers) tried to find a compromise=> some combination of the two? I.e., have I too tried to find a way of becoming saved without letting God touch my heart? * Have I reduced my “faith” to exterior religious activity in lieu of giving Jesus X my heart/soul, forming a personal relationship with Him? * Have I tried to save myself by “doing,” instead of simply believing? * Have I covered up my testimony for fear that I would lose popularity, if people really knew about my faith in X? I.e., am I just like the Judaizers in that respect?

2) Self-interest (the Judaizers’ 2nd motivation) [Galatians 6:12b]=> “...simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

A converted Jew in Galatia knew exactly what to expect from his unconverted Jewish friends, because they had tried to stone Paul (a converted Jew) to death. And they had prob. heard, that when Peter preached the cross to the Judaism’s leaders (Acts 5:29-33), they tried to kill him. But the Judaizers were men of compromise rather than conviction, and they wanted to avoid persecution like that at all costs. Self-interest is the instinctive response of natural man.
But Jesus has called Xns to a higher standard—to set aside our self-interest out of love for Him and faith in Him. He has called us to take up our cross, and to lose our lives, if necessary, as we follow Him, in order that we might truly find our lives. Jesus’ command to take up their cross and follow Him (Mt 16:24) was way too radical for the Judaizers’ tastes. They knew how abhorrent the gospel was to the Jews, and they didn’t want to rile them up with it. It proclaims the good news, that faith in Jesus is all that God requires for salvation. This meant that even Gentiles could become saved, even though they knew nothing about the Law, and had no desire to become Jewish. That doctrine always left the Jews in a furious state of outrage. So the Judaizers wanted to add the works of the Law to faith in Jesus. That might placate the Jews & prevent their persecution of the Judaizers. The “cross of Christ” has always been the most inflammatory issue, not only for Jews, but for unsaved Gentiles as well. It symbolizes the fact that Jesus died as man’s full/final means of salvation from sin—that man doesn’t need to, and in fact cannot, ever add anything to what Jesus has already done. This does terrible injury/insult to the spiritual pride of man. The cross offends him because its redemptive work leaves no room for human pride in man’s own spiritual achievement. It cuts man’s own righteousness off, at the knees. So I Cor 1:23 says this makes the cross an offense/stumbling block to the Jews, and utter foolishness to Gentiles. Knowing all this, the Judaizers wanted to avoid a crisis, by meeting their unsaved Jewish friends half way. They didn’t have strong doctrinal beliefs, but they had a strong sense of self-preservation/self-interest, that would have done whatever it took to save themselves from persecution. They hoped to avoid exclusion from the synagogue and from Jewish social/business relationships—exclusion that could ultimately lead to their financial ruin.
They hoped to buffer the offensiveness of the cross by continuing to adhere to the outward forms of Judaism—especially circumcision.

They would insist that Gentile Xn converts become proselytes to Judaism through circumcision.

All of this was just a thin veneer to cover up the Judaizers’ detestable self-interest, and cowardly/craven selfishness.

**Again, let’s ask ourselves if we have compromised out of self-interest, not taking up our cross & following X.**

The stumbling-block of the cross is the perfect test of whether/not a believer is motivated by self-interest.

If he is, he will hide his faith in the cross of Jesus X, to protect himself from rejection/persecution.

If he cares about other people’s souls (as Paul did), he won’t.

So * Have we withheld the truth, fearful of what we might suffer if we were open/forthright about our faith?

* Have we told those whose whole religion is mere ritual and ceremony that has no eternal value, and that they may be trying to withhold their hearts from God, just giving Him lip service, with all that ceremony?

* Have we become broad-road Xns, who like so many others, try to compromise w/ a world that doesn’t believe in Jesus/God?

* Have we feared to make a clean break with that world, by fearlessly/openly avowing our faith-in/love-for Jesus?

The world is a tyrant that demands absolute submission to its ways, & feels only contempt for compromisers.

3) **Insincerity (Hypocrisy)**

**[Galatians 6:13a]** "For those who are circumcised [certainly Judaizers, but prob. also the Jews in general] do not even keep the Law themselves,"

**This was typical of the legalistic Jewish leaders who tied heavy loads onto others that they wouldn’t lift themselves.**

At the Jerusalem Counsel, Peter described the nature of those loads (Acts 15:10-11), asking the Judaizers directly=>

"Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke [a load carried around the shoulders] which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? / But we believe that we are
saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are.”

This “yoke”/“heavy load” was the works-righteousness system which Judaizers claimed a person had to keep, to become saved. Peter said that Jews/Gentiles alike are saved by grace alone.

**Judaizers weren’t sincere enough to obey the Law rigorously.**

Though they dogmatically insisted on strict adherence to it by others, their own obedience was a sham. Like the scribes/Pharisees, they would establish inviolable rules for implementing the Law, and then invent ways to circumvent those rules themselves.

Spiritual hypocrisy like that is easier in God’s work than anywhere else, especially among legalistic leaders.

Insincere, superficial game-playing is characteristic of corrupt Xnity, where religion is merely external, never touching the heart.

E.g. when a family member stops going to church or mass, the whole family feels uneasy, & pressures its recalcitrant member to “get back into church.”

They neither expect/ask-for sincere, heartfelt faith in X, just conformity to the external standards of church attendance.

How could they ask more, when their own religion is merely external, & filled w/ insincere inconsistency?

**Real Xnity is as extensive as the whole nature of man, involving thought/feeling/action.**

It’s a religion of the mind, the heart—the whole life.

It’s not mere memory of doctrinal facts, nor is it just an excitement of feelings, nor acts of service for God.

It’s all of these in equal proportion, governing a person’s whole life/nature—intellectual/moral/social=⇒ everything.

4) **Pride** (the Judaizers’ ultimate motivation)

[Galatians 6:13b]⇒ “…but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.”

**When the Judaizers persuaded a Galatian Xn to become circumcised, they would brag about it to one another (and prob. also to their unconverted Jewish friends).**

They would claim to have brought another Gentile proselyte into the fold of Mosaic Law.
As we just saw, they weren’t conscientious about keeping the Law themselves, but they would boast about compelling a Gentile to do so, starting with the circumcision of his flesh. Their pride feasted on this supposed ability to exert power over these Gentiles’ minds—as their teachers. And so as Paul puts it, they “boasted in the Gentiles’ flesh.”

**Pride was at the heart of the Judaizers’ whole motivation=>**

* It was their pride that longed for popularity/acceptance within the Jewish community.
  It’s our pride which shares that same longing without our own circle of friends.
  Pride is self-love that says to the heart, “Don’t sacrifice being liked and well-thought-of by friends/family for Jesus’ sake. “Do whatever it takes to become admired by your peers. “You’ve formed this relationship w/ X for what you can get out of it, not to make sacrifices for His glory.”

* Moreover, it was the Judaizers’ pride of self-interest that was willing to compromise gospel truth in order to avoid persecution.
  Our pride can render us just as cowardly/impotent.
  Pride scoffs at Jesus’ words, “Take up your cross.”
  It makes a person his own god, just as it did in Satan’s heart.
  No idolater, worshiping the idol of self, willingly accepts persecution for Jesus’ sake since X isn’t his real God.
  He is himself!

* Pride was also behind the Judaizers’ insincerity.
  Pride still lies behind the insincerity/hypocrisy of professed Xns today, who reign on the throne of their own hearts.
  Pride, having made them their own god, taught them to think they had a right to determine for themselves, what was acceptable conduct and what wasn’t.
  They found it totally acceptable to insincerely and hypocritically demand strict obedience to the Law from others, which they had no intention of rendering to the Law themselves.
  And pride enabled them to forgive their own hypocrisy with ease.

May God save us from the tyranny of our own pride, so that instead of being controlled by unworthy motives like the Judaizers, we, like Paul, will minister out of sincere love for X, and for other people.
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1. The subject of our text today is the sincerity (or insincerity) of religious leaders’ motivations; Jesus often exposed the [12 false] motives of the scribes and Pharisees.

Mt 23:3-4, 6-9, 27

2. Virtually any role of spiritual leadership entails some danger of temptation to pride, [20 hypocrisy], and insincerity.

3. In our text today Paul will expose the true motives of his opponents—the Judaizers—comparing them with his [8 own] motivation for ministering…

* Paul’s Motive: Sincere Concern for the Galatians
  [Galatians 6:11]

Rom 16:22; II Thes 3:17; 2:2

4. Paul wrote in large, bold strokes here; it was the author’s way of saying, Listen to this. I sincerely [10 mean] what is written here!


* Desire for Popularity
  [Galatians 6:12a]

5. The Judaizers wanted to make a good impression on their fellow Jews to keep their [10 good] standing among them.

Mt 10:37-38

6. It’s natural for fallen man to avoid the truth about atonement for sin, adopting instead a more comfortable religion with demands that are [20 external] and ceremonial.

Isa 29:13; Jer 5:31; II Tim 3:1-5

7. Every manmade religion—every religion but Christianity—is based on man’s [12 doing] something to improve his lot spiritually.
8. The Judaizers were men of compromise rather than conviction, and they wanted to avoid persecution at all costs.

9. The Judaizers wanted to avoid a crisis by meeting their unsaved Jewish friends half way; they didn’t have strong doctrinal beliefs, but they had a strong sense of self-preservation and self-interest.

10. Judaizers weren’t sincere enough to obey the Law rigorously.

11. Real Christianity is as extensive as the nature of man; it’s a religion of the mind, the heart—the whole life.

12. The Judaizers weren’t conscientious about keeping the Law themselves, but they would boast about compelling a Gentile to do so starting with the circumcision of his flesh.

13. Pride taught them to think it totally acceptable to demand strict obedience to the Law from others which they had no intention of rendering to the Law themselves.