

## Galatians 1:1-12

### “Pleasing God: Not Man”

May 29, 2016

This week I read a book about one mother's struggle with a son who is an addict. They call addiction a disease because some can just quit and others struggle their whole lives. It is a disease that makes some vulnerable from one generation to another. It is a disease that fills lives with guilt because we think that we have some control over our lives. We did not choose our genes. We did not choose so many things that contribute to this disease and its affects upon our lives. It is like diabetes that now affects so many. Diabetes too is in the genes as well as part of bad decision making. It too carries a lot of guilt for all who are affected by it.

As I read the book, I became aware of something else. There is a great danger that we can allow the addict to become our God. Anything that consumes our lives, our time, and our thoughts can become our God. Of course it is only natural that the one we love and their problems would become the center and focus of our lives when they are in trouble. However, we cannot allow them to become our God and consume us completely. The author lost her son to addiction and she lost her husband because of their marriage. Of course both face the burden of guilt because he gave up on the marriage. Both in their way were consumed by the addiction.

So what does that have to do with our text? Guilt is an ever present reality in our lives. We are imperfect people and we fail God, ourselves and each other. Jesus Christ died on the Cross at Calvary and paid for our failures. Jesus Christ took our guilt to the Cross and paid for it because He does not want us to live in guilt but in His undeserved grace and mercy as we continue our walk through life. He does not want us to be focused upon ourselves, our problems and those who create troubles for us. He wants us to be focused upon His undeserved grace and mercy as we prepare ourselves to enter the gates of heaven one day. Addiction steals hope from us. God restores hope. No sin is too great that in Christ we cannot find forgiveness and eternal life.

Paul preached this Gospel to the Galatians. Someone came along and added to this Gospel the laws of the Old Testament. When we read the book of Galatians, we see that someone was advocating that the new converts to Christianity be circumcised. This is adding the Law to the Gospel and claiming we have to obey the Law to receive salvation. At the end of the book of the Galatians we are told that we no longer live in the ways of the flesh. We are told that if we dwell upon the ways of the flesh we will condemn our souls to hell. Therefore we are told to live in the freedom of the Gospel. We are told to open our hearts to God and allow the Holy Spirit to bring us His gifts so that we can fight the fight of faith with Christ at the center of our lives.

There is a problem with the addicted. We can enable them in their addiction. Sometimes we enable because we are just tired of fighting. Sometimes we enable because we want their love. We forget that love is a gift not something we earn by giving in and meeting their needs. We are even told in our text to avoid those that teach us other than Christ and the Gospel hope. We are told in our text that Paul teaches not to please men but to please God because Paul is a servant of Christ. We are not to please the addict but God! Of course we will hear; “You don’t love me!” Paul would not say this if he were not struggling to please those around him. Yet, Paul knows that Christ is the center and focus of his life not people or events in this world.

I must confess that I had to put the book down several times because I could not emotionally read it through. Likewise I must confess that there are times when I have to distract myself from the trials of this life. We are all imperfect people. Christ died because we are imperfect people. Looking through His blood, He sees our faith and sets aside our sin. Through His blood, He asks us to do the same. We are to look at each other and encourage each other’s walk of faith. We are to look at each other and support each other’s struggle to live in the freedom of the Gospel and reject that path of being selfish and self-centered. We are to look at each other and forgive as we are forgiven in Christ. Forgiveness does not mean we don’t hold

others accountable for their words and actions. Forgiveness means we set aside their sin and let God hold them accountable. Amen.