

# Final Words

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's go ahead and read the final eight verses of Galatians.

That's Galatians chapter 6, verses 11 through 18. 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. 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. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. In these verses, Paul revisits major themes and points his readers back to the one thing that matters for salvation, Jesus' work on the cross.

[ 1 : 27 ] And that's the main idea. Paul revisits major themes and points his readers back to the one thing that matters for salvation, Jesus Christ's work on the cross.

You know that Galatians is about a controversy. And that controversy is about the nature of salvation. Paul's making one final plea here that Jesus paid it all.

The false teachers thought that what Jesus did was insufficient. Those false teaching Judaizers said that to be saved, a person needs the atonement of Jesus plus additional human works.

And Paul pleads one more time with a lot of emotion, like a lawyer making a final appeal to a judge and jury. And he's pleading that his readers would realize that Christ's work is enough.

When we started Galatians, we noted that its beginning differs from Paul's typical greeting. Paul usually opened his letters by complimenting his readers about good things he had heard about them.

[ 2 : 30 ] Galatians lacks such commendation. Now we're at the end of Paul's letter to the Galatians, and the end of the letter carries the same weight of seriousness, urgency, and indignation as the rest of it.

At the beginning and the end, he commends his readers to God's grace. So we see his deep concern for the spiritual welfare for those to whom he is writing.

But he takes no time for the personal touches that are found in most of his other writings. It's almost as if Paul was rushing to send the letter on its way. Tonight we'll look at Paul's final words to the Galatians under three headings.

And in verses 11 through 13, we see the deceptive troublemakers. So the deceptive troublemakers is your first set of blanks. Listen to verses 11 through 13 again.

Paul said, You may think, What does verse 11 have to do with deceptive troublemakers?

[ 3 : 58 ] You probably have heard people say that Paul likely was writing such large letters because he had a vision problem. And that may have been the case. But Paul may have chosen this writing style because of more than just vision issues.

By writing at least this part of the letter by himself, Paul also was conveying a sense of urgency. He might have been emphasizing what he was saying by using a bigger font.

Regardless, we can see that the text does have a sense of urgency. Except for the closing benediction, which is in verse 18, verses 11 to the end are largely a parting salvo against the Judaizers, whose heretical activities prompted the letter in the first place.

They were teaching a false man-made gospel, which we know is really no gospel at all. They taught salvation by works and by living under the government of the law.

The Judaizers' teaching was in complete contradiction to the divine gospel of salvation by grace and living by the Spirit that Paul had preached when he ministered in Galatia.

[ 5 : 07 ] Two approaches to salvation are the only two that exist. They're the only two forms of religion that man has ever known. There is a grace, faith, and spirit religion known as Christianity, and there is a law, works, and fleshly religion, and that religion identifies every other religion that is out there.

We know that God's way is the way of grace working through man's faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. All other ways, no matter how seemingly different, are an attempt at salvation by fleshly works of the law.

God's way is the way of divine accomplishment. All other ways rely on human achievement. Throughout the letter, we've seen Paul dismantle the Judaizers' teaching, and in this section here, Paul focuses on the Judaizers' motives.

In verse 12, Paul shows that the false teachers are motivated by two things, self-promotion and self-preservation. So look at verse 12 again.

It says, 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.

[ 6 : 28 ] So you can see that the first part of verse 12 says that the people trying to force the Galatians to be circumcised want to make a good showing in the flesh.

We know that no outward bodily operation, even one originally given by God, can secure the salvation of somebody's soul. Thousands of years after Paul wrote this letter, human nature remains unchanged.

Self-promoting individuals today simply come up with different metrics. A self-promoting pastor might refer to the ABCs associated with his church.

That's attendance, baptisms, and cash. Or the pastor may tout the number of pastors he supposedly has trained. I don't have anybody in mind here, but if you think about Rick Warren, that would be a good guess.

The quote from John Stott puts things into perspective. John Stott said, Baptism is important as circumcision was important.

[ 7 : 35 ] The risen Christ gave baptism to the church as God gave circumcision to Abraham. Baptism is a sign of covenant membership as circumcision was, but both baptism and circumcision, however great in the spiritual truths they may signify, are themselves outward and bodily acts.

And it is absurd to magnify such things as indispensable means of salvation and then go on to boast about them. Self-preservation was the second reason why the Judaizers promoted their legalistic views.

The end of verse 12 says that the Judaizers promoted circumcision in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. The Judaizers advocated legalism to protect their lives and material welfare.

They were unwilling to pay the price of persecution. They were unwilling to be identified with Jesus Christ. They would use his name and attend his church only if there was no offense to those around them.

And most of such offense could be avoided if they denied the meaning of Christ's death. Consider one of those sentences again. The false teachers would use Jesus' name and attend his church only if there was no offense to those around them.

[ 9 : 00 ] Once again, we see that human nature remains unchanged after all these years. How many false teachers and false believers today will participate in churches only if they can avoid offending others?

The end of verse 12 clearly states what is most offensive to believers, and that is the cross of Christ. Some people have called the book of Galatians the crucifixion epistle.

And that's not only because it directly mentions the cross or crucifixion seven times, but because God's redemptive grace and the theme of the epistle become effective for men only through the cross of Christ.

The sign of the cross points to grace. And for that reason, the cross of Christ has always been an offense to the religions of works. We know that it was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

That, of course, comes from 1 Corinthians 1, verse 23. Even before Jesus was crucified, the idea of his sacrificial death was repugnant to many Jews who had shown only superficial interest in his teaching.

[10:13] To prove that point, flip over to John chapter 6, and we'll look at some excerpts from what Jesus taught at Capernaum. First up are John chapter 6, verses 28 and 29.

And here are John 6, 28 and 29. Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God?

Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Jump down to John 6, 41 through 47 now.

And here are John 6, 41 through 47. So the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.

They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves.

[11:17] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God.

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God. He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

Skip down now to verses 57 through 66 of John 6. Jesus is still speaking in John 6, 57. He says, As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?

[12:37] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life, but there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father.

And then verse 66 says, After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Let's go back to our Galatians text and look at Galatians 6.13 now.

Galatians 6.13 says, 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.

The end of verse 13 reemphasizes the self-promotion that Paul mentioned in verse 12. So let's focus on the first part of the verse. That's the part that says, For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law.

[13:55] The Judaizers are even worse than simply self-promoters who are trying to protect themselves from persecution. They also are hypocrites. The false teachers are hypocrites because they want to force the Galatians to do something that the false teachers failed to do.

Paul's comments here are very much like what Jesus said about the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew chapter 23. Listen to Matthew chapter 23, verses 1 through 7.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe what they tell you, but not the works they do.

For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

They do all their deeds to be seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feast and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

[15:14] Here's a quote from John MacArthur. He said, Since the time of Cain's unacceptable offering, man has used religion as a cover for his sin.

As the Judaizers demonstrate, it is possible to be extremely active in the church and yet be morally and spiritually corrupt. Nowhere is hypocrisy easier or more dangerous than in God's work, and nowhere does it arouse God's wrath more than where it is practiced in his name.

John Stott said, Indeed, it is natural to fallen man to decline from the real, the inward, and the spiritual, and to fabricate a substitute religion which is easy and comfortable because its demands are external and ceremonial only.

Now that Paul has reminded his readers about the deceptive troublemakers, he now wants his readers to remember something else. In verses 14 and 15, Paul reminds the Galatians and us about the definite truths.

So the definite truths are your next blanks. Listen to those various truths as we read Galatians chapter 6 verses 14 and 15 again.

[16:37] Paul wrote, The first truth comes in verse 14.

That's the truth about how Paul approaches his ministry. Paul's approach is in sharp contrast to the Judaizers' approach. The Judaizers boasted about the people they influenced and tried to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Paul boasted only in the cross of Christ. This mirrors what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 27 through 31.

Here are 1 Corinthians 1 27 through 31. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

[17:58] And because of him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

Verse 31 there quotes Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 24. And in Jeremiah 9 24 God is speaking. God said but let him who boasts boast in this that he understands and knows me for I am the Lord who practices steadfast love justice and righteousness in the earth for in these things I delight declares the Lord.

In another letter to the Corinthians listen to what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10 verses 17 and 18. 2 Corinthians 10 17 and 18 say let the one who boasts boast in the Lord for it is not the one who commends himself who is approved but the one whom the Lord commends.

Later in 2 Corinthians Paul is forced to boast a bit to defend himself and his authority. He does so only reluctantly. Here is 2 Corinthians 11 17 Paul said what I am saying with this boastful confidence I say not as the Lord would but as a fool.

That verse is one of a few times in 2 Corinthians 11 where Paul refers to his boasting as foolish. Only one type of boasting is the type of boasting for which Paul never apologizes.

[19:46] And of course in Galatians 6 14 we see that the acceptable boasting is boasting in the cross of Christ. Over the several centuries since Paul wrote this letter Christians have come to revere the symbol of the cross.

We see people wear a cross on jewelry and we see crosses in many places throughout a Christian church. But when Paul originally wrote this letter boasting about the cross was unthinkable.

in fact any talk of crucifixion was avoided in polite company. F.F. Bruce said the cross was by all ordinary standards of Paul's day the most ignoble of all objects.

A matter of unrelieved shame not of boasting. It is difficult after 16 centuries and more during which the cross has been a sacred symbol to realize the unspeakable horror and loathing which the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in Paul's day.

The word crux was unmentionable in polite Roman society. Even when one was being condemned to death by crucifixion the sentence used an archaic formula which served as a sort of euphemism and that was hang him on the unlucky tree.

[21:11] Boasting in the cross also forces us to confront some uncomfortable things about ourselves. Listen to this powerful quote from John Stott.

The cross tells us some very unpalatable truths about ourselves namely that we are sinners under the righteous curse of God's law and that we cannot save ourselves.

Christ bore our sin and curse precisely because we could gain release from them in no other way. If we could have been forgiven by our own good works by being circumcised and by keeping the law we may be quite sure that there would have been no cross.

Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to say to us I am here because of you it is your sin I am bearing your curse I am suffering your debt I am paying and your death I am dying.

nothing nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross all of us have inflated views of ourselves especially in self righteousness until we have visited a place called Calvary it is there at the foot of the cross that we shrink to our true size although we hate to admit it true believers are very much like the Judaizers except for one main difference that difference is that we are saved by the grace of God through Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the cross and that is why we like Paul should boast only in the cross Stott went on to say this the truth is that we cannot boast in ourselves and in the cross simultaneously if we boast in ourselves and in our ability to save ourselves we shall never boast in the cross and in the ability of Christ crucified to save us we have to choose only if we have humbled ourselves as hell deserving sinners shall we give up boasting of ourselves fly to the cross for salvation and spend the rest of our days glorifying in the cross then he completed his thought by saying this as a result result of the cross we in the world have parted company each has been crucified to the other the world is the society of unbelievers previously we were desperately anxious to be in favor with the world but now that we have seen ourselves as sinners and Christ crucified as our sin bearer we do not care what the world thinks or says of us or does to us in

[ 24 : 16 ] Galatians 6.15 Paul reminds us about what really counts and here is Galatians 6.15 again we see truths about what doesn't matter and then about what does matter for neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation circumcision and uncircumcision together represent the world systems of religion which include legalistic Judaism and all the countless forms of cults and paganism all of those systems rely on the flesh and none of them is of any value for salvation Galatians 6.15 should remind you of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5.17 and here is 2 Corinthians 5.17 therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has passed away behold the new has come

Paul knew what it was like to be a new creation God changed him from being Saul the blaspheming Pharisee to being Paul the evangelistic apostle no longer did Paul view Jesus as an itinerant Galilean rabbi and self appointed messianic imposter who was the enemy of Judaism instead Paul saw Jesus for who he really is God incarnate the savior the lord of heaven the true messiah who alone fills all old testament prophecies and provides forgiveness for sin the transformation in Paul's thinking took place in one blinding moment when he met the risen lord on the road to Damascus and when Paul's assessment of Jesus changed so did Paul's assessment of everyone else Paul knew that the same profound change that took place in his life would take place in the lives of all those who put their faith in

Christ very few if any conversions are as radical as what Paul experienced but every conversion produces a new creation complete with new interests and desires God's grace and mercy are wide enough to encompass everyone even the most vile wicked sinner and even the foremost of sinners as Paul called himself but God is only the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Jesus substitutionary death becomes their death and Jesus resurrection life their life the transformation wrought by the new birth is an instantaneous miracle and also is a lifelong process of sanctification for those so transformed everything changes the old things have passed away old values ideas plans loves desires and beliefs vanish and they are replaced in the new things and with the new things that accompany salvation so far we've been reminded of the deceptive troublemakers and the definite truths and in the last three verses of this letter

Paul expresses his hope for one more thing and Paul writes about the desired tranquility tranquility so desired tranquility is your last set of blanks we see that in Galatians 6 verses 16 through 18 here are Galatians 6 16 through 18 again and as for all who walk by this rule peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God from now on let no one cause me trouble for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers amen the biggest question about verse 16 is what Paul means by this rule and he's talking about the rule of justification by faith alone that's the standard of gospel salvation and holiness that Paul has talked about over and over in this book he now says that all who have rejected the false gospel of the Judaizers shall enjoy

God's blessing but here even Paul seems to imply an invitation to the Judaizers and to any others who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior they did not have to remain lost and alienated from God through faith in Christ they too could walk by the rule of the gospel remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3 16 through 18 here is what Jesus said in John 3 16 through 18 for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have

eternal life for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of  
[ 29 : 47 ] God even in his anger and disgust with the Judaizers Paul still desires that they receive the same transformation that Paul himself experienced when he's talking about walking by this rule he's talking about accepting the gospel of divine accomplishment through Christ's sacrifice on the cross and to walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than by sight in the power of the flesh he also mentions peace and mercy and peace and mercy here represent salvation peace refers to the believer's new relationship to God mercy refers to the divine removal of the believer's sins peace is the positive side of salvation peace is the establishing of a new and right relationship to God mercy is the negative side mercy is the forgiving of all a believer's sins and the setting aside of his judgment the Israel of

God refers to Jewish believers in Jesus Christ to those who are spiritual as well as physical descendants of Abraham they are the real Jews the Israel of faith months ago in Galatians chapter 3 verses 7 through 9 we learned that true Christians are the descendants of Abraham spiritually here are Galatians 3 7 through 9 know then that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying in you shall all the nations be blessed so then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith putting Galatians 3 7 through 9 together with Galatians 6 16 we can see that the Israel of God represents the true church this is consistent with Paul taught in Romans listen to

Romans chapter 2 verses 28 and 29 Romans 2 28 and 29 say for no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly nor is circumcision outward and physical but a Jew is one inwardly and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit not by the letter and of course letter there is another word for law then he says his praise is not from man but from God a little bit later in Romans listen to what Paul said in Romans chapter 9 verses 6 through 8 Romans 9 6 through 8 say but it is not as though the word of God has failed for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring but through Isaac shall your offspring be named this means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God but the children of the promise are counted as offspring there is one people of God we are the children of Abraham we are God's Israel so the blessings of God the apostolic benediction they are bestowed upon those of us who are in Christ Jesus check out Galatians 6 17 now Paul said from now on let no one cause me trouble for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus Paul probably to protect the guilty here avoids getting specific about whom is causing him the trouble he most certainly has the Judaizers in view but we know from other verses in Galatians that the Judaizers had negatively influenced some of the true believers in the church even some of those true believers may have been causing Paul some trouble from our own experience we know that some of the most difficult trouble to endure comes from fellow believers inside the church and if Paul was getting some opposition from true believers that likely hurt him more than any trouble that the Judaizers had caused him and we know from other scripture what Paul means when he talks about bearing in his body the marks of Jesus listen to Paul's own summary of his suffering in 2nd Corinthians chapter 11 verses 24 through 28 again these verses are 2nd Corinthians 11 24 through 28 five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one three times I was beaten with rods once I was stoned three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers danger from robbers danger from my own people danger from Gentiles danger in the city danger in the wilderness danger at sea danger from false brothers in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst often without food in cold and exposure and apart from other things there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches when you read that testimony the obvious question is what can make a person be willing to endure so many difficulties well we have the answer right here in

[ 35 : 48 ] Galatians Paul was focused on the cross of Christ he considered himself to be crucified to the world and the world to be crucified to him for Paul everything changed when he encountered the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road remember what Paul said in Philippians chapter 3 verses 2 through 11 here are Philippians 3 2 through 11 look out for the dogs look out for the evildoers look out for those who mutilate the flesh for we are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh though I myself have

reason for confidence in the flesh also if anyone thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh I have more circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law a Pharisee as to zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless but whatever gain I had

I counted as loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead Paul knew this important fact whenever a Christian is persecuted for his faith it is really Christ who is being persecuted through that Christian when Paul was on the way to Damascus to arrest and imprison Christians there the Lord said to him

Saul Saul why are you persecuting me that comes from Acts 9:4 because Satan and his world system can no longer afflict Christ directly they afflict Christ indirectly by persecuting the church Christ's body after eight months and now 28 lessons in Galatians this brings us to the final verse Paul closes his letter with these words in Galatians 6:18 the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers amen for Paul Galatians started and ended with the grace of Christ his first mention of grace came all the way back in Galatians chapter 1 verses 3 through 5 here are Galatians 1:3 through 5 grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever amen compare those verses now to Galatians 6:18

Paul says simply for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers amen in his closing benediction Paul makes the final declaration of grace over law faith over works the internal over the external Paul closes just the way he began and that's talking about grace not the law of Moses but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ remember the main idea for these final eight verses Paul revisits some major themes and points his readers back to the one thing that matters for salvation and that's Jesus Christ work on the cross before the Messiah came to the earth Old Testament Judaism was the most perfect expression of belief in God because it was founded on his revealed word and pointed to the need for a savior but after the saving Messiah who of course is Christ came

Judaism was no longer valid in God's sight a Jew who rejected Jesus was spiritually as pagan as any Gentile worshiper of false gods in the same way professed Christians who in the name of Jewish legalism sought to add human effort to the finished work of Christ were also ungodly enemies of God such were the Judaizers of Galatia who boasted in their flesh throughout this letter Paul has told us again and again that the only thing that matters is grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone if you remember nothing else about this Galatians study remember Galatians chapter 1 verse 9 here is Galatians chapter 1 verse 9 as we have said before so now I say again if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received let him be accursed some of you may know that the hymn when I survey the wondrous cross is based upon

[ 41 : 31 ] Galatians chapter 6 listen to the words of that hymn when I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride forbid it Lord that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God all the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to his blood see from his head his hands his feet sorrow and love flow mingled down did air such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown and here's a verse we rarely sing his dying crimson like a robe spreads or his body on the tree then I am dead to all the globe and all the globe is dead to me the final verse returns to the familiar words we know!

the realm of nature mine that were present far too small love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all with that there's nothing more to say than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit amen let's pray father we thank you for one more reminder that grace and the cross of Christ is the only thing that matters for salvation help us always keep that in mind when we are tempted to think we can do our salvation or sanctification by works always keep us focused that we are saved and we are kept saved only because of Christ and what he did for us help us share this message with others in Jesus name we pray amen