

Galatians 1

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[0 : 00] So we already read this evening from Galatians 1. We're going to focus on Galatians 1, verses 6-10 this evening as we close out the Lord's day.!

And let's pray one more time before we hear the word preached. Our Father, we are thankful for your holy and errant, sufficient word.

And we do pray this evening that you would work your way in our hearts and in our minds and in our souls. May we find that these very simple truths which most of us, if not all of us, know in this room, we pray that we would find our hearts stirred afresh and anew with them, our minds peaked once again with them, our affections moved.

And we pray that we would truly give you glory over these next minutes. Thank you for being our God. Thank you for making us your people. We want to exalt your name.

We pray all this in the strong name of Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. This book of Galatians is unique. It's unique in a lot of ways.

[1 : 23] One of them is that when Paul writes this book, he begins it very differently than he begins every other book that he writes.

In every other one of his epistles, he either thanks God for the people or he thanks the people for their ministry.

And yet here at the very beginning of this letter, he doesn't do that. He gives his greeting and then he just kinds of erupts. He's received news that so troubles him about these people that he doesn't thank God for them or thank them in Christ.

He just can't help himself. He says, I'm astonished. And Paul, when he read it, he paused there rightfully because it's meant to grip.

He's astonished. He's grieved. He's struck to the heart about what he has heard about these Galatians. It's a very strong word.

[2 : 32] We might say something. I don't know if you do this in England. We say it in the United States. His jaw hit the floor. He's open mouth. He can't believe it. What is it that concerns him so greatly?

He says how quickly they're abandoning the gospel that they recently received. He had preached to them the gospel and they had welcomely received that gospel.

And they received that gospel with rejoicing. And now they're tossing it aside. And he's astonished. You've seen this.

A child receives a gift on their birthday or on Christmas. And oh, they are so elated with that gift.

They are rejoicing. There's all kinds of little giggles and chuckles as they open this gift.

And then maybe even they do a little happy dance as they have this gift. And then the next gift they have that they're given is in a box.

[3 : 37] And they unwrap that. And there's the box. And whatever was in the box kind of gets put to the side. And then they're delighted with the box for the next hour or two hours. And you think as a parent, why in the world did I spend the money on these gifts?

They were happy with the box. And Paul here is saying they've been driven afar from what they were so excited about before.

Let's give the context here. Jewish Christians have come to Galatia, what is modern day Turkey, most likely from Jerusalem. This region, Galatia, Paul had preached the gospel in and he had successfully done so, where there were different churches established throughout Asia Minor or modern day Turkey.

And now these Jewish Christians, these Judaizers have come most likely from Jerusalem and they are seeking to add to the gospel. Their claim is that there isn't actually a free offer of grace.

Maybe not so surprising. These Judaizers believe that one must have credentials to receive the gospel, to receive the grace of Christ.

[4 : 56] And they, of course, have the credentials. They are Jews who confess to having been converted to Christ. Jews who have long believed in the God of the Bible. And they come along saying, yes, Paul gave you the gospel, but there's more.

Don't you know the people of God have always been circumcised? They've always abided by the law. And so you have to understand that first you must be circumcised.

First you must observe the law, be adherence to the law, and then the grace of God that is extended to you, then you may receive it.

The grace that Paul spoke about. But their grace is no grace. And their gospel is no gospel.

And what astonishes Paul is that these Galatians have tossed aside the gospel which he gave to them by preaching it to them, this beautiful costly gift. And they were embracing this cheap replacement that's being peddled by these Judaizers.

[6 : 01] And Paul was rightfully astonished. So here, as we sit here, 21st century, you say, well, that doesn't make a lot of sense.

Surely this isn't something that we are dealing with. Understand why Paul would be astonished who would cast aside the gospel that is surely an anomaly in Paul's time.

But it's far from an anomaly. It's far from just being part of his time. It's something that you and I are prone to.

This church, though I don't know it, it's prone to it. My church that I serve is prone to it.

I'm prone to it. This is why it's always good to be reminded about the gospel.

[7 : 05] It's also always good to be reminded that the greatest threats are not usually outside the church. They are usually inside the church. You and I, we get worked up about the threats outside of the church.

And rightfully, we are to be on guard. But often it is the threats inside the church that do the greatest harm and destroy more of God's people and churches than you and I can count.

It's much more subtle, but it's much more deadly. So let's see what we can learn from the text this evening. First, turning from the gospel, Paul says, is desertion of God.

Turning from the gospel is desertion from God. He comes right out of the box saying in verse 6, You are so quickly deserting him who called you. You are deserting God the Father.

His warning in the text comes quickly because the stakes are so dire to him. He doesn't say that they have deserted God. He doesn't say that. He says, but they are deserting God.

[8 : 09] They're in process. Their end isn't sealed yet. It hasn't come to a conclusion yet, but they are on their path to deserting. They're on the path to destruction.

And so he's warning them. It's a good descriptive word that Paul uses here, deserting. Because it makes us think about times of war when soldiers will desert in the midst of battle, or they will desert their army in the midst of war.

And that's a good word here because you and I are engaged in war. We're engaged in the great war.

Not World War I. The great war. The war that's been waged since the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3.15. You and I are participants in that war.

You're a soldier in that war. And Paul is warning them that it is very easy to desert those whom you are linked together with.

[9 : 15] Your comrades and arms. To abandon your captain of salvation. And to go chasing after and aligning yourself with the enemy.

In the United States we would say you're being a Benedict Arnold, but he's a hero to you. A traitor to us. It would be like being Guy Fawkes, I guess, in your context.

What did it look like? How were they quickly deserting God the Father? He says in verse 6, They're doing this by turning to a different gospel.

And he makes it clear. They were extended grace in Christ. The gospel, of course, meaning good news. And he's reminding them that this good news, this good news for sinners, he's saying is Christ.

Christ is your good news. Sinners are extended grace because the Son of God came into the world and became fleshed and lived the perfect life that we could not.

[10:18] And then died the atoning death upon the cross that we could not. And was buried and remained in the grave for three days. And was raised from the grave, triumphing over all of his and our enemies, showing that Satan and death and sin and hell have no hold upon the Christian.

Because they have no hold on him. And then by the Spirit that he sends into the world, he unites us with himself so that his victory is our victory.

That all that is his, that all that becomes his as his inheritance, as he sits enthroned above and even now liveth to intercede for us, and he sits on the throne of God.

And he exercises his divine, kingly authority for you and I, that we have all things in Christ. You've been set free.

It's a gospel. And Paul is saying you have turned from the simple gospel.

[11:33] Grace in Christ. Receiving Christ. And when you do so, you desert God.

The underlying thought is this, to have God one must have Christ. To wander from Christ is therefore to desert God the Father. As Paul will say in another book, there is one mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's only one. Apart from Christ, God is not our Father. He's not our friend. He's not anything that we would welcome.

He's our enemy apart from Christ. He's not our Savior. He's not our defender. He's not our protector. He's not our hope.

He's not our salvation. He's not our salvation. Apart from Christ. But in Christ, He's all of those things and more.

[12:36] He's our friend. And He's our... Our lover, if we can say it that way. The lover of our soul.

He's our King who reigns over us. He is our fortress and our defender and our protector. He is our peace and He is our joy and He is our hope.

All things in Him. In Christ. To embrace Christ is to have God. To reject Christ is to reject God.

Second, there is no other gospel. There's no other gospel. No matter what people say.

No matter what they argue. No matter what they offer to you. There is no other good news.

Eternally good news. Apart from Christ.

[13:40] All people will present their teaching as good news. You notice the enemies of the gospel seldom fly the flag of being opposed to the gospel.

They always present their message as the gospel. And they will often use the same words and even the same terms. A Jehovah's Witness that comes to your door will use the exact same phrases.

And we'll use the same words. When my kids were little I was catechizing them. And there was a day that Jehovah's Witness came to our front door.

Two of them. They always come in twos. Right? I have a rule with them. I love when they come to the door. Let them come to the door. I have a rule. My rule is this. When they show up, family member has to come get me.

And I will go to them and I'll say, listen, I am happy to answer all of your questions for as long as you want. But at the end I get to ask you three questions. And they always accept that.

[14:41] And so this day I was letting them ask all of their questions. And at the end we got to the end and I said, okay, great. Is it my turn just to ask you my few questions? They said, yes.

And I said, do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? And they said, oh, yes, absolutely. And I said, do you believe that he is God?

And the older one hesitated. The younger one started to say yes. And the older one said, well, it depends what you mean. And I said, well, do you believe that we believe in the same God?

And the younger one said, oh, yes, we do. I said, then let's just return back to that second question.

Would you answer that? I said to the older one, and she said, well, we believe that he is a God.

He was created by God the Father. And my daughter, who was sitting in the front room playing with toys, heard that.

[15:46] And she came running up and she said, that's not true. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

They've never come back since that day, they strove his witnesses. She knew what she heard was wrong. It was a false Christ, and that was no Christ.

But it can happen much more subtle than that. It can happen in the church. It's happening in churches that Paul has helped to begin. Our adversary is the deceiver, the father of lies.

He doesn't tempt with things that are opposite of what we have embraced. He just likes to distort it just a little bit. He just likes to get it a degree off.

You know, if in those ancient days when you were a pilot of a ship and you were going across the Atlantic from Great Britain to the United States, and if you were just a degree off, you end up in Brazil instead of the United States.

[16 : 55] A degree off over time just puts you somewhere else. And that's what our adversary does. He just likes to sew just a little bit, just a degree off, or something to say, just have a little bit of the wrong tincture.

I think of it like a dial on a radio. And you just, you tune it in. You get that frequency and you tune it in. I guess we don't do that anymore, but I used to when I was a kid.

You tune it in. And if you're just a little bit off, it's all fuzzy. And eventually it just disappears. A little distortion of what is pure and right makes it filthy and wrong.

Say we were baking a cake together and as we were baking a cake, we'd say, oh, we've got to get all those ingredients. And so we go and we get the flour and we get the eggs and we get the butter and we get the yeast and we get it all out and we lay it on the counter.

Let's make a chocolate cake. So we go and we get cocoa powder too and we put it on the shelf there. And then we remember, ah, got to get sugar. So we run to the pantry and you grab those crystallized white crystals off the shelf and you bring them back.

[18 : 11] And as you bring them back and we're looking at it, you say, ah, but that's salt, not sugar. Ah, let's call it sugar. And we put it in and we bake a cake.

Say, well, that's not a cake I want any part of. It would not taste good. It's not the same. A little off, it ceases to be cake, no matter what you call it.

A little off of the gospel, it doesn't matter what you call it. It's not the gospel. These false teachers, they don't seem to be adding much, just a little.

It's a little bit of change. From what we can see later in the book, they were simply requiring circumcision. Observance of some holy days, that's it. It's just a small thing.

And couldn't a small thing be helpful? Almost every heretic in the church is sought to be helpful to the church. It's usually one of two drives.

[19 : 09] It's either, let's just make the gospel a little less offensive, so that people more readily receive it. Or let's make it just a little more appealing to what people want to receive.

But by adding a little law, it was no longer grace. Remember what he said in verse 6, God called you in the grace of Christ, a little law, and it ceased to be grace.

If I offered you a slice of cake, and said, as I made this cake, I just put a little gasoline, a little petrol in it, would you eat it? No, it's deadly at that point.

We don't want a perverted cake. Even more so, we don't want to swallow a perverted gospel. You know, when false teachers do this in the history of the church, it's usually with the right motives. And I think people in our day and age, and even as we sit in our chairs and pews, it's often with the right motives. The story that often goes through my mind is that account from the Old Testament of Uzzah that troubles so many.

[20 : 24] Do you remember when Uzzah is struck dead by the Lord? There is that account in 2 Samuel, and they have gone to get the Ark of the Covenant, and David wants to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and he wants to bring it into the Holy City, but they don't obey the law of God where they were supposed to carry it upon poles, and Levites were supposed to carry it.

And instead, as 30,000 men go down and get this Ark of the Covenant, and they put it on an ox cart. It's a new ox cart. They're seeking to show honor to the Lord.

But it's not what he commanded. And when that ox cart is going along the way, the ox cart jostles, and when the ox cart jostles, the Ark of the Covenant gets jolted. And when the Ark of the Covenant gets jolted, it begins to fall off the ox cart, and Uzzah reaches out, and he just braces the Ark of the Covenant so it doesn't fall into the mud.

Is it right motive? Oh, he's trying to stop the very meeting place of God with his people from hitting the mud. It was Jonathan Edwards who first said it, but I remember hearing R.C. Sproul say it provocatively.

He said, what Uzzah thought was wrong? He thought his heart was cleaner than the mud. You and I don't realize how filthy we are apart from the grace of God.

[21 : 57] That he actually thought disobeying the law of God and stopping the Ark from falling in the mud, touching the Ark which he was not allowed to do by the law of God, that he was in the right.

God strikes him dead. And we find that so offensive. David found it offensive in 2 Samuel. And you know why?

Because we don't know how black our hearts are. I was watching Paul when he was just doing this thing with the kids and the inky, inky finger, inky finger.

And at one point he went to talk about himself and he was pointing at his chest and Oh, don't touch your chest with your thumb. That's what I wanted to say. Imagine if what it really was, was his hands were just black and it was old.

You and I are fallen beings. We don't just have inky thumbs. Great illustration. You have inky minds and inky hearts and inky affections and inky souls and inky hands and inky eyes and inky ears.

[23 : 16] You're corrupted through and through. We're sinners. We don't add to the gospel because we have nothing to add.

What you started in, Paul is telling them you must continue in. You started in Christ, you must continue in Christ. And he makes it clear in verse 7. Not that there is another one, meaning gospel.

The gospel is not a rare jewel. It is the only jewel of salvation. And so you think through the ages and we could do this all evening. Gnosticism, Arianism, Pleagianism, Marcionism, Donatism, Universalism, Romanism, Mysticism, Legalism, Easy-Believism, The Social Justice Gospel, The Prosperity Gospel, The Self-Help Gospel, The Therapeutic Gospels are no gospels.

They're not true. They don't give grace because it's only found in the good news of Christ Jesus, the person of Christ.

The Second, The Second, The Second, The Second, The Second, The Second, The Second, Thus, a preacher bringing any other message is no small danger.

[24 : 38] And Paul wants to make it crystal clear. He repeats what he said to them before, verse 9, as we have said before, and he repeats it again. This is something worth saying again and again.

He says, Even if we, we that is me, and all the rest of the apostles, John and James, name who you want, whoever it is, if we came, any of us brothers, writing this letter, or even other apostles, and we came preaching to you something different than the simple gospel that Christ has given for sinners, He says, let that person be a curse.

The stakes are that high. A preacher bringing any other message is no small danger. Notice it's not just the messenger that is important, it's the message.

If a preacher is not declaring to you the gospel, he's no good to you. No matter how much you like him. He's a danger, in fact.

Paul wants to make this even more clear. He says, If it's not a man, but an angel that comes as a messenger, verse 8, and just so you aren't confused, this isn't a hellish angel, this isn't a demon, this is an angel from heaven, he says, even if it was an angel from heaven bearing witness to another gospel, let him be a curse.

[26 : 00] Though he comes from heaven, he does not come from God. If his message is different. The message is all important.

God has spoken. There is nothing more, nothing less, than Christ Jesus to be proclaimed. There's nothing more, nothing less than it is to be accepted, but Christ Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews will say it this way, when he begins his book, won't he? He'll say, Long ago, at many times in many ways, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets, but in these last days, He has spoken to us in His Son.

That's it. It's the final word. You don't need anything else. The gospel that Paul preaches, that the Bible proclaims, and I'm here this evening preaching to you, is that God the Father sent God into the world, and God the Son willingly took on flesh, and lived and died for sinners.

And He extends His grace to you. And you but receive. You receive Him by faith. You just believe in Him.

[27 : 19] You just trust in Him for your salvation. That's it. Nothing less, but nothing more. That's it.

There's no other gospel. How could there be? How could God give any more than His Son? How is that even possible?

I love how one theologian has said, God sent God. How could God give any more than Himself? Let me just offer a few quick applications.

First, be an expert of the gospel. Be an expert of the gospel. I've been told that U.S. Treasury officers, that they don't study counterfeit American dollar bills or bills. They just study the real thing. They study the real thing, so that they know it through and through. And so that when they hear or see anything different, it sends off alarm bells.

[28 : 31] You should so know the gospel. So know Christ. That you hear anything else. That's false. And you can run from it.

Be an expert. Second, oh, I wish I didn't have to say this. Don't get bored with the gospel. Some of you are even sitting here tonight, and it's gone through your head, I know this. Don't get bored with the gospel. I wonder, in your spare moments, when you have free time, what is it you think upon?

When you're in conversations with one another, what is it that you talk about? What animates you? I mean, what really stirs you?

Is it rugby? Is it gardening? Is it biscuits after church?

[29 : 48] What is it? Is it so easy to get animated about all kinds of Christian things.

These Judaizers, they're animated. And they profess Christ, but what they're animated by is the law, not Christ. They're animated by what they want people to do, rather than what has been given to us.

What are you animated by? Is it Christ? Or are you bored with Christ? Do you find yourself thinking upon Christ, and talking about Christ, and delighting in Christ, and wanting to know more and more of Christ?

It's so easy, just to be a degree off. Third, recognize wolves, and treat them as enemies. Paul said in verse 7, that quote, there are some who trouble you.

No doubt these teachers believe they were helping. Here's a better, more mature, higher view of the Christian life. These are enemies. And it's right to warn sheep, if a wolf is in their midst.

[31 : 04] It seems harsh that he would say, let them be accursed, but sheep are being devoured. You don't pet a wolf. You don't reason with a wolf. You drive it off. Lives are at stake. So, if there is a wolf, you recognize it.

You recognize them as enemies. Finally, no sound preaching. No sound preaching.

I can speak for Paul and Reuben. No. Listen, I want the people in my congregation to stop me at any moment that they say, Jason, you're not preaching Christ.

any moment that I'm off and, oh man, I am on different precipices and there are other things that seem to animate me and I am doing all kinds of things but not putting Christ before them.

Oh my goodness, I want them to come and say, oh pastor, we love you and that was wrong. We need Christ. No sound preaching.

[32 : 14] If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you receive, the essence of preaching is a gospel. It's Christ that is the good news is to be proclaimed.

There's a lot that passes for preaching that is anything but preaching. When Paul thinks about preaching, his mind immediately links it with the gospel. He says in 1 Corinthians, we preach Christ and we preach him crucified.

And as he says in these final verses, this is being faithful to God. He says if he wanted to please men, he would preach differently. Paul says, I preach Christ, the gospel. He says in 1 Corinthians, we preach Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.

He says, he offends everyone because Paul is willing to offend everyone with Christ because everyone needs Christ. That's what you need.

That's what I need. That's what our neighbors need. That's what the people in the office need.

That's what your coworkers need. That's what your fellow students and teachers need. That's what your neighbors need.

[33 : 19] It's Christ. Oh, we can compromise a little here, add a little there, and just make this Christianity thing a little more appealing.

Just a little less offensive. Isn't that loving? No. It's just not loving at all. If you are giving them anything more that they must have than Christ or anything less than Christ.

It's only Christ that is the good news. It's Christ. It's not a Christ we've dressed up.

It's a Christ we've dressed down. It's the Christ of the Bible. And he is good news for the sender. He is abundantly good news. All that we need.

And he has simply been gifted to us. Isn't it astonishing that we would ever be tempted to wander from Christ.

[34 : 30] And hold firmly to that gospel. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.