

GALATIANS 1

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Galatians chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we begin this very interesting letter that is very appropriate for the days we are living in.

Keep in mind that Galatia was not like Corinth, which we just read about, a city in Southern Greece.

Galatia is not a city but a region that encompasses the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe; places that Paul visited on all three of his missionary journeys and where he planted churches in these cities on his first missionary journey. (Acts 13:14-14:23)

The time frame of the writing of this letter to all these churches in the Southern portion of Galatia is the early 50's A. D. and this letter was written when Paul was in Corinth shortly before he wrote his letter to the Romans.

Which is interesting, because many believe that Galatians is the *“first draft of the book of Romans”* because it contains the same doctrinal material but in condensed form.

I don't think there is any doubt who wrote this letter. Even the most liberal of scholars attribute this letter to the apostle Paul. In fact, the early church fathers like Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria all stated that Paul the apostle wrote this letter to the Galatians.

This letter is powerful and has been called the “Declaration of Independence of Christian Liberty.”

Merril C. Tenney wrote of this letter: “Christianity might have been just one more Jewish sect, and the thought of the western world might have been entirely pagan had it never been written. Galatians embodies the germinal teaching on Christian freedom which separated Christianity from Judaism, and which launched it upon a career of missionary conquest. It was the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation, because of salvation by grace alone became the dominant theme of the preaching of the Reformers.”

This letter is just as important to us today as it was to the people living in the region of Galatia for it will show us that we are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works.

And think about this, after over 1900 years people are still trying to mix Grace and the Law and it doesn't work.

Adding anything to Grace doesn't improve it; in fact, it only cheapens it. And so, as we go through this letter Paul will show us what saving faith is and isn't!

Let me show you what I mean about Grace being mixed with the Law today. One of the main proponents of this is called The Hebrew Roots Movement, and this is what we are told of this movement that hundreds of thousands of Christians are getting involved in, and we see those numbers growing more and more.

And, as we will see, this is what Paul was coming against very strongly in this letter. We are told,

Broadly speaking, followers of the HRM [Hebrew Roots Movement] believe that all believers in Christ are obligated to follow Jewish laws and practices from the books of Moses. In some groups, extrabiblical rabbinic teachings and traditions are elevated (if not in official doctrinal beliefs then in practice) to the same level as Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Although they often speak of keeping the “law,” they are usually inconsistent in how this is understood and defined. For example, certain laws are either broken or neglected while a great deal of attention is placed on keeping the Sabbath (Friday sunset through Saturday sunset) and celebrating the feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23. . . .

It is difficult to document the movement’s history because of its lack of organizational structure, but the modern HRM has been influenced in some ways by Seventh Day Adventism and the Worldwide Church of God during the lifetime of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. Additionally, the HRM has been influenced by the practices of Messianic Jews, but the similarities between the groups are superficial and should not be conflated. In fact, some Messianic Jewish organizations have denounced the beliefs of the HRM.

The past few decades have witnessed a growing influence of this movement among conservative Christians. It is not unusual to see some HRM proponents give themselves Hebrew names, identify as Torah observant, write “God” as “G-d,” eat only kosher foods, claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew (or at least several books were), condemn numerous Christian traditions as pagan, and dismiss teachings from Paul’s epistles. Some have gone so far as to challenge orthodox Christian beliefs such as the Trinity and even the deity of Jesus Christ.

Fundamentally, the HRM teaches that many modern Christian beliefs and practices were introduced to the church by pagan Greeks. This is why they generally do not like to be identified as Christians. Instead, they believe that they need to recover the first century Hebrew roots of Christianity.

One writer summarized the HRM in the following way:

It is a very modern movement that insists that we must resurrect first-century Judaism (our Jewish Roots) and the milieu and lifestyle of first-century Jews and impose them on both Jewish and non-Jewish believers. This is not just an academic study to better understand Scripture and its setting but is rather a movement of restoration that claims that the church has moved off its Jewish foundation and must return to a more Jewish way of life to be authentic.

- <https://answersingenesis.org/presuppositions/dangers-hebrew-roots-movement/>

I guess this is why it is so confusing to me that so many Christians are getting into this movement when the Word of God clearly, very clearly comes against it.

In fact, Paul is flabbergasted by how the Galatians turned so quickly from the truths of God found in the Word of God to believe a lie.

And as you will see, Galatians is the most impersonal and businesslike of all of Paul's epistles.

Paul has a quick introduction to this letter and then he gets down to business!

Why is he that concerned? It was because the Gospel was under attack and souls were at stake and Paul had no time for small talk or pleasantries. When it came to defending the Gospel Paul was all business and so should we!

Look at what Paul says in this letter, **“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel . . . O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth . . . I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. . . .You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”** (Galatians 1:6, 3:1, 4:11, 5:4)

Was Paul being too controlling here? Was Paul neglecting what the Old Testament said? Was he adopting pagan teachings? Absolutely not! You see, Paul loved them too much to let them continue down that path and sometimes you need to be hard!

Leon Morris wrote, “Galatians is a passionate letter, the outpouring of the soul of a preacher on fire for his Lord and deeply committed to bringing his hearers to an understanding of what saving faith is.”

Make no mistake about it, the theme of this epistle is ***“Salvation by grace alone through faith alone”***, or ***“How does a person get into heaven.”***

Paul is going to argue that the only way a person will make it into heaven is by God's grace!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Galatians chapter 1, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we read through His Word.

GALATIANS 1

VERSES 1-2

As you can see, Paul opens up with his position of authority – an apostle.

Why did he say that?

Because Paul is going to speak against the false teachers, the Judaizers who were coming in after Paul taught and they were mixing Law and Grace together for salvation.

Thus, Paul wants these churches in the region of Galatia to know that this was a Divine calling by God. He didn't decide this position nor did other men chose him for this position, but God called him into it!

Thus, as he speaks, as he rebukes this false doctrine, he does so with the authority of God!

Sometimes there are people who wonder who gave me the authority to do what I do as a Pastor.

First of all, it wasn't because I graduated from some seminary school, that would only make me a graduate.

It is because God has called me to be a pastor and with that calling comes the responsibility to teach, love, warn, and even correct the sheep that God has entrusted to me. And, like it or not, I take that very seriously!

Martin Luther struggled some with what Paul said, and then he saw the wisdom of it all. He wrote, “When I was a young man I thought Paul was making too much of his call. I did not understand his purpose. I did not then realize the importance of the ministry. . . .We exalt our calling, not to gain glory among men, or money, or satisfaction, or favor, but because people need to be assured that the words we speak are the words of God. This is no sinful pride. It is holy pride.”

And the reality is, that should be true in our own lives as well. That God is the one who is doing the calling, it is His Divine call upon our lives and not something we have orchestrated or manipulated.

Thus, the God who appointed Paul also appoints us for positions of ministry!

Some people wonder how I pick or choose elders or pastors or for that matter, people in any ministry position here at Calvary.

The answer is simple, I don't.

All I do is watch what God is doing in people's lives, how He is using them and then I recognize that calling upon their life!

That is the way it should be. That is something that my pastor taught me years ago, don't put someone in a position of leadership just because you have an opening, there is a need. Wait upon God and let Him raise someone up, which may take some time, but it is a lot harder to remove someone from ministry once they are in it. Wise words!

And again, this letter is to be read to all the churches in the region of Galatia!

VERSES 3-5

Paul opens with his familiar greeting of Grace and Peace, the Greek and Jewish greeting.

One of the reasons is simple, that both Jews and Greeks are one in Christ and thus he is greeting both Jews and Gentiles.

Also, as Lenski tells us, “Grace is always first, peace is always second. This is due to the fact that grace is the source of peace. Without grace there is and can be no peace, but when grace is ours, peace must of necessity follow.”

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

Look at what we are told in John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

God the Father **GAVE** His Son and now we are told that Jesus **GAVE** Himself to pay for our sins. He paid the price for our sins and if we receive the free gift from God we can be delivered from this present evil age, it’s power that is upon our lives!

Thus, all the glory is given to God for what He has done, and no glory can be given to us and what we have done in regard to our salvation.

It would be like having this life-saving operation and as the surgery is over, the praise goes to the scalpel instead of the surgeon. That would be foolish, the scalpel was just the instrument in which the surgeon used, and thus, he is to get the praise, the glory!

We are just the instruments that God works through and thus, He gets the glory, not us! Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

You see, the death of Jesus was voluntary, He *GAVE* Himself and it satisfied God’s righteous demands against sinful man and He has reconciled us back to God by paying in full the penalty for our sins.

It is as Peter tells us in I Peter 3:18, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

And when Paul speaks of **“this present evil age”** he is speaking of the Devil’s control of this world’s system. It began with the fall of Adam and it continues on today, culminating with the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on this earth!

But Paul says that Jesus **“might deliver us from this present evil age.”** What is that about?

The Greek word that is used for **“deliver”** means to “pull from danger.” I like that and it is exactly what Jesus has done.

It is not deliverance from the *presence* of something, but deliverance from the *power* of something. We will not be delivered from the *presence* of this present evil age until we go to be with Jesus or when He establishes His Kingdom here on earth. But we can experience deliverance from the *power* of this present evil age right now.

And when you think about it, this is exactly what Jesus has done for us. Jesus is on a rescue mission to pull us from danger because this world is doomed for judgment. And thus, those who receive the Gospel message will be pulled from this danger!

William MacDonald put it like this, “Verse 4 should be a reminder that God is not interested in improving the world, or making men comfortable in it, but in delivering men from it. Our priorities should coincide with His.”

One more point here. It speaks of bringing glory to God and yet, when you think about it, if my salvation was based upon me keeping the Law, then guess who gets the glory? It would be me!

I guess, if that were true, and it isn't, then I could sing, “How great I am!” It makes me shudder just to think about that and yet, this false doctrine of mixing Grace and the Law robbed God of some of the glory that was due to Him!

So Paul is getting them refocused on who gets the glory, it is God! And our salvation is based on the person, the price and the purpose, not on some principles to live!

Thus, before Paul hits them hard and heavy, he shows them that our salvation is based upon Christ, the cross of Calvary and that He has saved us, ***IT IS FINISHED!***

Let me put this into perspective for you. You can remove Mohammed from Islam, Buddha from Buddhism, Confucius from Confucianism and nothing would change, because those religions aren't built on their leaders, but on their teachings; but not on them personally.

But remove Jesus Christ from Christianity and it ceases to exist because Christianity is inseparably linked to and built upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ!

Only Jesus, the sinless Son of God could have paid the price for our sins and rescue us from coming judgment (purpose).

And the big problem with legalism is that it tries to ignore or diminish Jesus' death with regard to salvation.

How do they do this, how do they get away with this?

It is very simple. Legalists give it lip service, they say Jesus' death and resurrection will get you "*in the door*" of salvation but now you have to work to earn the right to stay saved.

As we will see, that is not the case, not at all.

And if Paul were to go to a church and give this message here in Galatians today, he would probably be thrown out of many of them because he is too harsh! Again, when it comes to salvation, there is no compromise!

VERSES 6-9

Keep in mind that Paul often opened up his letters with praise unto the recipients of his letters, thanksgiving, but not in this letter to the Galatians.

In a sense he is saying, "*We need to talk!*"

Paul is amazed, he is astounded, he is bewildered that they have turned away from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, and embracing a false gospel, a false Jesus! You see, by doing this they were turning away from Jesus!

And please understand that Paul didn't marvel that false teachers were teaching a false gospel, that is just what they do. No, he marveled that the Galatians, who he had personally taught the truth, were turning so quickly from that truth and buying into these lies. This is the pain of every pastor, believers believing these lies of these false teachers! And, I am saddened to say, I have felt this pain very deeply a few years back! I understand what Paul was going through, to some extent!

And the problem here was with these Judaizers who came in and recognized Jesus as the Messiah. They spoke of His sacrificial death. They not only believed on the Gospel message, but they tried to improve upon it by mixing the Law with Grace and adding anything to Grace only destroys it, as I have said.

Paul tells us in Romans 11:6, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**But if it is by grace (His unmerited favor and graciousness), it is no longer conditioned on works or anything men have done. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace [it would be meaningless].**” I don’t think that could be any clearer, and yet, when the deceivers come, they deceive the people! And the reason they are deceived is because they ignore what the Word of God has to say and they listen to the words of men!

I am sorry, but there is no way you can read the Scriptures and come to the conclusion that we are saved by Grace and the Law! Thus, you reject what God’s Word has to say to believe what man has to say, and I have heard and seen people do this very thing!

One writer gives to us this insight into these destructive, these dangerous teachings. He tells us, “The most destructive dangers to the church have never been atheism, pagan religions, or cults that openly deny Scripture, but rather supposedly Christian movements that accept so much biblical truth that their unscriptural doctrines seem relatively insignificant and harmless. But a single drop of poison in a large container can make all the water lethal. And a single false idea that in any way undercuts God’s grace poisons the whole system of belief.” (John MacArthur)

Paul, in warning the Corinthians, said back in II Corinthians 11:3-4, **“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it!”**

And yet today, we see Christians embrace so much unbiblical doctrine. May we be warned for there are different Gospels out there, other Jesus’ out there that people are trying to get us to follow – but the truth of God’s Word exposes their lies, their deceptions – may we not forget that!

Interestingly enough, in Galatians 1:7, the word **“trouble”** carries with it the idea of, “to make seasick as when one is tossed to and fro by waves on the sea.”

That is exactly what Legalism does. It tosses you in and out of salvation, up and down emotionally until you are spiritually and emotionally sick! Again, be careful, be warned!

Listen again to what Paul said here in Galatians 1:8-9 and then we will dig into them. This is from The Amplified Bible and Paul wrote, **“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to and different from that which we preached to you, let him be accursed (anathema, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment)! As we said before, so I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel different from or contrary to that which you received [from us], let him be accursed (anathema, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment)!”**

Make no mistake about it, these are very harsh words that Paul is speaking against these false teachers, that they will see the judgment of God upon their lives; *ANATHEMA* is the Greek word that Paul uses.

Now some would say, ***“Where’s the love Paul?”***

Think about that for a minute. Would you send your child to a school where the teacher is teaching them lies, things that are very dangerous to their well-being?

Of course you wouldn’t and if you caught wind of a teacher doing that, you would confront them immediately. It just shows that you love your child and you are protecting them and that is what Paul is doing, protecting the Galatians and us from these lies!

I know that some felt that way about me a few years back when we dealt with the Hebrew Roots Movement in the church. They felt I was too harsh on those who were involved in this, even asking one to leave the church. Here’s the thing, agree with me or not. God has placed me as the under shepherd of this church. And I am accountable to the Lord. And when I see false doctrine, false teachers, I will expose them and remove them.

Martin Luther put it like this, “Note the resourcefulness of the devil. Heretics do not advertise their errors. Murderers, adulterers, thieves disguise themselves. So the devil masquerades all these devices and activities. He puts on white to make himself look like an angel of light.” Exactly!

It is because I love you too much to let you be deceived by these things. And for those who are teaching them, I pray that they would see the truth of the Gospel because, if you mix the Law with Grace, you are not saved!

And Paul wants to drive home this point so much that he repeats this curse in verse 9.

I remember when I was young, and did something wrong, my mom would say, ***“Joseph William Guglielmo, get in this house right now! Don’t make me repeat myself!”***

If I didn’t listen and she had to repeat herself, I was in more trouble!

That is Paul's point, if you preach these false gospel's you are in big trouble with God for leading people astray.

Of this Bruce tells us, "The Gospel preached by Paul is not the true Gospel because it is Paul who preaches it, it is the true Gospel because the risen Christ gave it to Paul to preach."

Notice again what Paul says, "**But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**" Galatians 1:8.

I find it interesting that Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Mormons, was given revelations from the angel Moroni, who, after you see what their gospel is all about, is full of bologni! Sorry, not really!

Today Mormon's consider themselves as Christians, but they preach another Jesus, a different gospel. And they are coming around house-to-house, doing good works for their salvation and we need to be aware that they are not Christians!

The late Walter Martin, in his book *The Kingdom of the Cults* tells us this regarding Mormons:

Personal salvation in Mormonism is one of the doctrines most heavily emphasized, and since Christianity is the Gospel or "Good News" of God's redemption in Christ, it is inevitable that the two should come into conflict.

The Mormon doctrine of salvation involves not only faith in Christ, but baptism by immersion, obedience to the teaching of the Mormon Church, good works, and "keeping the commandments of God (which) will cleanse away the stain of sin" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 4).

Apparently Brigham was ignorant of the Biblical pronouncement that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin]" (Hebrews 9:22).

The Mormon teaching concerning salvation is, therefore, quite the opposite of the New Testament revelation of justification by faith and redemption solely by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Brigham Young, an authoritative Mormon source by any standard, was quite opposed to the Christian doctrine of salvation which teaches that a person may at any time sincerely repent of his sins, even at the eleventh hour, and receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Wrote Brigham:

“Some of our old traditions teach us that a man guilty of atrocious and murderous acts may savingly repent on the scaffold; and upon his execution will hear the expression – ‘Bless God! He has gone to heaven, to be crowned in glory, through the all-redeeming merits of Christ the Lord!’ This is all nonsense. Such a character will never see heaven” (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 8, p. 61).

According to the Mormon scheme of salvation the gods who created this earth actually planned that Adam, who was to become ruler of this domain, and his wife, Eve, were predestined to sin so that the race of man who now inhabit this earth might come into being and eventually reach godhood. The fall in the Garden of Eden was actually the means “by which act Adam and Eve became mortal, and could beget mortal children” (J. Widtsoe, A Rational Theology, Deseret Publishing Company, p. 47).

The Lord Jesus offered one eternal sacrifice for all sins and His salvation comes not by the works of the law or any human works whatever (Galatians 2:16 and Ephesians 2:9), but solely by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

The Savior of the New Testament revelation existed eternally as God; lived a holy, harmless and undefiled life, separate from sinners, and “knew no sin.” He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The Savior of Mormonism, however, is an entirely different person, as their official publications clearly reveal.

The Mormon Savior is not the second person of the Christian Trinity since, as we have seen previously, Mormons reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and he is not even a careful replica of the New Testament Redeemer.

In Mormon theology, Christ as a pre-existent spirit was not only the spirit brother of the devil (as alluded to in the Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4:1-4, and later reaffirmed by Brigham Young in the Journal of Discourses, Vol. 13, p. 282), but celebrated his own marriage to both “the Marys’ and Martha, whereby he could see his seed before he was crucified” (apostle Orson Hyde, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 4, pp. 259-260).

As we have seen previously, the Mormon concept of the virgin birth, alone, distinguishes their “Christ” from the Christ of the Bible.

In addition to this revolting concept, Brigham Young categorically stated that the sacrifice made upon the cross by Jesus Christ in the form of His own blood was ineffective for the cleansing of *some* sins. Brigham went on to teach the now suppressed but never officially repudiated doctrine of “blood atonement.”

To better understand Young's limitation of the cleansing power of Christ's blood, we shall refer to his own words:

“Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands.

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it; and the judgments [sic.] of the Almighty will come, sooner or later, and every man and woman will have to atone for their covenants . . . All mankind love themselves and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed . . . I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins . . . This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him, and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it” (Journal of Discourses. Vol. III, p. 247, and Vol. IV, pp. 219-220).

So clear cut was Brigham's denial of the all sufficiency and efficiency of the atoning sacrifice of Christ in the foregoing quotation that Mormons have had to develop an argument “to explain” what the prophet really meant. It is their contention that a criminal is “executed to atone for his crimes and this is all Brigham Young meant.”

- Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, pp. 216-219

Folks, that is another gospel, a different Jesus and Paul says that those that preach these things are accursed, which also applies to those that follow them, for salvation is only found in Jesus and not in our works! That goes for the Hebrew Roots Movement as well, and the reality is, it goes for all religions because they all have a works-based salvation. Only Christianity has the finished work of Christ that allows us into heaven. Thus, speaking the truth is not unloving because it is the truth!

Peter tells us in Acts 4:11-12, **“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

In Psalm 103:12 we are told, **“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”**

In Isaiah 43:25 we are told, **“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”**

And lastly, in Titus 3:3-7 from The Amplified Bible, **“For we also were once thoughtless and senseless, obstinate and disobedient, deluded and misled; [we too were once] slaves to all sorts of cravings and pleasures, wasting our days in malice and jealousy and envy, hateful (hated, detestable) and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior to man [as man] appeared, He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but because of His own pity and mercy, by [the] cleansing [bath] of the new birth (regeneration) and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Which He poured out [so] richly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. And He did it in order] that we might be justified by His grace (by His favor, wholly undeserved), [that we might be acknowledged and counted as conformed to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action], and that we might become heirs of eternal life according to [our] hope.”**

I think you get the point; we are saved by Grace through faith and not by the Law through Works.

“IT IS FINISHED!” was the cry of Jesus from the cross and now many are trying to complete the work by their efforts, and they negate what Christ has done!

He has paid in full the penalty for our salvation if we would only receive it by faith!

Paul will hit the Galatians hard again in chapter 3 where he tells us, **“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”**

Galatians 3:1-3. May we not be foolish!

I realize that I hit that pretty hard, but it is an issue today and we need to deal with it!

VERSE 10

There is the big question, “*Are you a man pleaser or a God pleaser?*” You see, you truly can’t be both because when you stand up for the things of God, man doesn’t like that!

Morris put it like this, and it is what we are seeing today from the pulpits across America! He wrote, “There have always been preachers who have sought popular acclaim above all else, and there are some still. It is part of fallen human nature that even those charged with the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel can fall into the trap of trying to be popular rather than faithful.”

Make no mistake about it, when you say that man is a sinner separated from God and that Jesus is the only way to heaven, you will, not might, you will offend people.

The Gospel is offensive, there is no getting around that. Paul said in I Corinthians, “**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**” I Corinthians 1:18, 22-25.

Thus, our service is to God, we seek to please Him, and some may be offended by what we say, but don’t let that stop you. We are not to be obnoxious, but the Gospel message is offensive. But to those who receive it, it is the power of God unto Salvation!

And Paul says that we are “**a servant of Christ**” or a slave of Christ. That means you only have one Person to please and that is the Lord, not even yourself as many like to believe today!

And please understand that as we surrender to Christ, His will not ours, it determines not only success and victory in the Christian life, but it really demonstrates whether or not you really are a Christian because obedience is the evidence of saving faith, not perfection, but obedience!

Remember, one day we will stand before the Lord, and we will hear Him say, “**Well done good and faithful servant . . .**”

VERSES 11-12

Paul is contrasting his Gospel that was from God as opposed to these false gospels that were from man!

Now how do we know that the Bible is reliable, that it is the truth?

Others have come and said that they have the truth, their Scriptures are right like the Muslims and their Koran, the Jehovah Witnesses and their New World Translation, the Mormons and The Book of Mormon and-so-on.

Who is right and how do we know that it is right? Good questions.

First of all, the Bible has been the most analyzed book ever!

Archaeology has shown that the Bible is accurate. The manuscripts are consistent.

Secondly, we have a book that took over 1600 years to write by over 40 different authors on three different continents, in different circumstances, in three languages, dealing with very controversial subjects and yet it is one story of a loving God redeeming sinful man!

Thirdly, the Bible is over 25% prophetic in nature or it tells us what is going to happen before it happens. There are over 300 prophecies of Christ’s first coming that were fulfilled down to the tiniest detail, even the exact day He would ride through Jerusalem as Messiah the King as Daniel tells us.

No other religious book does that because as they try to, they will be exposed as lies because only God can tell the beginning from the end!

Make no mistake about it, the Bible stands alone, it can be trusted for it is the Words of God to man and look at how God's Word and His Spirit have changed the lives of people and continue to change the lives of people!

In fact, Paul is going to show us that very fact, that his life was changed by God and His Word!

VERSES 13-14

People had heard about Paul's attempts to destroy Christianity, how he persecuted Christians, and they were fearful of Paul.

In Acts 8:1-4 we are told, **“Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”**

And in Acts 9:1-2 we are told, **“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”**

Make no mistake about it, Paul had a zeal for God but without knowledge. He thought he was serving God but instead he was fighting against God.

How true that is today in these false religions like Mormonism, Islam, Jehovah Witnesses, the Hebrew Roots Movement and-so-on.

People who truly believe they are serving God but are not!

Now what happened to Paul that changed him so dramatically from the chief antagonist of the Christian faith to its staunchest defender of the faith? He saw the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and Paul describes the plan of God for his life this way as we continue reading here in Galatians.

VERSES 15-17

Remember that right after Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, he was led into the city being blind, and he stayed in Damascus for three days in darkness where he fasted and prayed while he pondered his life.

Keep in mind that Paul's whole life had been devoted to Judaism and now he realized it was all wrong. He could not gain the favor of God and a place in heaven by keeping the Law, no one can!

Then, after Paul's initial ministry in Damascus, which could have lasted several weeks to several months, instead of going right up to Jerusalem to introduce himself to the other apostles, the Lord led Paul to the desert of Arabia where he spent the better part of three years. Not Saudi Arabia but a region that stretched east from Damascus down to the Sinai Peninsula.

It was during this time Jesus Himself taught Paul, not only the gospel, but also how all of the Jewish Scriptures pointed to Him, to Jesus!

Let me ask you this. Did you ever think about that, that God has a plan for your life even before you were born?

The omniscience of God – He is all-knowing, and He has our life planed out for us and calls us to then walk accordingly.

Now if I were God, I would have revealed myself to Paul before he persecuted the church, but God’s timing was perfect. God got a hold of Paul’s heart on the road to Damascus and the persecution he brought against the church God used to spread the church out from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth!

VERSES 18-19

Paul now goes to Jerusalem and in Acts 9:23-31 we see what transpired.

We are told, **“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”**

VERSES 20-24

After Paul's short stay in Jerusalem he began making his way back to his hometown of Tarsus.

And, as Paul went through Syria, he preached the Word, and when he arrived in Cilicia, his home province (Acts 21:39; 22:3), he began to evangelize (see Acts 15:23).

Historians have concluded that he remained there perhaps seven years ministering in relative obscurity until Barnabas recruited him for the work in Antioch of Syria. (Acts 11:25-26)

Antioch in Syria became Paul's home church and the headquarters for the Gentile churches even as Jerusalem was the headquarters for Jewish believers.

Make no mistake about it, Paul's testimony spread very quickly. They spoke of how this former persecutor of the church, of Christians was now on their side and spreading the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

That truly is our story for before we were saved, before we were serving God, we were fighting against Him. But one day, on a road we were traveling God got a hold of our heart and opened our eyes. Now we are no longer fighting against Him but serving Him faithfully and our witness, our testimony of what we were and now what we are in Christ is spreading. Praise God for that!

This is a tough letter, but it is so important. Don't try to negate what Paul is saying about Law and Grace and how you can't mix them together. You can't! Don't ignore it. Read it, pray about it and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth if you are struggling in this area.

As I close tonight let me sum up this chapter.

First of all, Paul preached the true Gospel of Jesus Christ that was given to Him by the Lord.

Secondly, his life showed he was a changed man. It was not just empty words but the power of God working through Paul, helping him live a life pleasing to God!

Thus, don't be taken in by the false gospels that may have some truth mixed with it, but the lies are deadly!

Be wise, be alert and stand strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Stand upon His Word and you will not be led astray, you will not be deceived! You will not be tossed to and fro with the winds of doctrine that are blowing through the church and will blow through the church!