

# Galatians 1 Commentary-Barber

## Galatians 1 Commentary Verse by Verse Exposition

**Dr. Wayne Barber**

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### Introduction to Galatians



Well, many of you have been e-mailing me and calling me and whatever, saying you're praying that I would know what the next book is that we should go to. You know, when you think about it, you could just throw the Bible up and let it fall, and wherever it opens is a good book. Is that not correct? It's God's Word from cover to cover. I even believe in the maps.

But I want to tell you, I've honestly prayed. As a matter of fact, I had almost ruled this book out, but I have honestly prayed and I do believe God has laid upon my heart what we need desperately. Would you turn with me to the book of Galatians. I have referenced it many times, but only from chapter 2, and only from chapter 6. The meat of the whole book is chapters 3, 4 and 5, and so, therefore, I want us to look at the book of Galatians.

I want to make sure you understand that when we pray and we've asked the Lord to lead us, evidently there's a message in this book for us as a church and for us individually in this book. We've got to approach it that way. This is not just another time to give out information. We want to hear what God has to say to us in this book.

And as we introduce it, we're just going to talk about a picture of deception, how deception so quickly comes into a group. We are going to spend the next several months looking at a group of churches in Galatia. Now remember, not one church, but several churches were terribly deceived by the false message of religion. Have you been with me long enough to understand what I am talking about?

**Religion is that which a man does for God.**

**Christianity is what God does through a man.**

And these people in Galatia were duped. They were mistakenly led into religion. They came out of a relationship which is the essence of Christianity, and fell back into a religion for which they would pay dearly.

I've always loved to fish I guess. I guess I was born loving to fish. My daddy was a great, great fisherman and instilled that into me. Of course, when I was in the teenage years daddy wouldn't let me drive till I was 17 and I can't understand why. And so there were not a lot of places we could go and fish and get there with our bicycles, etc. Finally I got a buddy that could drive and so we could go in his car and we'd go down to the Roanoke River. Roanoke River ran through Roanoke, Virginia, where I grew up. And we'd go by and pick up some catfish bait.

Now anything that smells bad and is rotten is good catfish bait. They're scavenger fish and they feed off the bottom. We'd go by and daddy had a friend of his had a tire place and we'd pick up an old tire, take it with us, with a big old thing of kerosene. Soak that tire in kerosene and light it, it'd burn all night long. The key is, though, always stay up wind from it. It was bad when the wind changed. That was not the best smell in the world. We'd put that catfish bait on and throw it out with a heavy weight, let it sink to the bottom, get us one of those little sticks that had a little "v" in the top of it, cut the limbs off and set the rod in it and get back, and we'd have a cooler with, with drinks, chips and food and that was one of the best nights you could ever spend—the old fire burning on the tire would burn all night long.

And as most of you know when catfish hit the bait, they don't really mess with it like a bass . They just come up and grab it and go. They just choke it down. I mean, they're not worried about being finicky, because they don't like good stuff anyway. And you can see that rod go boop, boop, and you might as well pick it up, because it's gone and this is just as soon as it goes down, jerk that thing back. And you in your imagination, you can see that old catfish looking at that bait thinking "Whoa, this is good stuff!" And he grabs it, never looks at it very well. He's so deceived into thinking it's all healthy for him and he swallows the whole thing, hook, line and sinker. And it doesn't take him long to realize that a hook is in the bait. And there's a pair of unseen hands in a world that that catfish has never understood, controlling his destiny. And it doesn't take long until the hook produces his death. It's a painful experience for a catfish. He's been deceived. He's been duped.

I want to tell you, these people in Galatia didn't realize the hook that was in the message into which they had bought. They didn't realize—they can't lose their salvation—but they didn't realize the death that was going to come from their not experiencing the fullness of Jesus and the joy that He could produce in their life, and the love for one another. When they bought into the deceptive message, they didn't understand the dangers that went with it.

## **BONDAGE OF THE LAW LIBERTY OF LIVING GRACE**

Galatians is a classic book regarding the bondage that comes with law and the freedom that comes with grace. You'll never find a better book, except for Romans, but it's 16 chapters, and I didn't think you were ready for about six years of Romans. In Philippians we saw living grace. And, oh, what a joy to see that living grace! But in Galatians we're going to see the doctrine behind that living grace. And we are going to see the liberty that comes with this living grace—how free we are to be what God wants us to be.

I don't believe that any of us here today have any idea how inbred the law mentality is in us. I'm telling you, you watch yourself next week. We can talk grace with our lips, turn right around and live under law by our methods and our practice. It's amazing, even in my own life. I've preached this for years, but it frightens me every day. You don't know this message unless you're living it. Intellectual knowledge about this message won't cut it. If you're not living it you have not learned it.

As I mentioned, this epistle to the Galatians is to several churches ([Map of Galatia](#); [Another Map](#)), not just one. If you'll look at Gal 1:2—and today's just an overview—it says,

“And all the brethren who are with me.”

He's signing on now. He says, “to the churches [plural] of [Galatia](#).” The name Galatia is interesting and is derived from the barbaric Gaul's or Celts. These were very hostile people who lived in Asia Minor. After several centuries of plundering the Greek and Roman Empires, they began to integrate into other nations and, their hostility and fierce warrior mentality was weakened by their intermingling with other peoples. After a while they just settled down. In fact, they were known to question everything. It's incredible how they change from being so adamant and so fierce to being weak and questioning everything, and you couldn't trust them. By the time Paul wrote Galatians there was a large population of Jews in that area, which helps explain some of the problems that had begun to creep into their churches.

On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas established churches in four cities that were in southern [Galatia](#). They were the cities of [Antioch](#)—not Antioch of Syria, but Antioch of [Pisidia](#)— [Lystra](#), [Iconium](#) and [Derbe](#). In Acts 13:14 through Acts 14:23, you find the history of the first journey and how they established churches in southern Galatia. These churches had bonded together in what we would call today kind of an association of churches. And all of them had fallen into the trap of what we're going to deal with in Galatians. The Galatian epistle itself does not identify particular churches, just the areas in which they were set up. But we do know that Paul personally ministered in these churches.

In Galatians 4:13 he says,

But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

Man, they had an instant kindred spirit there that joined together. And Paul had preached the wonderful **gospel of grace** to these people. The fact that the book of Acts mentions the four churches in southern Galatia probably means that these were the churches to whom he was writing. There has been a controversy as to whether Paul was writing primarily to northern Galatia or southern Galatia. To be honest with you, nobody knows anything about northern Galatia. And since these are the churches that are mentioned in the first missionary journey, most people—I'm one of them—believe that this epistle was addressed to them.

While in Galatia Paul nearly lost his life. In Acts some antagonistic Jewish leaders who were just hung up with the Mosaic Law followed him from Antioch to Iconium to Lystra. Acts 14:19-20 says,

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and, having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him he arose and entered the city."

When I read those verses I want to say, "Paul, don't go back in there; they'll just beat you up again. They stoned you; don't go back!" But he did, and the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. You have to understand, he risked his life to preach the message of the **gospel of grace** to these dear folks.

After going to Derbe and establishing a church there, Paul and Barnabas revisited the cities. Can you imagine? He just keeps going back. I don't know if he loved pain, but he just kept going back to these cities. Acts 14:22 says

They were strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.

You know, the thought just came to my mind that in 1 John he says "perfect love," when you're totally surrendered to God, "cast out all fear." (1John 4:18) And you certainly see that in the apostle Paul. He's not worried about himself. He's worried about the Galatian believers and wanted to make sure they were growing and being strengthened in the faith.

On his second missionary journey ([Map](#)), Paul again visited the Galatian churches, but this time with Silas. Acts 16:4 tells us that they were delivering some decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29). The decree said that they were free from the laws of the Jews (Acts 15:23-29). The message was "You don't have to go back up under the Law of Moses. You don't have to be circumcised. Jesus is enough. He is sufficient for you." This message was a declaration of freedom.

So Paul and Silas were going from church to church saying, "Man, you're going to like this. Let me give you this. This is a letter from the church in Jerusalem." So the time of Paul's second missionary journey, as he was passing out these letters, the churches were growing and they seemed to be strong. Here he had been strengthening them. And now they had this declaration of freedom from the leaders in Jerusalem. Acts 16:5 says

So the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in numbers daily.

Now this is what I want you to see. Sometimes when we are growing spiritually, we become the most vulnerable. It is when I am the most sincere in my walk with God that I become the most vulnerable, because I don't want to miss anything, and sometimes we can fall into the trap of error and deception. Something happened to the churches in Galatia. They were growing; they were being strengthened, but something happened that infested the entire area. The entire association of churches fell into the trap. And it is to address this problem that the book of Galatians was written under the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God.

You're going to see an angry preacher in Galatians. You say, "That's an oxymoron." Well, no, not really. There's two kinds of anger. There's a righteous anger and an unrighteous anger. And you're going to see a man righteously angry when he writes this. You see, one of the things that makes any teacher of the **message of grace** angry in a righteous way, is when the people he's teaching are affected by a deceptive doctrine not compatible with the **message of grace**. When others come in and begin to add law to the **message of grace**, that will anger any preacher of grace. I've discovered over the years that the more you preach grace, the more sensitive you become to law. You can spot it 150 yards off!

And, you see, that's what angered the apostle Paul, that these false teachers had come in and even worse that; the people had listened to them. By the way, the best way to stop false doctrine is to quit listening to it. That was the problem in Galatia. Paul wasn't surprised that the Judaizers had come, but he was surprised that the people had listened to them. And he was sensitive like a mother watching over her children or a shepherd watching over his sheep.

At a university in Alaska a 70 year old man was stomped to death by a moose. It was a cow; who had a calf with her. And all day long the kids on the campus had been throwing snowballs at the mother moose, irritating her and frightening her. And along come a 70 year old gentleman (bless his heart) and he wasn't hurting anybody. He was just going to work out in a gym but he made a huge mistake. He got between the moose and the calf, and you don't do that. The instinct of the mother is to protect her offspring. And so she attacked him and stomped him to death. They were going to shoot the moose because of it, until finally somebody had enough sanity to realize that the moose was just doing what instinctively it should have done.

That's the way it is when you have a church or a pastor or teachers that teach grace. Like the mother moose, they become sensitive to the souls that they are teaching. And when that law comes in, that's when their righteous anger begins to arise, because somebody's trying to add something to Jesus. You know now why we have elders! Elders protect the **message of grace**. That's what they're for. If you ever want to see righteous anger, you bring law into a church that is founded upon the **message of grace**.

Galatians is Paul writing the book of Romans "mad." It took Paul sixteen chapters to say the same thing in Romans, but it only

takes him six chapters in Galatians! You ever noticed how your momma got to the point real quick when she was mad? There wasn't any dialogue. There wasn't any commentary. There wasn't any introduction. Just boom, right in your face. As you enter the text now, Paul's going to come out "both guns blazing." He does not even thank God for these people even one time! He thanked God for the Corinthians and they were a mess, but he didn't thank God for these people. Instead, he came out with "both guns blazing." It doesn't take you long to realize what the problem is and this is what the epistle to the Galatians is all about.

But what I want you to do is make a connection. There is nothing new under the sun as Solomon tells us. You see, we're living in days when it's the same thing. We would much rather do something for God than to simply relate to Him, and the former approach is exactly what our flesh desires. "Let's go work for Him. Let's go do something. I've got to **do** something or He won't accept me." And the message of the grace of Christ says, "No, you do what you do because you have already been accepted." Isn't that beautiful? "I've got to **do** something so He will love me." No, no, He already loves you. That's why you do what you do. This little truth changes our whole mentality. The mentality of law will cripple your spiritual life and will bring pain you didn't think could be there.

## THE DECEIVERS THAT TROUBLED THEM

First, let's look at the deceivers that troubled the Galatian churches. The term "Galatians" is found in Galatians 3:1. Notice what he says. He says, "You foolish Galatians." There's a lot in that passage and when we get there we'll study it in depth. "Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?"

Now Paul says **who**, and the emphasis is on that **who**. Who has bewitched you? Somehow, some way, somebody had bewitched them. The word "**bewitched**," which we will study in depth later is the word **baskaino**. It has the idea of being put under a spell. A. T. Robertson says it has the idea of being fascinated with somebody. It's like being mesmerized by an eloquent speaker, even though their message is false. They hearers are not listening to *what* he's saying. Instead, they're listening to *how* he says it. And now they're controlled by that what they've heard. **Baskaino** carries the idea of charming someone.

So someone had come in and with great ability bewitched these people and put them under a spell. The message sounded so good that the Galatians didn't see the hook that was in the message, and it had taken away from the **message of grace**. It seems like there was one person behind this false message. Look at Gal 5:7

You were running well [they were doing great; the church is being strengthened]; **who** hindered you from obeying the truth?

Again, this idea of **who** suggests there is a ringleader. (**Ed**: Who in Gal 5:7 is masculine singular which supports the idea of a single dominant personality)

Have you ever thought about it? One person in the body of Christ is enough to bring the whole body down, in the sense of crippling the spiritual walk of others. When one eloquent speaker with a legalistic mindset gets into a church, it's not going to take long before others begin to give in to his message. And then you've got a cancer growing in the body, and people don't seem to understand what Christianity really is. They are completely taken off the path of what **grace** is all about.

It's amazing how quickly we turn to what our flesh wants to hear, especially when we hear somebody say it well, without even thinking about what they're saying. You know, I wonder today in the 21st century where the Bereans are, to check it out and see if it'd be so (Acts 17:11). Our flesh loves the message of what we can **do** for God.

Over the years I grew up under this message of what we can **do** for God. How many of you grew up under it, besides me? Yeah, and some of you just won't be honest. Yeah, all of us did. Matter of fact, you go to work tomorrow, and if you work out in the secular world, it's a totally works mentality. So you have got to be careful to be "deprogrammed." When you come into God's kingdom He doesn't operate the same way the world operates. "My way is not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts." We love to **do** something so we can measure it and then take some credit from it. We ask questions like "How many did you have in church the other day?" or "How much money are you taking in each week?" You see, we love that kind of thing. It's numbers; it's figures. Give me a list and I'll go do it so that I can be spiritual. Our flesh loves that works mentality rather instead of wanting to relate to God and dealing with the ugliness of our flesh and dealing with the sin that's in our life. How quickly we respond to the **message of works**!

Galatians 1:6 says,

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel (**euaggelion**).

Paul says "So soon, so soon! You were doing great. What are you doing? You've gone right back to what you've been set free from." He continues in Galatians 1:7 and explains there really isn't another gospel. He says, "which is not another." Notice what he

says in the rest of Gal 1:7,

But there are some who **trouble** you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

The word “**trouble**” is the word *tarasso*. *Tarasso* means to stir up. Have you ever seen a body of believers that is stirred up? You can just about bet that they’ve bought into the **message of works**. Now, I want to make sure we understand that when we have conflict here and when we see things arise, it’s coming from someone who is appealing to their flesh. That’s what stirs up the body. It turns it upside down. The **message of grace** puts it right-side up. But the **message of law** will turn it upside down. It’ll stir up the body. It will trouble the people. There is not any joy with the **message of law**. This works mentality will destroy a people.

“There are some who trouble,” he says. And you see, I told you there was a ringleader, but now he’s got “**some**.” There are others now that have bought into the message. These are eloquent convincing speakers, and people are buying into their message right and left. Why? Because their flesh of the hearers is susceptible to this false message. The deceivers had come upon the Galatians with a doctrine that would really trouble and disturb and stir up in a wrong way those who love Christ.

Paul gives us another clue in Gal 1:8 as to how they get the message out. Where do these people come from? First of all, they come from within. They’re already there. Gal 1:8-9:

But even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Now, what was their method? It was through teaching and preaching. And I’m telling you, times have not changed. If somebody says it well, throws the Name “Jesus” into the message three or four times, we tend to buy right into it and if he sheds a tear that’s even better. And so we buy into the message without checking out what’s really being said. “Is this what the Scriptures say?” And evidently the Galatian churches bought into the message of law.

Now do you understand why I say that Galatians is Paul writing Romans mad? Here’s a preacher that sees his flock for whom he risked his life to preach this message of grace, and now he’s sees his flock going after a message of law, a message from which Paul had been set free for years. It’s that old religious mentality, that old “**do**” mentality. Paul had been set free from it but the churches in Galatia are embracing it and he’s angry with a righteously anger.

Paul tells them that the false doctrine being preached was totally of man, not of God. I’ll tell you, anything—always remember this—anything that’s of man will appeal to the **flesh**, and it may produce growth in numbers, but that doesn’t mean it’s of God. Gal 1:11 says

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me [and here’s the contrast] is not according to man.

Let’s review what we’ve learned. We’ve got a ring leader. He started this whole thing. He’s been sitting there waiting for an opportunity, and now he’s in a teaching position, and now he’s beginning to propound the **message of works**—You’ve got to **do** this; you’ve got to **do** that; you’ve got to **do** this; you’ve got to **do** that. And the believers in Galatia were so mesmerized by this guy it was as if they were under a spell, as if they’d never heard Paul, they had never even heard the **message of grace**. They were in a sense “hypnotized” by the false teachers and preachers who were offering the Galatian man’s “gospel,” not God’s gospel.

Now who are these false teachers? We ran across them in Philipppians. In fact Paul mentions them in every epistle. He’s not surprised that they are present but he is surprised that the people are willing to listen to them. These folks are the **Judaizers**, the legalists who want to put genuine believers back up under the **law of Moses**. Some scholars believe that the **Judaizers** were planted in these early churches by the Jews themselves in order to corrupt the threat of Christianity against their religion of Judaism. You see, Christianity is a threat to any religion because it’s not a **religion**. It’s a **relationship**. So these people were planted in the Galatian churches.

I think that plan’s still around today. I think there’s a school that trains these people and they send them wherever you try to preach the **message of grace**. And they’ll get right in your face with their message of works and they’re good. They’re good at what they say, particularly preying upon people that don’t fully understand the **message of grace**. The saddest thing was that many Jewish people had a *so-called* relationship with Christ, but they did not really have one. And they were able to get into the churches and then propound the Mosaic system, the **message of law**. Paul alludes to these **Judaizers** in Gal 2:4. He talks about them spying on him, spying out his liberty in Christ. You can just feel the hostility these people have towards Paul. In Gal 2:4 he says

and this occurred because of false brethren, secretly brought in [and then he puts a parenthesis] who came in by stealth. “who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus [and that’s a fact; our liberty is only in Christ Jesus] that they might bring us into bondage.



You know what **stealth** means? That means, buddy, they were there, and you didn't even realize they got there. A stealth bomber one of those planes that can fly so fast and you don't even pick it up on a radar screen, and it's there before you know it. In fact, they even tried to force Paul to circumcise Titus who was a Gentile believer. But Paul would not bend. He refused to do it, because Christ is enough. Peter, James and John stood beside him and said, "He's exactly right."

These Jewish leaders, **Judaizers**, were some of the ones who stoned Paul at Lystra and who no doubt had added the churches of Galatia to their "hit list." Now they are going to prey on these little churches that God had begun through Paul in Galatia. These false teachers were like the ones about whom Paul had warned the Ephesian elders --they came up from within. Acts 20:30 says

And **from among your own selves**, men will arise, speaking **perverse** (*diastrepho*) things to **draw away** (*apospao*) the **disciples** (*mathetes*) after them. (Acts 20:30-note)

These **Judaizers** were creating such confusion in these Galatian churches. They didn't even know what grace was anymore. They were buying back in to a system rather than a relationship they had with Christ. They taught the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised, the men had to be circumcised. Why the man? Because he passes the seed on from generation to generation. And therefore his whole family now can be considered to be Jewish because that's the physical mark of Abraham and they told him that you have to have this. They told them that if they remained bound to the Mosaic Law, regulations and ceremonies, then they could make it all the way to heaven, and that's what they were propounding to these people. You've got to **do** this. You've got to **do** this. You've got to **do** this.

You say, "They're not around anymore. Why do we study this?" Oh, they're around folks. It's just a different system that's propounded. I've told you this before, but I remember a book I read once that suggested I wake up at 4:00 in the morning and have my quiet time and somebody said, God doesn't use anybody that doesn't get up at 4:00 in the morning. I was so sincere. I said, "O God, I want to be used." I got up at 4:00 in the morning. I got on my knees. Did the dumbest thing I've ever done, closed my eyes. I woke up about 7:20 with a cramp in my right leg that I thought I'd never get out. "Somehow, God, I don't think this is what You're talking about, but this is what they told me that if I did would achieve something in my life."

## YOU DON'T ACHIEVE YOU RECEIVE

You don't **achieve** anything in your life; you **receive** it. And the "doing" in Christianity is not obeying a set of rules. The "doing" in Christianity is bowing before the One who already has accomplished those rules and then He dictates and you just simply say "Yes" to Him. You are not attaining anything. Jesus is your spirituality. By the way, I found out what time those guys who got up at 4:00 went to bed. Hey, check that out. They go to bed with the cows. They didn't have TV back in those days when those books were written. Sometimes I don't even leave the church until 8:00, and what are you doing going to bed at 8:00?

Paul had warned the Galatian believers before about these people. You see, again, he's not surprised that these people have come. His biggest surprise is that these people, who had been taught the **message of grace**, would listen to them. Galatians 1:9 says,

As we have said before, so I say again now (the apostle reminded the believers there) if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Cut him off. Get away from him. There's no doubt that these men knew the message of grace, but they paid no attention to it.

Well, we'll deal with all of this as we come to it in the text. I hope you can now see that these Galatian churches have had false teaching come into their midst, teaching that appealed to the flesh. I would be willing to say every church in our country has had false teaching get into it. And you can stand and preach grace until you fall over on the floor, but there are some people who will not hear you. They don't want to walk with God. They want a **religion**. They want to go **do** something for Him, because they still have that mentality "if I **do** it, I can **achieve** it." It's not that. You **do** because you love Him and because it's already **achieved**. Jesus is our spirituality, and not what we **do** or don't **do**. The Galatians drifted back to the old performance mentality of the flesh. The deceivers that troubled them.

**Let me ask you a question. How many of you have already been deceived? You're already deceived. You're struggling with this message of grace. You're struggling big time. You know why?** Because you have bought so much into the **message of works** you can't seem to see the difference, and you're thinking that what I'm saying is wrong and what Paul is saying is wrong. It's like Watchman Nee said one time, "We live such subnormal lives that when we see something that's normal, we think it's abnormal." That's where we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People don't understand, this is normal Christianity that we're talking about. They have bought into a lie.

## THE DOCTRINE

## THAT TRICKED THEM

Secondly, let's look at the doctrine that tricked them. We see the deceivers that troubled them, but now we have the doctrine that tricked them. It doesn't take long to realize Paul's purpose in writing Galatians. The word "law" is used 32 times in six chapters. Does that tell you what it's all about? He's dealing with the **law**.

### MORAL LAW

Now to understand this, I've got to be very careful here, and I've really prayed that God would help me to help you understand and to help me understand what I'm saying. There are two parts of the law. There was the moral part of the law; that's your Ten Commandments. God never did away with the moral law. He wrote it on our hearts. God lives in us to perfect and produce the moral law. Now, remember--When you say **doing away with the law**, never even think about the Ten Commandments. No, sir; that's God standard which He requires of everyone. It's the very standard that condemns every one of us as sinners, because nobody can attain it.

(Ed: J C Ryle said "I cannot find a syllable in [Paul's] writings which teach that any one of the Ten Commandments is done away... I believe that the coming of Christ's Gospel did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair's breadth.")

### CEREMONIAL LAW

It's the second part of the law that He put away. And that's the ceremonial law which was the rules and regulations that governed their behavior, the way they did everything that they did, with circumcision being one of the major requirements. You can eat this; you can't eat that. You can drink this; you can't drink that. On certain days you can carry a burden; on certain days you can't carry it, that kind of law. And, in reality, He used it for their benefit. It set Israel apart as a nation, but it did not save them in any way, shape or form. And so these are requirements and rules which they have brought back into the practice of Christianity, even though Jesus had fulfilled every all of the ceremonial law. However, God has not thrown away the moral law. The Spirit of Christ lives in us to enable us to carry out everything that the moral law requires.

As noted, the ceremonial law even included circumcision. I emphasized **circumcision** because it's mentioned six times in the book of Galatians. Understand that circumcision is the physical mark that identified the Jews physically with Abraham. The spiritual mark is circumcision of the heart. This is an internal mark. Look over in Gal 6:12-14 and I'll show you what I'm talking about...

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the Law.

That's an interesting phrase right there. They've got all the rules and don't keep them themselves.

But they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. (Gal 6:12-14)

Isn't it interesting that **religion** addresses external things and never touches the moral law? Why is that? Because nobody can fulfill the moral law. You see, somebody would rather address you on the fact that you've been divorced, or the fact that you did this, that and the other, rather than on the love that God produces in your life that is the standard of character He demands from every believer.

Over in Gal 5:14, look at this. I want to make sure you see this. It's a beautiful verse. It says, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in **How many words?**] one word." Now, that makes it simple, doesn't it. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Now what is the word then that fulfills the Law? Would you tell me? Love, that's right. Now, can we produce this love? "Oh, yes. Why, I went to a seminar the other day and they told me to go home and love my wife." Now, that's where your story ended, wasn't it. Because when you got home you didn't realize you cannot even do what you sincerely desire to do. Why? Only the Spirit of Christ can produce it in you.

Look in Gal 5:22. Where does this love come from? From the One who fulfills it and the One who produces it.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love [the characteristics of which are], joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

Look at the last phrase, "against such things there is **What?**] no law." Why? Because when this love is present, the law has already been fulfilled. I don't have to worry about a list of rules. I bow before Him and He produces in me the character that I could never produce myself. You see, Christianity is not me trying to produce what I can't produce.

**Christianity is Christ coming to live in me,  
producing through me what He demands of me.**

Galatians 2:20-21 are the key verses in this epistle, but we won't stay there too long today. I've preached on them here before; but don't worry, we're really going to preach on them in days to come. He says "I have been crucified with Christ." Paul says that old legalist that I used to be doesn't live anymore. "And it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives [*Where does He live?*] in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith [*How do you appropriate all this?*] by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. I do not," Paul says, "nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly."

DON'T "FRUSTRATE"  
THE GRACE OF GOD!

Now when he says **I do not nullify**, the word means I don't hinder, *atheteo*. I do not frustrate the grace of God. I'm not going to go back up under the law. That frustrates the grace of God.

**The grace of God is  
His enabling power,  
His transforming power.**

I'm not going to frustrate that. If I can do anything and God says that's a righteous work right there, whoa, I like that, then Christ died needlessly.

He goes on to say I can't produce righteousness. Jesus has become to me righteousness and redemption and sanctification.

"For if righteousness comes through the Law then Christ died needlessly."

You see, **when you add a law to Christ, you've just detracted from Him**. That's why He came to fulfill the Law, dotted every "i," crossed every "t".

**He knew what we couldn't do, and He comes to live in us to produce through us what we would never be able to do.**

In Galatians 4:17 we see the motive of these false teachers.

They eagerly seek you out [*that means that they're not in any way passive about coming after you*]. But they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them." [*Shut you out from what?*]

In Galatians 5:4:

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

That has nothing to do with a believer losing his salvation, by the way, and I can't wait to teach that in its context. Where we grab a verse here and a verse there, here a verse, there a verse, everywhere a verse, verse, and we build a theology that hasn't got anything to do with *theos*, which means God. It's no theology it's "*us*"-ology.

Now why would they do this?

"In order that you may seek after them."

You know what? These false teachers want a following and they use the Law, they put you back up under a works mentality, telling you that if you don't do this you cannot achieve righteousness. And they use that to control the people.

I'll tell you one thing I cannot stomach is somebody who tries to put a believer who's been set free under the **message of grace**, put him back up under the law mentality, telling him he's got to **do** this, this, this or he'll never spiritual. My friend, that's in the book of Hesitations. These people had come in and taken these precious believers that were set free to walk in the fullness and the joy of Jesus, free to be what God wants them to be and put them back up under law and robbed them of all the joy that Christianity could bring them. No wonder Paul's disturbed.

"LEGALISTIC"  
VERSUS  
LEGALISM

Now, I want to explain one thing and I have to quit. I thought I was going to get another point in, but hey, I'm not competing with



anybody. My son came to me one day and he said, "Daddy, my school is **legalistic**." I want to make sure you understand the difference here. What he meant was they have a lot of rules. Don't equate rules with **legalism**. That's not what I'm saying.

### **The mentality of legalism is you have to obey the rules in order to be spiritual.**

Do you see the difference? It's the attitude with which you look at a rule. Rules build character. Some of you are going to say, "Well, the constitution and bylaws has a bunch of rules in it." Rules build character; they do not make anybody spiritual. They give us parameters; they give us boundaries.

It has nothing to do with my spirituality. Rules are simply there to build the character in my life. As you run to the Lord, He enables you to be whatever He commands. But your spirituality is never determined by how many quiet times you've had. It's not determined by how many times you come to church. It's determined when you bow before Him, when you surrender your will to His will. He is your spirituality. That's the **message of grace**. But don't confuse rules with legalism. The issue is the way you look at the rules, and this is what often confuses us. Some say "Throw the rules away." That's the antinomianism ("against the law") in Romans. You can't do that. We have commands, etc., but keeping those commands does not make us spiritual. In fact, when we obey God's commands, it truly it points to Him and not to us, because His Spirit is in us enabling us to obey the very rules that He gives us!

Be not deceived Paul is going to say in Galatians 6. God is not mocked, "for whatsoever a man sows this he will also reap."

**What are you sowing right now? Have you bought into the message of works? Are you trying to be more spiritual than everybody else because you do this and this and this and this? Or have you discovered that doing this, this, this and this just gets to help you know Christ better and doesn't elevate you in the Kingdom at all?**

It just simply means that you can know Him and His fullness and walk in the joy that He enables, and that there are no "spiritual brownie points" for doing this. God is interested in a relationship, and doing those things that you once did to prove yourself spiritual, are now the things you do just because you love Him knowing you've been accepted and loved. Do you see the difference in the mentality between the **message of works/law** and the **message of grace**? The Galatians bought a lie and it brought a lot of pain.

## **Galatians 1**

### **Galatians 1:1 Just Who Is in Charge?**



Would you turn with me to Galatians 1. We're going to be looking at Gal 1:1 today, and my title of the message will be, "Just Who Is in Charge?" Let me get you into the context. Now, I know review bothers a lot of people, but I'll tell you what, I love to fly fish. When you fly fish you just don't throw into the pool. You throw up into the current and let the fly drift down into the pool. And when you do review, that's throwing it up into the current and letting it drift down into the pool of what you're going to share. You've got to get into the flow of what's happening. That's why I do review.

### **The appealing deception of religion**

And I want to make sure you hear what I'm saying. The deception of religion is such a problem in the body of Christ. It was in Paul's day and it is particularly in our day of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We'd much rather **do** something for God than we would be a clean vessel through whom God can do His own work (cf 2Ti 2:21). In our introduction to the book of Galatians we saw last time how the churches of southern Galatia bought into this religious works mentality and the apostle Paul is not a happy camper. The deception they bought into had weakened their churches. It had weakened their influence and their witness and had particularly affected the relationships they had with one another.

Paul makes a statement that's very profound. He says, "You have actually deserted Christ by turning to a religious works mentality." And I want to make sure that you're taking note of these statements, because I didn't make them; Paul did. Look what he says in Gal 1:6. He says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting," not the message of grace, not the church you attend, he said you are deserting "Him [Christ] Who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel," as if there is another kind of good news. As a result of this turning away, they were upside down. They were troubled. They were disturbed.

Gal 1:7 says, “which is really not another.” It just shows you there’s not another good news. There is no other gospel. “Only there are some who are disturbing you,” Paul says, “and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” These Galatians were so deceived by the **message of works** that they were acting as if they had no understanding of genuine Christianity. That’s incredible, isn’t it? It’s kind of like the church business meeting where somebody says, “I don’t know what to do. Maybe we need to pray.” And somebody else said, “Has it come to that?” You see, when you’re in a works mentality who needs prayer? Who needs to walk by grace? And that’s what happens. We begin to live as if we have no understanding of what the Christian life is all about.

In Gal 3:1 Paul asks “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?” And that word “bewitched,” [\*baskaino\*](#) means to put you under their spell. They were living as if they were under a spell. Paul had seen them before. He had seen them walk up under the **message of grace**. And now they’re living as if they don’t even understand how they were saved. They had become so deceived that they thought they could perfect themselves by their works. Isn’t it incredible? Jesus and grace is good enough for salvation, but thank you, we’ll take care of it from here. We’ll do our thing and we’ll accomplish sanctification on our own.

In Gal 3:2 Paul asks

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Of course the answer is obvious, **hearing with faith**. And then he asks in Gal 3:3

Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

You see their decision to go back to works mentality, the old law mentality, destroyed their whole testimony. I want us to make sure we understand this. We can talk about living grace in here and Christ being Who He is in our life, but if we walk outside or even within these walls, we choose to do things ourselves and ask God to bless it, we just completely erased any testimony we could have ever had, because if we can **do** it, then who needs God to start with?

They had once lived under grace and had been persecuted because of it. And Paul reminds them in Gal 3:4, “Did you suffer so many things in vain?” And then, as if he stops and steps back, he says, “if indeed it was in vain.” He’s wondering how many of them understood the message to begin with. And then he asks them...

Does He [Christ], then who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? (Gal 3:5)

Is it because of you are trying harder? Now that’s your religious mindset right there. I’ve got to try harder so that God will love me. That’s religion. That is not grace. He says, “Is it because of your trying harder that God now works His miracles among you?” You see, by their turning back to the law they have put themselves into bondage.

In Gal 4:9 he says, “But now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God.” I can’t wait to get to that phrase. “How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?”

I wonder if it’s occurred to you as it’s occurred to me in studying Galatians that when I go back to doing things for myself and asking God to bless it; when I go back to that mentality of trying harder for Jesus; what happens is I put myself back under enslavement to the flesh. That is all that religion is. It’s an enslavement to the flesh. And this works mentality dismisses any possibility of any kind of valid testimony of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of this had cut Paul to the quick. Here is a man that was once the most religious man that ever walked on the face of this earth. Here’s a man who had been delivered from the very bondage these people had chosen to buy into. And as he watched them do this he said, “What are you doing? I preached to you the message God preached to me that freed me. Why would you want bondage instead of freedom?” It really broke his heart. Gal 4:11, he says, “I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.” I think that’s the saddest commentary of a preacher wanting people to understand grace and then realizing that they just will not hear it. They’d rather **do** something for God than relate to Him, that God do something through them.

In Gal 4:12 Paul says

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong.

His heart is bleeding for these people. These deceived Galatian believers were now spiritually depleted. If you ever wonder when you’re going through all the ritual of whatever you put yourself up under and there’s no joy in it, I can tell you there is no joy in religion. Religion brings no joy. Jesus produces that in the person of His Spirit in our life. They had lost the spiritual satisfaction they’d once had. And this is what a works mentality does.

Gal 4:15 Paul asks

Where then is that sense of blessing that you had?

He's remembering back; he's wanting them to remember back. Remember the days you were so full of joy? You loved each other. You dealt with sin as it came up. Where's that gone? You see, when you buy into a works mentality, which is inbred in all of us, "that sense of blessing" disappears.

In Gal 5:7 he reminds them

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

Well it's a pretty sad story, isn't it? Now, that's the picture of the Galatian churches to whom he is writing--not one church, but several churches in southern Galatia. But you know what the beautiful thing is here? There wouldn't be this epistle if there was not hope. And that's the beautiful thing about grace. There is still hope for each of these churches. Even though they were living as they were living, acting as they were acting, that did not negate who God says they were. Positionally they're still the children of God. In Gal 4:7 Paul says

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

You know what I love about Scripture? It shows us who we really are. What you do or what you do not do does not negate what God says you already are. Now, you may not be enjoying it as a son, but you're still a child. And as long as we're children of God—and we will be if we've been saved and Jesus has come to live in us—there's always hope. There's always hope. The light at the other end of the tunnel is not another train. There is hope. And I love that. With God your glass is always half full, never half empty. There's always hope with Him. The **message of grace** sparks the **message of hope**.

Well, today we begin with Galatians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle," and then it's in parentheses here, "(not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)."

Now we have to understand something. When false doctrine is introduced—and in this case and in most cases in the New Testament, other than Gnosticism, it's legalism that gets into the church—when false doctrine is introduced, God's Word has just been challenged. Somebody needs to step up, take the truth and turn everything right side up. You see, wrong doctrine turns everything upside down.

Now who's going to step forward in this situation? The Galatian churches have been infiltrated by error. Who's going to step forward? And since they're now "upside down," who's going to take God's Word and put them "right side up?" Well, you already know the answer. Enter the apostle Paul. Don't you love him? If anybody's going to be in the midst of a mess, it's going to be the apostle Paul. And he starts off with the most authoritative phrase you can find anywhere in the New Testament. He says, "Paul, an apostle."

Now that's like him pulling his badge out and saying, "Paul, an apostle." And you say, "He says that in every epistle." No, he does not. We just studied one and he didn't use the word in the whole epistle. Why is that? Because when he's correcting false doctrine, when he's stepping into the midst of error, he pulls out his badge and says, "Paul, an apostle." In his epistle to the Philippian church he did not use the word "apostle." He called himself a "bondservant" (*doulos*) and captured the love that was among all of the saints in Philippi. But now he's doing something very specific in the letter to the Galatians.

We need to understand his statement "Paul, an apostle." The word for **apostle** is *apostolos*—*apo*, from; *stolo*, to send, to be sent from with a message. Now who are these people that were sent forth with a message? (See also [Apostle](#)) Who were these apostles? Can we have apostles today in the same sense there were apostles in the New Testament? I say watch television and I see people who proclaim themselves as apostles. Can we have them today? Is that even possible? Well, I hope you'll understand the answer to that one by the time we finish today.

Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead). (Gal 1:1)

The first thing I want you to look at today is the appointment of an apostle. Now just who appointed an apostle? An apostle's appointment could not come from men. That's interesting to me. Several religions have picked up on this today and say that men can commission apostles. No, sir. Paul says "Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man."

Now there are two prepositions he uses here to build his case, to emphasize what he's saying. One is *apo* which means away from and indicates a source. And then there is *dia*, which is the vehicle or agency through which something occurs. Paul says, "I do not have man as my source. My calling did not come through any agency that man would have. There's no means that man came up with to make me an apostle." "Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man." Now in the phrase, "not sent from men," notice the little word "not." There are two words in the Greek for "not." English translates these two words the same way.

One of the words for "not" can mean absolutely not, but only as the context demands it. And sometimes it can be a relative sense, and it's used as the context directs. The other word for "not" which is used in Galatians 1:1 is not in our English language. It's the little word "*ou*," which means absolutely not in any way, shape or form, never, never, never. And any time you ever see a "*bu*," it just shuts out what follows. It doesn't matter what the context is. "*Ou*" means absolutely not, in any way, shape or form. So man could **not** appoint apostles in any way, shape or form. He says **no** man could have appointed me as an apostle.

If man could **not** in any way appoint an apostle, then where do these apostles come from? Who appointed the apostles? Well, Paul is very clear, as the verse continues "Paul, an apostle not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father," and then notice what he does. He mentions the resurrection; "Who raised Him from the dead."

Now, the fact that Paul mentions the resurrected Christ is very significant. To be an apostle in the New Testament, in the sense that Paul was an apostle, was to have been a witness of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul asks "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?" And then he gives the condition. "Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord?" The question you may be asking is "Did Paul really witness the resurrected Christ? When? I don't know where that is in Scripture."

It's in Acts 9. This is after the resurrection. This is after the crucifixion. In Acts 9:3-4 we read

As he journeyed he came near [Damascus](#) [referring to Paul at this time named Saul]. And suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'"

I love that passage. That's like God saying "If you mess with those Christians you're messing with Me. You're bothering Me." Paul didn't think he was persecuting Jesus. He thought he was just persecuting the Christians.

"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. (Acts 26:14-15)

Paul, trembling and astonished, said

"What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' (Acts 22:10)

Now keep in mind that when Paul wrote this letter, there were many false apostles. He dealt with them in other epistles, not just in Galatians. But the true apostles were those who were appointed by God Himself. Those who are appointed by God Himself, were men like Paul and James, men who wrote the New Testament.

Galatians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead."

Now, I hope there's no question in your mind that an apostle in the sense that Paul was an apostle had to be appointed by the resurrected Christ. They had to be a witness of Him and He had to appoint them.

The second thing I want you to see today as we talk about who is in charge, is the authenticity of an apostle. You see, an apostle in the days of Paul was not only appointed by Christ, but was authenticated by Christ. They were proven to be God's apostles. How? The most definitive way they were proven to be genuine God-sent apostles is by their performance of signs and wonders and miracles. These supernatural phenomena authenticated their apostleship.

These apostles were in a class all by themselves. They were a very small group. And I want to make sure you understand. None of us will ever, ever be an apostle in the sense that Paul was an apostle. You can use the word generically—sent forth as a missionary—but never in the specific sense of the apostles of the New Testament. If you ever hear me say from this pulpit, "God spoke to me this morning and made me an apostle," I want you to walk up, take me by the ear and lead me to the nursing home, because something has slipped in this man's brain.

The apostles like Paul were the ones through whom we have the New Testament. They gave us all of the New Testament books. They're the foundation of the church. In Ephesians the first three chapters talk about who and whose we are in Christ. It says in Ephesians 2:20 (note),

Having been built upon the foundation, the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus, being Himself, being the cornerstone.

For years we had a foundation, and there this foundation sat, for three years, at least. And everybody would drive by and say "Well, are they ever going to build anything on that thing?" All we had the money for was to build the foundation. We didn't need a new foundation, we needed to build on the foundation we already had.

Now why in the world would anybody say that they're a New Testament apostle in the sense of the apostle Paul? We have the [Canon](#). We have everything we need. The apostles laid the foundation. We are the building that comes up and rests upon that foundation. They were relegated to a certain time. They were a specific, narrow and small group. Not many people were put into the category of an apostle. In Ephesians 3:5 (note) Paul, speaking of the mystery of Christ, says, "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." So the apostles were the people God used to reveal the mystery of Christ. And they in turn wrote it down so that we would have the revelation from God.

God used the apostles to give us the doctrine that we have today. He authenticated them by signs and wonders. Now this seems to be a topic that everybody likes to talk about today. If you're looking for a pattern in signs and wonders don't ever look for it outside of Jesus and the apostles. Can God do anything He wants to do any time He wants to do it? Absolutely. But when you're looking for a pattern—if I do this and this and this God will do this—no, sir; that's totally foreign to Scripture.

Let me show you. Look in Hebrews 2:3 (note) where we'll find the pattern. What a marvelous book of Hebrews. I love Hebrews. It says in Heb 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a [[salvation]]?" Now look at the generation here. "After it was first spoken through the Lord [He's first generation], it was confirmed [and notice the pronouns here] to us," third generation. Now, who in the world confirmed it to the people that were being written to in Hebrews? It said "it was confirmed to us [third generation] by those [second generation] who heard."

Now notice, it was first shared by the Lord. Then it was confirmed to us by those who heard. Now who are "those who heard"? Who do they represent? That's the apostles. Look at Heb 2:4 (note):

"God also bearing witness [and look at the pronoun again here] with them [with them; he didn't say with us] both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."

Now the phrase "signs and wonders and various miracles" is significant to understand. It simply means that this was the means that God took to affirm and to authenticate His apostles. And I challenge you to study this, the subject of signs and wonders. As a phrase it's only found ten times in the New Testament (Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22, Jn 4:48, Acts 4:30, 5:12, 14:3, 15:12, Ro 15:19, 2Cor 12:12, Heb 2:4). And sometimes it's not very good.

In Matthew 24:24 "signs and wonders" refers to false prophets seeking to mislead the elect.

"For false Christ's and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead if possible even the elect." (Mt 24:24, )

Now here's signs and wonders used to mislead, to deceive. Does it make you feel like you're in the 21<sup>st</sup> century all over again?

"Signs and wonders" is used with Jesus in a very positive way. John 20:31 is the key verse for the whole study of the gospel of John, and it tells you why He came and why He did what He did. It says,

"Many other signs did He do, but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ."

You see, it's just a sign that points to something. You don't worship the sign. You look to see what it points to.

I was coming back from a revival years ago and we were singing together. Boy, we were having the best time singing. The only problem with that was I was driving and was not paying attention. We were in the mountains of Virginia and there was a sign that said "curve." You know, when you see a "curve" sign in Virginia, I mean, it gets your attention. And I missed the sign. And thank the Lord He wasn't through with me yet. We hit a guard rail and went over it and my front wheels hung over it about 100 feet from a ravine down below. I just missed a tractor trailer truck by probably the width of a tire. And it was quite a hair-raising experience.

But, you know, I began to appreciate that sign. I didn't go back and bow down to it, oh no. I understand now what it was for. It was to point to something. A sign, or a wonder or a miracle is nothing more than a sign that Jesus used in order to authenticate who He was. It pointed to the fact that He was the Son of God. And "signs and wonders" in the same way with the apostles. The pattern of "signs and wonders" is never a pattern for anyone except the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who seek "signs and wonders" are not seeking Christ.

Can I say that again? Those who seek "signs and wonders" are not seeking Christ. Matthew 12:39 says,

"But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.'"

These signs and wonders were performed to authenticate the apostles and Christ. I want you to see how they are attached to the apostles.

In Acts 2:43,

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

In Acts 5:12,

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people.

So you've got to understand then that the apostles were in a unique group. To take what God did in their life and force it as a pattern into our life would be to misuse Scripture. There has never been anyone like them. Christ Himself appointed them and Christ Himself authenticated him.

Well, what about places today that echo the same situations that these apostles went into? I have no trouble with that. I have no trouble whatsoever. But to look for it as a pattern, no sir, you cannot find it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We don't need it because we have Christ, Who is the fullness of all the blessing and He is in us. He is the Blessor. Why in the world would somebody go out looking for a blessing when they have the Blessor? It doesn't make any sense.

And so make sure you understand who these apostles were. Just who is in charge? When the apostle stepped forward, buddy, he pulled a badge out. He had been appointed by Christ. He had also been authenticated by Christ.

**But then finally the authority of an apostle.** In Acts 1:1-2 we find that Jesus not only instructed the apostles, but He also, again, called them, chose them. It says "This first account" Luke is writing this.

"The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had, by the Holy Spirit given orders [He instructed] to the apostles whom He had chosen."

He chose them and He instructed. Christ chose them, Christ Himself. They were appointed and their authority was from Christ Himself.

I had a friend one time that told me, he said, "I saw the strangest thing on the Interstate." And of course you can see some strange things on the Interstate. And I said, "What's that?" He said, "I saw a little man, he couldn't have been more about 5'5" or 5'6", and he was standing out in the middle of the Interstate highway. And," he said, "Wayne, he had two lanes of traffic stopped." He said, "It must have been 20 or more Mack trucks." He said, "It's incredible." I'm thinking to myself, if that had been me they'd have run flat over me. How did he do that? He said, "Well," and then he smiled, "he had a uniform on and a badge and all he had to do was hold his hand up."

Now, that's what I want you to think about. It wasn't his authority. He had no authority. It was the authority the badge gave him. Now let's make sure we understand this. These apostles had authority, but that authority was not in themselves; it was in Christ who appointed and authenticated them. The authority is always in Him. It was in the One who gave them the badge as being an apostle. He chose them. He called them. Now He's delegated to them the responsibility to give the epistles of the Word of God to the church today.

Now, I want you to turn to Matthew 28:18. I've heard this thing quoted so many times, but finally I read it. And I found out somebody didn't understand when they quoted it. I've always heard this. It says "All authority has been given to Him." "He gave it to us." No sir. Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and [where else?] on earth.'" Do you realize He didn't say all authority has been given to Me and because I love you guys I'm going to give it to you? No sir, He did not. He didn't say that.

We've got to realize the authority is never in man. The authority is in God Who lives in man. It's in Christ. To the degree that the apostles lived in accordance with Christ and His will was to the degree they experienced His authority. That's the key. Authority has always got to be centered in Christ. Authority is only shared to the degree of the person's willingness to say "Yes." In 1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ" and then he adds a phrase, "by the will (thelema) of God." In *Kittel's Dictionary of Theological Words*, it says that that phrase "by the will of God," here's what Paul's saying:

"I am totally submissive to the authority of God in my life and the only way I can exercise any authority is to be submissive to the authority that was delegated to me to begin with."

So the authority is never in the man. The authority is in Christ. This is why Paul said in Romans 1:1 (note), "I'm a **bondservant (doulos)**." Have you ever stopped to think about the apostle Paul? Some people think he's an egotist. They don't have a clue about the apostle Paul. No, sir. You think you're going to be an egotist when you're walking down the road and all of a sudden a



blinding light hits you and He blinded him for three days and then commissioned him and sent him out? You think that Paul didn't wake up every single morning of his life wondering, "He could put my eyes out in about two seconds. I have met with the God of creation." He lived as a broken, surrendered man because God broke him on that [Damascus](#) road, changed him completely by the **message of His grace** and made him one of the greatest preachers in the New Testament.

But Paul had no authority in himself. His authority was in Christ Who delegated it to him. And when he was willing to say yes, then he had the authority of an apostle. Paul was a broken man, a surrendered man, a called, chosen, appointed man; God authenticated him. That time when he was bitten by the snakes and didn't die, and all other things that happened to him, is not something that has to do with us. That's what Jesus did with the apostle Paul. But the only time he ever had any authority was according to the measure of his willingness to surrender to the authority that lived within him.

When man assumes an authority of his own instead of bowing before Christ who is the authority—now listen to me—that's when doctrine's going to be perverted. I don't care how intelligent he is. I don't care how he does it, but if his heart is not surrendered to what Jesus is saying, somehow the doctrine is going to be perverted. The false teachers in Galatia assumed authority that was not theirs. And as a result they preached a message that was not truth. And sadly the Galatians listened to these men who had no authority and as a result their lives were "upside down."

Now, why must authority always be centered in Christ? John 1:3 says "He created all things" and then it goes on to say, "without Him nothing could be created." And not only that, He died for His creation. The only one who knows the design, the only one who knows the plan, is the One Who's in authority, and He lives within us. So all authority is in Him.

Well, for a person to wear the badge of the authority of an apostle he had to be appointed, he had to be authenticated by God Himself. And the authority that came forth from Paul was not from him, but it was from Christ. It was Christ in him. The authority rests in Christ and, and it never rests in man.

So what do we have here? We have the book of Galatians. The Word of God has been challenged. Paul, in submission to the One Who is in authority, the One Who lives in him, steps forward, pulls out the badge that this One gave to him and said, "Paul, an apostle," and he begins to turn that church right side up.

"Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." (Gal 1:1)

Do we have apostles today? Absolutely not in the sense that Paul was called an apostle. So then who and what is our authority? It's the same authority he had. It's the same authority we have, the Lord Jesus Christ: He and now His Word is our authority. And I want you to understand that when the Word of God is preached, taught, shared, however, it is the living and powerful Word which helps people get their lives turned right side up. On the other hand, error turns one's life upside down.

And, folks, this is what we're all about. I understand from time to time I run a little too fast. I use too many Greek words. Hey, let me tell you something. We're trying to get this church to a point that they absolutely love and crave the Word of God. Why? Because God's Word is going to keep us right side up in every area of our church. It's going to take a while to do that, but I believe God didn't send us here, like a guy said, He didn't teach us to swim to drown us. He's got something in store. It's going to take time. My desire and prayer is that every person who teaches in a Sunday School class, stands up in the authority of Jesus Christ, which means he's living a surrendered life, and in the authority of what God has to say. God's Word will take care of the rest. That's the authority we have today.

Aren't you glad to pick up the Bible and know that it was put together by those whom God had appointed and authenticated, and through whom He expressed His authority? And now we pick it up and we open it up without shame, without embarrassment, for it is God's Word and we never have to apologize for it. You see, we're, caught up in something today. We're caught up in using the world's ways to accomplish God's ends. And I want to tell you, the "world's ways" have never worked and they won't work today! We must use God's means to accomplish God's ends, and that means using His Word under His authority!

I'm telling you folks, you know what our problem is? Nobody has to document what's out there in this world. Take this Bible and put it in the middle of it. This is light. This is life. This was authenticated by the Lord Himself. This is His book and it takes people's lives and turns them "right side up" "Who's in charge?" God and His Word and that's what places things back on the right path. That's what the apostle Paul did. He stepped out and said "Paul, an apostle." And everybody in the Galatian churches went "Whoa!" And I guarantee you they listened, because he had something authoritative to say. But he's not happy, because he knew that religion robs us of every bit of joy we can have just by experiencing Christ moment to moment. A works mentality is what our flesh wants. We're all going to struggle with this desire, but the **message of grace** is the answer for the **message of works**.

## Galatians 1:3-5 The Gospel of Grace – Part 1



We're going to be looking at **Gal 1:3-5** today as we talk about the **gospel of grace**. The apostle Paul has stepped forward as God's authority. God's Word had been challenged. Anytime error gets around us, God's Word is challenged, and Paul is up to the challenge. He held up his badge. He says in Gal 1:1, "Paul, an apostle." God's Word is so precious and God had men called apostles, the ones who gave us the New Testament. The kind of apostle that the apostle Paul was, was unique in his day and non-existent in our day.

An apostle had to be appointed by Christ Himself, as we saw the last time. Gal 1:1 tells us "Paul, an **apostle** (*apostolos*), not of men, neither by the agency of man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." We saw that he had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ. These apostles were so unique. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 he says, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord?"

The apostles were not only appointed by Christ, but they were authenticated by Christ. The way they were authenticated as described in Hebrews 2:3-4, was through signs and wonders and miracles. There are many people still looking for that pattern today. However, you will not find that pattern today. That pattern was restricted to the first century apostles and to Jesus Christ. Can Christ do a miracle anytime He wants? Absolutely! That's not what I'm saying. But we don't go looking for a pattern of signs, wonders and miracles. These were given to the apostles to show that they were authentic.

Not only were the apostles authenticated, but the apostles were given authority by Christ. In fact, Christ was their authority. He lived in them. He said in Matthew 28, "All authority has been given unto Me." He doesn't say I'm giving it to you. Oh, no! He came to live in them and to the degree they were willing to bow before Him was to the measure they would begin to experience His authority. It's always His authority, never ours.

The message of God's grace that Paul had taught in Galatia had been destroyed when they chose to listen to false teachers that had come among them, teaching a message of works. They chose to go back to that old works mentality. They chose *religion* over a *relationship* with Jesus Christ. Now I want you to know, and you'll see it over and over again in Galatians, that there is no way to mix *religion* with *Christianity*. There is no way to do this and still to expect to experience any of the joy that people can have with Christ and the harmonious relationships they can have with one another. There's no way that can happen when you try to mix a religious works mentality with Christianity.

Paul begins early in the epistle to the Galatians laying the foundation for what he's going to build on for the rest of the letter. And it's amazing to study the life of Paul. I love it. I love to study his epistles. Many people get on to me and say, "Do you ever do an Old Testament book?" Every now and then I do just to make everybody happy, but I love the epistles. I love Paul. People say he's an egotist. That's ridiculous. He's the most humble man you've ever read about. He's a man that has been broken. He's a man who was blinded for three days. Do you think he didn't understand the Lordship of Christ? But when he writes this book, he's like a lawyer building his case. He builds with "blocks" one at a time - he has this block and then another block and then another and another. And so he begins to build in this first chapter, continues to build all the way through the letter.

Gal 1:3-5 are such powerful passages because they are so concise. They present a true picture of the **gospel of grace**. Every word is power packed. And remember, Paul is going to come back and build on what he is saying in these passages. Gal 1:3-5 says,

**Grace** (*charis*) to you and peace (*eirene*) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Now there are four things that I want us to see about the gospel of grace. Let's just see what the gospel of grace is all about. First, let's look at the peace that grace provides. Look at Gal 1:3: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

When I study Paul's epistles it's amazing to me that that phrase "**grace to you and peace**" is found in 10 of his epistles -- Romans (Ro 1:7), it's found in 1 Corinthians (1Cor 1:3) and 2 Corinthians (2Cor 1:2), in Galatians (Gal 1:3), Ephesians (Eph 1:2), Philippians (Php 1:2), Colossians (Col 1:2), 1 Thessalonians (1Th 1:1) and 2 Thessalonians (2Th 1:2) and also Philemon (Philemon 1:3) "grace to you and peace." (See also 1Ti 1:2, 2Ti 1:2, Titus 1:4). And it's always in that order, grace and then peace.

Until a person experiences the saving grace of God, he cannot know peace with God. I hope we understand that. You see, man is at enmity with God. He is separated from God because of the damage of sin. When he was born into this separation, he was born into sin (cf Ro 5:12, 3:23). Sin is the "virus" that plagues humanity. And there is no cure outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Religion

cannot begin to bridge the gap between man and God. Religion offers no peace whatsoever. But grace is not about what man can do to reconcile the situation, but what God has done to reconcile the separation. Grace is all about Jesus coming and dying for us on the cross, paying a debt He did not owe, when we owed a debt we could not pay.

Ephesians 2:8-note is wonderful to help us realize that you cannot be saved by any fleshly work. It says,

For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

So at the very moment of our receiving God's grace, that which He has done for us, Christ comes to live within us. And when you receive Jesus, when I received Jesus into my heart, and when you received Him into your heart, you didn't realize it and I didn't realize it, but we were making a statement. And what we were saying is religion does not work. Religious works could not have gotten us to that place.

You see, we had to come to realize there was nothing we could do to save ourselves. And the fact that we received Jesus as Savior, trusting Him to do the saving work for us on the Cross speaks of the fact that religion does not work. Only God's grace saves us-- His saving grace.

### **Saving grace gives us peace with God that is unconditional**

Romans 5:1(note) says

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exalt in hope of the glory of God.

Nobody, nothing, can ever disturb the relationship we have with God the Father through Jesus Christ. That is an unconditional situation. When we receive it, it can never be distorted.

However, living grace is something different. We saw this in Philippians, we'll see it beautifully brought out in Galatians. Living grace is available for the believer to experience day by day. Living grace is conditional. And it is conditioned by our willingness to yield to Christ, to let Jesus be Jesus in us. This is what Paul is referring to in Galatians, because he is writing to believers who have already received saving grace. Now, living grace is Christ living His life in and through us. How many times have you heard that? Well you're going to hear it a lot more. He says it in Galatians 2:20. Peter had made the foolish mistake of going back to the old religious works mentality, and Paul had to stand him up and rebuke him to his face. And then he says in that context

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives **[Where does He live?]** in me; and the life I now live I live by faith in the One who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 -note)

You see, just as saving grace produces peace **with** God, living grace produces the peace **of** God. Notice that the "peace **of** God" is something that is conditional. You may be here today and you have experienced saving grace. You're at peace **with** God, but you're not living in the peace **of** God because you may have made the same mistake the Galatians made. You may have gone back to doing things your way instead of yielding to Christ. Galatians 5:22 (note), for instance, describes, "the fruit of the Spirit," which is not something you work up, not a book you read or somebody you talk to or a program you watch. Paul says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love," and then he adds it's joy and it's peace. So fruit of God is something the Spirit of God has got to produce within us. That's the peace **of** God.

Can I ask you a question? Are you living in the peace of God? Have you let it rest? Have you laid it down? Have you just simply said, "Lord Jesus, You're in control. I just want to be obedient to You. Whatever You want is what I want." That's the peace *of* God. You already have the peace *with* God. But living grace is when you experience the peace *of* God, through Christ and only through Christ and the grace that He offers. Can we have peace first of all with God, secondly with others and thirdly, and most importantly, within ourselves? Saving grace produces peace *with* God; living grace produces the peace *of* God.

Paul is not simply greeting the believers here. So many people in commentaries pick this thing up and say he's just giving a simple greeting. And they say, now let's get to the meat. Oh no, no. This is God's Word. It's inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Every word is powerful, it's packed with what God wants it to say. What Paul is doing is laying a foundation. He's trying to show these believers who have lost the peace *of* God. You say, "Well, how do you know?" Because he says, "Where is the sense of blessing that you once had?" (Gal 4:15) In Gal 5:7 Paul asks "You were running well, who has hindered you from obeying the truth?" You see, these people have turned to religion and lost everything they could have had in their relationship with Christ. And that's what religion does to all of us! When we choose to do it our way, we are walking away from the fullness of what we could be experiencing in Christ Jesus.

He makes certain that no one misunderstands the source of this grace and peace writing...

Grace to you and peace [*now watch*] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:3)

In the phrase “from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul uses a little preposition for “*from*,” the word **apo**. ([See discussion of apo and ek](#)) **Apo** simply designates a source. Where’s it coming from? It’s coming *from* (*apo*) God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Religion does not offer this.

But there’s something he says here that I think theologically you need to put into your cap. He points to the oneness of the Godhead. Notice that the preposition “*from*” governs both the Father and the Son. Don’t tune out here. Stay with me. “Grace to you and peace *from* God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Ah, you’re still not with me. It is not “*from* God our Father and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s not what Paul said. If he had, he would have used **apo** twice. No, sir. This is a technical, but when he used apo only once, he links God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as one. He is showing us that God the Father and God the Son are One and the same.

He does the same thing in Gal 1:1 with the word “*through*” when he says “but through Jesus Christ [and not “through God the Father,” but] and God the Father.” There’s only one God. There is only one God in three persons. So Gal 1:1 and Gal 1:3 give us a beautiful picture of the Godhead. This clearly reflects the preeminence that the apostle Paul gave to Jesus Christ as God. Paul understands Jesus’ divinity and he readily bows before Him. Also notice the triple designation of Jesus as “the Lord (*kurios*),” which expresses His exalted rank, while “Jesus (*lesous*)” speaks of His saving work and finally “Christ (*Christos*)” speaks of His divine commission.

So the peace that we’re looking for, the peace that the lost world is looking for with God, only comes by the grace of God. And once we have the peace *with* God, the peace *of* God that we are looking to experience day by day, moment by moment, is only found in Jesus Christ.

How many times I’ve heard somebody say, “I need to get away for about three weeks. I’ve got to get my head together.” Well, the problem is, you took the problem with you. The problem is the **flesh**. And if the flesh is not dealt with, and if the flesh does not surrender, there will be no peace *of* God even after three weeks of time away. We must deal with sin in our life. We must reckon with our flesh. And when we do, then grace, God’s living grace offers us a peace that passes all understanding (Php 4:7). That’s the peace that living grace offers.

Secondly, the price that grace paid. Jesus is the embodiment of all grace. Paul says in 2Ti 2:1 (note) “**Be strong** (present imperative = command to continually allow yourself to be strengthened) in the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus.” Grace is found only in Christ. And look what He did for us. Look at the price He paid for us. Gal 1:4 says,

“Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us.”

Now, that word “**gave**” (*didomi*) is in the **aoist tense**. That means at a certain point in time He gave Himself. That is not only biblical, that is historical. We know that not only did He come historically, at a point in time (John 1:14), we also know that He died historically, at a point in time. He gave Himself at a certain point in time. The phrase “**gave Himself**” means that Jesus died, referring specifically to His death on the Cross.

In fact in Gal 1:1 he wrote “Paul, an apostle, not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead.” The fact that He was raised from the dead means that He died. There is no resurrection without a death. The book of the Revelation gives us a look into the prophetic future of what’s going to take place I believe just prior to the seven years of tribulation on this earth. And now, you know where I stand. I believe the church is going to be taken into heaven. We will not fight. If you want to stay here, stay here. That’s your problem. But I believe the rest of us are going to go.

Jesus takes the sealed book from the Father in Rev 5:6 (note). John begins with the phrase “And I saw.” I love these pictures. There’s nothing that grabs me in Scripture more than these kinds of pictures. “And I saw between the throne [this is looking to heaven for a minute] with the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” “Standing as if [what?] slain.” There we see the resurrected Christ in heaven before the last days of what will take place on this earth.

So Christ died. What did it cost for you and me to be here and hear this morning? Christ died. He gave of Himself. And as Galatians 1:1 says, He rose from the dead. This is the basis of our salvation.

Why in the world would Paul have to remind believers of the basis of their salvation? Oh, there’s a huge reason here. What was His attitude when Christ came to die for us? We said it was in the aorist tense, but I didn’t tell you it’s in the active voice. What does that mean? Not only did He give Himself, but He willingly gave Himself. The word *didomi* means to willing give something for the benefit of somebody else. And the **active voice** means that Jesus chose to die for our sins.

Now that's incredible! If He was made to die for our sins, that's one thing; but if He chose to die for our sin, that's incredible. And that's the picture that Paul draws for us. No one made Christ die for our sin. He chose voluntarily to do so. When did He make this decision to die for us? The King James Version correctly translates Revelation 13:8 ([note](#)), and if this doesn't touch your heart then I tell you what, this would be a great morning to get saved. I tell you what has happened folks. We have lost the wonder and the awe of our salvation. We don't understand why it is that we can be in here this morning and even understand the truth that God wants us to hear. It's because of what Christ did for us on the cross and He did it willingly. He chose to do it.

Revelation 13:8 ([note](#)) says,

"That all that dwell upon the earth shall worship Him whose names are not written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Do you understand what's being said here? Jesus, in heaven, before the world had ever been created, before sin had ever become a problem on earth, stood in heaven as the Lamb saying to His Father, "Father, I'm ready to go, I'm ready to go." He made a decision before you and I ever even thought about making a choice to sin. He chose to come and die for you and die.

Why did He give of Himself? Gal 1:4 goes on to say, "who gave Himself for our sins." He died for our sins. Romans 3:23 ([note](#)) says very clearly—and Romans and Galatians are commentaries on each other—he says "For all have sinned and come short of the glory (doxa) of God." That means that doesn't matter if you're a Jew, that doesn't matter if you're a Gentile. It doesn't matter if you've had all the covenants and the promises, etc., and all the religious activity. He said you died. You were born in your sin and you are a sinner. And if you are a Gentile (the pagan world), you can't point a finger, because every man born has been born into sin. We were all lost and we had no hope whatsoever.

But Christ came and gave of Himself willingly, the sinless sacrifice, the God-man for our sins. For grace to be extended to mankind cost Christ's death on the Cross for our sins. If man could any way attain righteousness by religious works, then Christ would not have had to leave the throne of glory and come down here, veiling His glory in human flesh, and going to the Cross to bear our sin. The very fact that we claim to be Christians means we're not religious, because we know what religion cannot accomplish. Jesus had to accomplish it for us.

The **peace** that grace provides, the **price** that grace paid, but the third thing I want you to see is the **purpose** that grace pictures.

There's a purpose of Him dying for our sins, and the picture of it is incredible.

Who gave Himself for our sins [[Why?](#)] so that He might rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

Now, what purpose does Christ dying for our sins accomplish for us? "Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us." Now the word "**deliver**" is [exaireo \(A-8\)](#) which means to take out of. You've got a box of chocolates and you want to reach in and take one out of it. That's the word [exaireo](#), only it's a little different than that. It has also the choice of what is taken out. Now, I can hear the Calvinists jump up and say, "He means the elect here." Excuse me, but he does not. And I hate to pop your little bubble. But if the choice is taken out. In other words, He didn't choose the animals and He didn't choose the trees and the stones and the other created things on this earth to be taken out from this bondage. He chose to deliver humanity from the present evil age.

#### THE KEY NOTE OF THE WHOLE EPISTLE

Now this strikes the key note of the whole epistle. He has taken us out from under something that has been pulling us down for quite a while. Christ came to die for our sins to deliver us. And from what? A state of bondage. Bondage to what? **This present evil age**. (KJV = "present evil world") Now I don't know if you've studied Romans, but Romans focuses more on the fact that Jesus saved us from the penalty of sins. Yes, He did. And He saves us from the power of sin. Yes, He did. But Galatians has a slightly different focus on what Jesus came to do, which is germane to the remainder of the epistle. He wants them to understand this very thing. Our sins are simply indications of our bondage, bondage to a system of living and thinking that is found in this world.

You turn a television on, you're listening to that system. You turn the radio on, and I hear stuff on that thing, I'm thinking good grief! Get a clue people! But, you know, it's interesting. I love to listen to it to kind of keep up with what the system's doing to people's minds. Christ not only delivered us from our personal sins, but He from the pull and the power of a system, which is the way the world does what it does.

Now look carefully at this, because I'm going somewhere with it and so is Paul. Gal 1:4, "Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us [*take us out from under*] from this present evil age." Now what does he mean by "present evil age"? Well, the Greek word for **age** (or "**world**" in Gal 1:4KJV) is the word [aion](#). It's an order or a system in this context. **Aion** can be a time period, but here in Galatians, it is more of an order or a system, an evil harmful way of thinking and doing. The same word is used in Romans 12 in the same way in Ro 12:2 ([note](#)), "And **do not** be **conformed** (present imperative = stop letting this happen) to this



world,” to this system, to the system of thinking, the way something is done. The word “**world**” (*aion*) is used in Ro 12:2. Therefore in Romans and Galatians *aion* seems to describe a system or a way of thinking.

Do you realize how we have to almost be deprogrammed when we come to church on Sunday, because we live for six days in a **world** that is totally in conflict with what God says in His Word? And every time you get into the Word you have to understand that your mind’s going to pull you a certain way (Ed: toward the world’s way of thinking), but you have been set free from that kind of bondage. You can now listen to what God says, and His truth sets you free. In this **age** in which we live, sin prevails and therefore the law belongs to this **age**. There’s coming an age when righteousness will prevail.

I have many of my great brothers in Christ and they say, “Oh, we’re in the Millennium now.” That’s the most ridiculous statement I’ve ever heard on earth. How can we be in the millennium now? Does righteousness reign? Did you watch the news this morning or last night? Do you think righteousness rules and reigns? No, it doesn’t. That’s why the law is tied to this **age**. Why? Because if a law was given to expose sin and sin is a part of this age, righteousness does not rule.

But what he’s talking about in Galatians? There is a system in this world and he’s not discounting that reality. But the focus of what he’s talking about is not just the system of the world on the radio to which you listen. What Paul is talking about is the religious system of this world. Christ not only died on the Cross to deliver us from our sins, but from the religious thinking and system of this world (age). I don’t care where you go, the darkest part of Africa, you’re going to find religion. People will worship a tree, a stump. They’ll worship a stone if they have to. Wherever you go you’re going to find a religion. Man has come up with his own way of worship. He’s come up with his own type of religion and believers have been set free from it.

I want you to look over at Gal 4:3 because world is used in another context. In Gal 4:3, Paul uses the word “*world*”. But he shows how narrow its meaning is in the book of Galatians.

So also we while we were children were held in bondage under **how watch carefully** the elemental things of the **[of the what?]** of the **world** (not aion but kosmos)."

There’s our word “*world*”. The word “**elemental**” is the Greek word *stoicheion* which means row by row by row by row, or it can be translated the A-B-C’s.

Now, what is Paul talking about in Gal 4:3? Alright, let’s keep reading. Gal 4:8-10 shows that the world system Paul describes in Galatians is the world of religion -- the way they live, the way they think, the way they act. Look at Gal 4:8: “However, at that time when you did not know God, you were slaves (douleuo) to those which by nature are no gods.” He points immediately to the religion the Gentiles had before they became believers. He is not referring here to Jews. His point is that everyone has a religion of some kind.

Gal 4:9: “But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?”

And then to show that he’s talking about religion, look at Gal 4:10 “You observe days and months and seasons and years” and he points them right back to the slavery they once had to religion no matter what form that it took. This led him to say in Gal 4:11, “I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.” And Paul is describing both Jewish and Gentile religions as elemental, as ABC’s. Why? Because they’re merely human, and they will never rise to a divine level.

Thank God we’ve been set free from religion! We’ve been given a relationship. You see, both Jewish and Gentile religions were centered on a manmade system of works. They are all based on what man can do for God. The Pharisees added 613 commandments. They didn’t think they had enough. We have been set free from this system by the death of Christ on the Cross. What was His motive for dying? Why did He give Himself for our sins? To deliver us, to rescue us, but from what? From the penalty of sin, yes, and the power of sin, yes, but also from the pull and the tug of the religious mindset that is in this present evil age.

As a matter of fact, if you don’t think that this religion is apropos to our present sinful age, when the Antichrist comes “religion” will be his main tool to deceive. He will have a religious leader who will step right alongside the Antichrist and will deceive the world. Galatians 1:4 says, “Who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us, deliver us, from this present evil age.” So we have been set free folks. Everybody thinks freedom is the right to do what you please. No! Freedom is the power to do as you should.

I’ve been watching something on television. There aren’t many good things on television but I discovered the Discovery Channel and the Learning Channel. The Learning Channel challenges me too much, but the Discovery Channel is kind of fun. I also like that Animal Planet Channel. And there’s one program that I like. They go in and they take the animals that have been deprived of food and water. It’s a beautiful thing. And one show is about a grizzly bear. They fly over him in a helicopter and shoot him with a needle to put them to sleep. And they go down, it takes about 12 of them and a big net to load him. They put him into a net and a helicopter takes it up and puts him into a cage. And then they fly to a specified area and drop the cage. And the funniest thing is when they wait for the bear to wake up. Do you want to be there when a grizzly bear wakes up? It’s noticeable how they all run and



jump in the truck and they pull that thing out and that grizzly bear finally gets awake, banging on the cage. He's like, "Who in the world has put me into bondage?" And he realizes suddenly that the door of that cage is open and he can get out. And when he discovers the door, the way he runs is not the way he normally runs. He takes off and runs and throws his paws up in the air and he must thinking, "*I'm free, I am free, I am free.*" Now wouldn't it be stupid if that grizzly bear decided, you know what, I think I liked it in the cage better than I like it out here, and he turned around and walked right back into that cage and let them shut it on him?

That's exactly what the Galatians did! They had been set free from the religious mindset. They'd been set free from committee meetings where we have to come up with something and ask God to bless it. They had been set free from a long list of different rules that supposedly make you spiritual, rules like if you don't have your quiet time God's going to kill you. They have been set free from that mindset. They've been given a relationship. Why in the world would they go back into the "cage?" And that's why Paul is saying what he's saying, "Grace has set you free. Yes, from sin; yes, from the power the sin; yes, from the world that's around you; but particularly from the religious mindset you used to practice to try and please God by what you did, rather than by surrendering to Him."

Now, folks, I want to tell you, this is where we live today. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If we're not walking in a relationship with God we are constantly bombarded by what do we need to do for Him next? What's our next act we need to perform for God? Thank God He delivered us from that mindset. I think that's the heartbeat of Paul when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, buddy. I walked away from that religious mindset. Christ lives in me now." And I don't know about you, but I don't want to go back to it. Do you want to go back to it? That's what church can become folks if you're not careful. "How many did you have in the service last week?" "Well, we had such and such." "Well, God must not be blessing us." Oh, that's garbage! We've been set free from that mindset. And those false teachers that came in among the Galatians made it look so good to them that they bought back into it and walked right back into the cage!

**Finally, the praise that grace produces.** The **peace** that grace provides; the **price** that grace paid; the **purpose** grace pictures; but finally the **praise** that grace produces.

He says all of this (deliverance and rescuing from the present evil age) is,

"According to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be the glory forevermore. Amen." (Gal 1:4b)

It is "according to the will of our God and Father" that we have been set free in Christ. The words **"according to"** is the one Greek word *kata*. *Kata* refers to the standard of something, the measure of something. You say according to, what's the measure? Well, according to the will of our God, not of man, but our God and Father.

The word for **"will"** is ***thelema***. *Thelema* is a great word. According to the will, *kata thelema*. I've moved too quickly. You know what ***thelema*** is? It's the divine intent that God says "this is going to happen. I'm going to get involved in it to make certain it takes place and no man will thwart the My purpose." That's the will of God. God's going to see that it happens. And so God saw to it that you and I could be set free from the religious mindset.

Understand that Christ and the Spirit are equal to God the Father. So a better translation of this verse perhaps would be "according to the will of God Who is also our Father," because we've got to remember it's one God, Who is also our Father. As our perfect Father He saw fit to deliver us from an evil system, a religious system of thinking that focuses on man and what man can do. Our freedom in Christ from this present evil world's way of thinking and living is the divine intent of the Father. The Father got involved and sent His only begotten Son. And Jesus came and died and shed His blood on the Cross so that you and I could be set free.

Do you understand what a slap in the face it is to grace when we choose to go back up under law? When we go back to measuring everything that we do? When we go back to taking the credit and only giving God token glory? This is like a "slap in the face" to God's grace. Grace has never been according to any merit on our part. You can't do something for God and experience His grace other than by surrendering to Him. Paul is insisting on the fact that we are now in the age of grace. This was the divine intent (will) of God. This was the purpose for which Christ died on the Cross and the purpose that He rose again. It's the Gospel of Christ and His death and resurrection that transfers us out from under the bondage to this **present evil age**, and the impossible demands it places upon us.

And so Paul, with these wonderful thoughts in mind, bursts into praise. Now, I love this. This has happened to me many times when I've been preaching. Somebody says, "Did he speak in tongues?" No, we know exactly what he said. He spoke in a language that's communicable to all of us. These people that jump off into that kind of thing to me need help. That's not what's happening here. What's happening here is that Paul turns everything back towards God. It's as if as Paul was writing the epistle that he was caught up in what he was writing about his own freedom that he can't hold in his praise. He had been a religionist for all of his life and God had taken him out from under this and all of a sudden it dawns on him what it costs God to do this, and that God's intent was a relationship, not a religion. And so he breaks into praise

To Whom [God] be the glory forevermore. Amen. (Gal 1:5)

The word for “**glory**” is **doxa** , which means the proper recognition you give to somebody. Once you begin to understand Who He is, you can then give God the proper recognition that is due Him.

But he does something unique here, and I don’t know I’ll get it out right. He puts the definite article before the word “glory.” And, folks, this takes us out of our mind right now. You can’t begin to understand what he just said. I don’t think Paul did. It’s under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. When he says “**the glory**,” he means all of the glory, not that which man can give. Man will never be able to give God **the glory** He deserves. He’s talking about **the glory** that God deserves. He puts a definite article in front of it. A million years into heaven we’ll walk down the streets of heaven and when we see Him and see the marks on His hands and realize what it took to set us free from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the religious damning mindset that infects this world, we’ll fall down on our face and we’ll praise Him for a million years and a billion years upon a million years. And all the glory, all the glory that man could never touch is what He deserves for what He has done for you and I. That’s what he’s talking about.

Finally Paul finishes with “**Amen**.” You know what “**amen**” means? (OT use of **amen**) We say it all the time, don’t we? Do we even know what it means? It means “may this always be so and don’t you dare think about changing it.” That’s an “**amen**.” The next time you say “Amen” to your children maybe that will help them understand: “I have said it, that’s it.”

You understand that when Paul writes this book, folks, this is not a friendly letter. He is upset in a righteous way. Why? Because all that I’ve just preached to you they’ve taken and just thrown it over here and said we’d rather **do** something for God. Why in the world did they do that? Because of the deceivers that had come in among them and made the **message of works** look good (numbers, nickels, noses) and caused the Galatians to drift back in the old religious mindset. So this is why Paul starts like he starts. He builds a foundation in the beginning which he will continue to build on. The church of Galatia stood guilty choosing to walk away from all that it had cost God to give them freedom from religion and instead give them a relationship with Him. No wonder Paul is upset. Religion takes the glory away from God and puts it on man.

## Galatians 1:6-8 The Tragedy of Deception



**Galatians 1:6** I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

What we’re going to talk about today is the tragedy of deception. Isn’t it interesting in our lives how many times we deal with the symptom and we never deal with the problem. We’re always dealing with the symptoms, felt needs, instead of real needs in our life. Well, if you’re not careful, when you read through the book of Galatians you might get the feeling that the false teachers that had duped the believers are the problem. You might say the false doctrine is the problem or the false teachers are the problem. But no, they are only the “symptom.”

And it’s just interesting for us to understand today. We have been warned from day 1 that we’ll have false teachers. Jesus said that; Paul said that; Peter told us that. False teachers will be here until Jesus comes back, always trying to pervert and distort the **gospel of grace**. But the fact that they are around, that they continue to survive, that’s just a symptom. You know what the real problem is? **The problem is too many believers are listening to them. The best way to stop false doctrine is to stop listening to it.** The Galatians were taught by Paul. They understood the **message of grace**, and yet they didn’t keep their focus on the true message. Instead, they listened to the deceivers who bought their false message. The way to stop false teaching is to quit listening to it.

Paul had begun the letter with a stern reminder about what the **gospel of grace** really is. I wonder if I went up and down the rows this morning if any one of us could really verbalize what the gospel of grace really is. It’s not just a simple greeting in the first part of this book when he starts off in Gal 1:3. It’s inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and Paul has a message. He’s building a foundation.

The first thing he does, he shows us the peace that grace provides in Gal 1:3. He says

“Grace (**charis**) to you and peace (**eirene**) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It’s always found in that order --grace first, then peace. You see, grace always precedes peace, but grace always produces peace. God’s grace is what gave them the peace that they had with God. You see, the Galatians had experienced peace with God. Now, that’s what I call saving grace; you can call it whatever, but saving grace is what I call it. That’s when the peace **with** God is

absolutely affirmed and insured.

But they were not experiencing the peace **of** God. What's the difference? Peace **with** God is unconditional. It comes when you experience **saving grace**. Grace always produces peace. **Living grace**, however, is something that happens only when we yield (surrender, submit) to Him (**Ed**: the indwelling Spirit of Christ = Ro 8:9, Spirit of His Son = Gal 4:6). The fruit of God's Spirit is "love, joy, peace..." and that's something God has to produce. If I'm not walking in the peace **of** God this morning it simply means I'm not walking yielded and surrendered to Him.

You see, the religious mindset that the false teachers had bought into in the Galatian churches had robbed them of their peace. You say, how do you know that? Because, he says where is that sense of blessing that you once had? (Gal 4:15) And so Paul, in a simple greeting (that some commentators say is only "a simple greeting") what he's doing is he is building a foundation. And he's saying this peace that you're looking for and that you have lost, the peace **of** God (you can't lose the peace **with** God), is a consequence of turning back to works rather than to grace.

Then Paul reminded them of the price that grace paid. For us to have peace with God and for us to have peace with one another, for us to have peace within ourselves, it would cost a great price. It says in Gal 1:4, speaking of Jesus, "Who gave Himself for our sins." It costs Christ His death on the cross for us to have the peace with Him and peace with one another. And yet these Galatians had walked right away, "slapped Him in the face" (so to speak) by going back to a works doctrine that robbed them of their peace.

Then Paul shows the purpose that grace portrays. In other words, there's a huge purpose that He died for our sins. "So that He might rescue us." He's not trying to cover every base of what Christ did for us when He died on the Cross.

That He might rescue us from this present evil age (**aion**) according to the will of our God and Father. (Gal 1:4)

God's great purpose in our life was to set us free. And here Paul says it is **"from this present evil age."** Now, what's he talking about? Let's review. The age that he refers to is the religious mindset, the religious way of doing things. Christ set us free from that kind of bondage. This religious mindset is what we can **do** for God, always having to **perform** so that we can merit favor from God. But God set us free from that. Isn't it awesome to be set free! I mean, now, freedom is not the right to do as you please; freedom is the power to do as you should. And yet the Galatians walked away. They took the ball and chain and put it right back on their ankles. They said, "We don't want that kind of grace. We don't want that. This is what our flesh wants." They'd bought back into a religious mindset.

And then finally Paul shows the praise that grace always produces in Gal 1:5. He says "to whom be the glory forevermore," and then he says, **"Amen."** And that word amen means "let it always be so, and don't you dare think about ever changing this." The glory goes to Him. It's totally God's desire for us to have a relationship with Him. That's all Christianity is. It's not some religion; it's not a denomination; Christianity is a relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. And when Paul got to thinking about what it cost God to do that for us and how we've been rescued, Paul himself, the greatest religionist that ever lived, has come out from under that old bondage and he just can't help but start praising God. He said, "all praise goes to Him forevermore, amen."

Well, we start now with Gal 1:6. That's the "current" that we're in. That's the "flow of the river." Religious deception robs us of the joy of a relationship. I always know when I've turned back to my flesh -it's when my joy goes, when suddenly there's no love for others, when suddenly I have no patience and I just can't stand it. When I come to the end of myself, I recognize what I've done. I have stepped out of the realm of walking surrendered to Him and I've taken matters into my own hands and now I'm doing it my way, which is the performance attitude that religion always propagates. And so, I am robbed of my joy. These Galatian believers were robbed of their joy, their peace, and all that they could have had if they'd just simply continued to walk as they had been taught.

Paul does not thank God one time for the Galatians. That still gets to me and I smile every time. He thanked God for the Corinthians. I wouldn't have thanked God for the Corinthians, but Paul did. But he didn't thank God for these Galatians, buddy. If you have ever seen righteous indignation, you see it in the book of Galatians. He comes out with both guns blazing and he doesn't bat an eye. He gets right to the root of the problem. What in the world are you doing, he's saying to the Galatians? Why are you going back up under that old religious mindset, that works mentality? In Gal 1:6, he says

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"

Pretty tough words!

Let's look at three things today in the passage, Gal 1:6-8, and see if we can gain from it. See if God will just speak to our hearts. One thing I want you to know is that anytime we open the Word of God that's an invitation from God to come into that Word and hear a message that He has already spoken. We need to hear it. We need to hear it big time in the 21st century.

## SPIRITUAL DESERTION

**First of all, let's look at their spiritual desertion.** He says in Gal 1:6,

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ.

That phrase "I am amazed" is the Greek word [\*thumazo \(B-1\)\*](#). The word means to marvel or to wonder. It's in the **present tense**, and Paul says "I'm walking around continually stunned; I'm stunned. I can't understand what you've done." He has found out what they have done. They have listened to the false teachers. They've gone back up under law, that old performance mentality; and he said, "I am stunned."

**Thumazo** is used in Luke 9:43 when Jesus delivered the boy who was plagued by demonic spirits. Listen to the words. It says, "And they were all **amazed** at the greatness of God." It's like they couldn't figure it out. How could God do this? And in Luke 24:12 *thumazo* was used when Peter witnessed the empty tomb. "But Peter arose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in he saw the linen wrappings only and he went away from, to his home **marveling** [*thumazo*] at what had happened." He said, "Man, I'm stunned. I can't figure this out."

In Luke 24:41 two disciples were walking down the road earlier in that chapter, and the Lord Jesus came along side.

And while they still could not believe it for joy and were **marveling**, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" (Luke 24:41 )

The setting is after His resurrection and they didn't recognize Jesus because He had blinded their eyes. And He began to reveal Himself to them slowly and finally He taught them about Himself from the Scriptures and they were so excited. They couldn't hardly stand it; their heart burned within them and they ran seven miles back to tell their friends what had happened. They'd seen Jesus and Jesus had ministered to them.

And this verse comes right as they got back and right as they're telling their story. Luke 24:36 says, "And while they were telling these things He stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?'" Wouldn't you like to have been a fly on the wall just to watch this whole scene? And then it says in Acts 24:39, "See My hands and My feet, that is, it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this He showed them His hands and His feet." And then comes our verse, Acts 24:41, "And while they still could not believe it, for joy, and they were **marveling**," and that's the word. They couldn't grasp it. They were stunned.

**Thumazo** is the word that Paul uses in a powerful way in Galatians 1:6. He said "I'm amazed. I'm astonished. I'm stunned that you could do this. How you could be so gullible to buy back into that which will only put you into bondage." He was amazed, first of all, that they had so quickly deserted their calling.

"I am amazed," he said, "that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ." It had happened so quickly. He said, "So quickly you're deserting." The words "**so quickly**" are, in fact, two Greek words; the word "so," and the word "quickly." The word "**quickly**" is [\*tacheos \(#3\)\*](#). *Tacheos* speaks of a small amount of time. Sometimes it's difficult for me to get up and go to work. But if I'm going hunting, I get up quickly, there's not much time involved between the time I get out of bed and the time I'm out the door. There's something about that; I have never figured that out! But now with the word "so" written in there, it's a little [\*houte\*](#), it's a word in the Greek that pushes it even further. Even though it's **quickly** and only involves a short time, no, it's quicker than that. "**So quickly** you're deserting." That little word "**so**" is found in John 3:16 when it says, "For God so loved the world," so loved the world, so loved the world. He didn't just love the world, He so loved the world. It pushes it even further. That's the word he uses here.

We must ask the question, **so quickly** after what did they desert? What's he talking about? Is it their conversion? So quickly after they had gotten saved by the Gospel that was preached by Paul to them? So quickly after they had understood, is this what he's talking about? I don't think so. Now you have room for disagreement here because my opinion is not inerrant, but I don't think so. I think it's **so quickly** after they heard the false teaching that they deserted.

Now, let me explain. It's almost as if they heard it and didn't even check it out to see whether it was Scriptural. You know my role here is to preach the word of God, and I'm going to do that, bless God, till He comes back again. However, that's not my only role. My role also is to try to stimulate people to start learning to study for themselves. I'm so grateful for Bible Study Fellowship and Precept and all the different studies that are going on around here, because these studies teach a person how to study for

themselves.

Why is that important? Well, let me just give you an example of that. In Acts 17:10-11 (note) Luke talks about the Bereans. This is what we have got to become as a congregation. Many of you take me on every time I preach, which is a picture of iron sharpening iron. But, I mean, we'll always have that. We're accountable to each other. Acts 17:10, "And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. And when they arrived they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those of Thessalonica." And that word "noble-minded" means they had a lot more class. When I was teaching and preaching in conference work I'd go to some churches and I'd go to other churches, and some of them had more class than the others. Some of them didn't care. Hurry up, finish; I'm going to the restaurant. Some of them, buddy, they dug in with me and they'd say let me just see if what he's saying is so. That's the Bereans. They had more class. He says, "For they **received (dechomai)** the word with great **eagerness (prothumia)**." You know, that's my desire here, that God creates such a hunger in our church from the children all the way up that when we come together under the word of God this is the most important thing we do and we come with an eagerness to hear.

And then Acts 17:11b says, "**Examining (anakrino** in the present tense = continually, as their "lifestyle!") the **Scriptures (graphe)** daily to see whether these things were so." You see, they didn't do that. They heard a false message, but they did not buy into it. You say, well, Wayne, people don't do that today, do they? Wake up and smell the roses. I have a story that I know of a prominent pastor.. He wasn't prepared to preach one Sunday night. He picked up a tract and on that tract he saw a good outline and it looked like it was worthy to preach and he took that tract and made it his message that night and preached it. And this was 35 years ago and he still suffers today for what happened, because he was on television and radio and he did a foolish thing. He did not check out the tract to see if it was what the Scripture said.

So many of us, listen, it's never the messenger; it's always the message. And we have got to learn in our day check it out to see if it be so. That's one of the reasons I preach verse by verse, and I know sometimes that bothers people. But hey, listen, one of these days I'm going to be in glory. Some of you will outlive me. But I tell you what, if somebody ever steps in this pulpit and he opens up the book of Galatians and he starts preaching a message that's not in the book of Galatians, you're going to know I'm grinning in heaven, because you're going to say, wait a minute, that's not what God's word says. You have checked it out and you know that that's not what He says. We have got to know what this book says. The reason they bought into that error was they didn't check it out. They didn't see if it was so in God's Word.

Well, "you deserted Him who called you by the grace of Christ." The word for **deserting** is *metatithemi*. It means to change sides. It was used in military and politics to describe someone who defected. They defected from one side to go over to the other side. And the most damaging thing is, this verb is in the **present tense**, which means they were still doing it. When Paul writes the book of Galatians it's going on. As he's writing, it's going on. They're still doing it! But also, even more damaging than that, the verb metatithemi is in the **middle voice**. Now, I know we don't have a middle voice in English, but this is helpful if you don't understand the text. Middle voice means they made a choice on their own based on something that's happening. In other words, they had heard a message that was error. It was error and yet, it was spoken so eloquently and with such polish, that they bought it. They made a choice on their own and they bought into the false message willingly.

Paul is bewildered. He's amazed. He's shocked. He's stunned. He risked his life to teach them the **message of grace** and all they had to do was to hear someone present a message of works and their flesh bought it that fast. And that's the whole reason for the writing of this epistle. They spiritually defected. To me the saddest thing is, they didn't desert the message; they deserted Christ Himself. Did you notice the verse? It says, "I'm amazed that you're so quickly **deserting Him**." That's the thing that gets me. They walked away from the **personal relationship**. They can't lose their salvation, but they walked away from experiencing the fullness of what God wanted to do in their life. That's amazing. We don't realize we're deserting Him when we choose a works mentality. We defect from His enabling power and we try in our own power to **do** for God and when we do this, we have defected. We have defected Him. We have deserted God!

Now the phrase, "deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ," in this phrase, it's so neat, he's already laid out the gospel one time, now he's going to do it again. He does it over and over and over again in Galatians just, in other words, to say, "Now, are you paying attention? Let me say it again." And that little phrase, "deserting Him who called you by the grace of God," in this we find the distinctive features of what the gospel is all about.

First of all, regarding its source; the source is God, not man. It says "Him," speaking of God, "who called you." And then, secondly, the means of calling. It was of grace, not of works. I see these bumper stickers that say "I found God." You didn't; you weren't even looking for Him. He found you. And it was because of His grace that you were called. The Scripture says nobody can come to Jesus except the Father draw him. So it's not a matter of me calling anybody, it's a matter of God calling people as He uses vessels who teach and preach His Word.

And, by the way, by using the **aorist tense** there's something special here, and I want to give a little note of encouragement to

those of you that teach. By the aorist tense he means that a certain specific time, and what he points back to is when he preached to them the gospel of grace. And what he's saying is that "while I was speaking to you, the gospel of grace God in me and in the Word was reaching through me and calling you." I don't know how many times I'll come to a service; I don't know why—there's a wall in front of me. There's a wall. Nobody really knows that but me. It's a mental war going inside or in my mind. Is anybody listening? Does anybody care? Is anybody paying and attention? And I feel like sometimes I'm the biggest failure that ever walked on the face of this earth. I'll walk out of this building and I'll get in my car and drive home and say, "God, I could drive a truck if You want me to do that." And what God encouraged my heart with with this passage is, "Wayne, you're called to preach; now you do what I called you to do whether they smile or whether they frown. It doesn't matter. If they don't do anything, that's all right. Wayne, while you are speaking, I am calling others through you." Boy, that blessed my heart.

If you're a teacher here today, don't ever be discouraged. It's a win-win situation. You do what God called you to do. You get in the Word. You do your preparation. You preach it and teach it or whatever it is you do, and just remember something, God is using that word. He will call people through you. You don't even know it. You don't have a clue what you're doing. God does and God uses vessels. And that's what Paul is pointing to by using that aorist tense. Whether you preach, whether you teach—and listen—or whether you're sharing the Word of God, remember it's not you calling anybody. God in you will use the Word and your words to call others.

Christ and the grace He offers is the centerpiece of the gospel. There is no other gospel. And yet, they turned to something they thought was good. He says in Gal 1:6, "I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel." Now, that's the new updated New American Standard. The word "different" is the word [heteros \(See C-2\)](#) (See also discussion of [allos](#)). *Heteros* means different from anything, or another kind. We get the word heterosexual from it, different, different, totally different. Men and women are different. Any man who says he understands a woman would lie about anything. There's differences here. Heterosexual, *heteros*. He says "for another of a different kind." You mean there's good news of a totally different kind? You mean there's good news when you take Jesus out of the message? There's good news over here? Well, some translations translate it "another." But that's correct, because it means another of a different kind. But then the new updated New American Standard goes ahead and takes that translation.

Let me explain to you before I go on. There's a word *allos*. There's two words for "another." I know this bothers some people, but there's two words for "another." One is [allos](#), another of the same kind. Sometimes Paul will say "love one another." What does he mean? He means within the walls of the church, because he says another of the same kind. You're all believers. But *heteros*, again, is another of a different kind. And at first you think there can be two gospels: You chose a different gospel that's outside of that which we preach to you, the grace of Christ, you chose that? You mean there's another "good news"? And then he says in Gal 1:7, "which is really not another" and he changes that word [allos](#). It's not another of the same kind. He uses both words there to prove his point. In other words, what they bought into has no good news in it whatsoever.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you have lived your life at a certain time as a believer and you've tried to do things for God and you were so frustrated you couldn't stand it? There was no joy in it. You were condemning and critical and judgmental of other people and you didn't realize that you had bought what you thought was good, but it wasn't good. Besides myself, is there anybody else in here that's ever experienced that before? Well, now you know what the Galatians have done. We've all been there. What they had bought into had taken Christ and the message of grace right out, completely out of the picture. And what was substituted was a path of righteousness which involved performance mentality: If we do this, we can attain this. But there is no other gospel. And religion offers no good news to us whatsoever. These Galatians were a foolish people. But don't be too quick to pass judgment, because we've all been there. Nobody made them do it; they did it themselves, spiritual deception or desertion.

When I was over in Romania, I used to go all the time, 13 years in a row, three years under Ceausescu. And when they were freed up, I remember going back one time and I was saying, "You know what impressed me about you folks?" They all sit up and they said, "What?" And I said, "Your flesh is just as rotten as mine. You just speak Romanian and I speak English." And they gave me a standing ovation. They said, "We need to hear that every day." I asked them, "I said how in the world did somebody force you into Communism?" And I didn't know my history. History had never been a real good subject with me. I've always enjoyed it, but I never have been too good at it. And you know what they told me? They said, "Wayne, you don't know your history." That was obvious. And they said, "Wayne, we weren't forced into Communism." And I said, "What?" They said, "Oh, no! We voted it in. We chose it. Somebody presented it to us. It sounded better than what we had, and we voted it in." and for almost 30 years the whole place was plundered because of a choice that they made. The Galatians made a choice. Choices sometimes can cost us.

#### SPIRITUAL DISTORTION

**But secondly, not only do we see spiritual desertion, we see spiritual distortion.** Look at the last part of Gal 1:7. "Only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." Now, the tense there of "disturbing you" again is in the present tense. They're continuing to do this, continuing to do this, deceived teachers. Now, these are not deceived teachers as



much as they are deceptive teachers. Do we know the difference this morning? If I gave you a pop test would you know the difference? A deceptive teacher knows exactly what he's doing, and he's going to take Christ out of the message. He's going to accomplish his end. A deceived teacher is different. He may want to preach the truth but has been deceived and somebody needs to correct his heart. These are deceptive teachers. These are lost people that have gotten in amongst the church crowd there in southern Galatia. And, boy, the damage they're doing.

"There are some who are disturbing you." Rather than identifying who they are, Paul majors on what they're doing, and I like that. First of all, they're seeking to disturb them. The word for "disturbing" is the word *tarasso*. It means to shake somebody's allegiance, to cause them to defect. Oh, brother. I tell you what, the political world in which we live is interesting, isn't it? And always somebody's trying to say something to cause people on this side to defect and come over to this side and they use every way which they can to do it. That's the idea of the word there. They're shaking their allegiance. It goes back to Gal 1:6. It caused these people to defect. They disturbed them. They shook their allegiance. And instead of going and listening to Christ, these people defected.

In Gal 5:10 he says, "I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is." Now, it's interesting to me if you have any history in Scripture at all, that the council in Jerusalem met right after Paul wrote Galatians. That's interesting to me. And in Acts 15, look what he says. They sent out a decree. In Acts 15:24 it says "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you"—it's the very same word—"with their words, unsettling your souls." Now, in other words after they heard about what went on in Galatia, they wrote a letter and warned all the other churches. They said, "Look out, look out. These people are telling you that they're coming from us and they're not, they're not. And they're going to disturb you in your soul."

The word for "soul" incorporates the three faculties that make everyone of us up today. It's the mind, the way we think; it's the emotions, the way we feel; and it's our will, the way we act. And he says they're going to disturb your soul. They're going to disturb the way you think. They're going to disturb the way you feel. They're going to disturb the way that you act. These false teachers had upset everything.

But not only did they seek to disturb the Galatian believers by causing them to defect the gospel of grace and go back to this religious mentality, they also sought to distort the gospel. Gal 1:7: "There are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." That word "**distort**," *metastrepho* (#3), means to totally turn around, to pervert.

You know, it's interesting to me, when I study this, this happens to me when I'm studying sometimes. The thing that hit me was, listen, it's one thing to get them to come over to your side. "Yes, sir, we won. We've got them. We've got them." But that's not what their intent was. That's just part of it. They wanted to erase the Christian message, the gospel message. They wanted to completely replace it with a message of law. They were out to remove Christ from the message with their doctrine of works. The true gospel is the gospel of grace. It's the gospel of Christ. Saving grace, when He comes to live in you; living grace, when He wants to live His life through you. That's the true message. That's not terms that we just, that we just put those terms on living grace, saving grace, to help people understand. The message is just Scripture. This is the normal Christian life. To turn this around tells you everything you need to know about what these false teachers were seeking to do.

And I want to tell you something, folks, error comes in subtle ways. There's a man up north who has started what they call, I think it's called the open view of God. I don't know if you've heard about it or not. And now it's a major discussion in some of the top schools in our country. And here's what it says. It takes statements out of the Old Testament particularly where God said to Abraham, "Well, now I know that you will not disobey Me." Now, did God not know that? And so they take statements like that and say God doesn't know everything; God's still learning; and so therefore He's not omniscient.

Wait a minute. You see how subtle that is? Scriptures were not written for God's point of view or for His sake; it was written for our sake. God knows what He's talking about. If you take away His omniscience—He knows everything—then you've just taken away His omnipresence; you've just taken away His omnipotence; you have subtly just destroyed the deity of God. You've taken Him right out of the equation. And that's going on today right to this day. There are people that will sit down and argue with you about this whole thing because they don't understand.

So, spiritual desertion, and then spiritual distortion. Remember, they're not just trying to get you on this side, they're trying to change everything that you ever thought about being, to take Christ and God and grace and all that out of the message and to substitute it with something else.

And, then, finally, spiritual destruction. Gal 1:8. I added Gal 1:8 even though you could start a brand new message here, I wanted to add this verse: "But even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be [what's the word?] **accursed**!" (*anathema*) You cannot find a stronger word than that. For those who distort the gospel, who take Christ out of it, who take the grace message out of it, who pervert the gospel, there is waiting for them

a spiritual destruction. He said, "Let him be accursed!"

It's obvious from this that these are not saved people, because a believer can't be accursed in that sense of the word. So these are lost teachers who never have bought into the message of grace, who never have surrendered to Christ, and yet they're probably members of some of the Galatian churches, and they have one purpose, and that's to take grace out. 2 Peter 2:1 (note) is a good reference point here about these men. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you." We've been warned folks. We've been warned. They may be sitting out here right here this morning. "Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies." Oh, they're real brave. They do it secretly, not face-to-face. They're cowards. "Even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality." Boy, we live in a day we've watched that: "And because of them the way of the truth will be maligned."

2Pe 2:3 (note): "And in their greed they will exploit you with false words." That's the word that we get the word "plastic" from (**Greek = *plastos***). They take it and use words that you think you know what it is and they twist it to mean whatever they want to make it. He says, "They exploit you with false words; their judgment," their judgment, there is a judgment for these people, "their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." An addendum to that is "here comes the judge." They will stand before a holy God one day and their destruction has already been put into concrete. It cannot be changed.

You see, error is a serious thing to God. In Gal 1:8 it proclaims a scathing judgment to them who pervert the gospel: "But even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed!" The literal here is "but even if," and that's a third class condition "if;" that's a hypothetical situation. Paul is not saying he's ever going to do this. But he said, "even if, hey, let's just put it this way: if we ever did, if we ever did." The "we" could be a writer's "we" or it could be the ones that are with him.

But also he mentions the angel. That's not being mystical, the word for angel means messenger, a messenger straight out of heaven. If they come down and they preach a message that's contrary to the gospel of grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ, he said let all of us—he includes himself—be accursed. "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you."

What had he preached to them? That's the message of grace. The firm footing Paul is standing on is that message of salvation, the message of grace, the message of saving grace and the message of living grace: Christ dying for us in order that we might be delivered from our sins, also to be delivered from this present evil religious world system. It's the gospel of grace that involved the enabling power of God so that daily we can experience it, and it's totally unmerited by man. Paul warns that it is not the messenger, but it's the message. And this is something we've got to remember. It doesn't matter how well we dress up and look when we stand in the pulpit. The messenger is not the key. It doesn't matter how polished he is; it doesn't matter if he alliterates his points; the point is, what is he saying? That's what Paul's pointing to. There can only be one gospel, no matter who it is, it's the messenger that carries that gospel. And that gospel has got to be absolutely accurately presented. Paul includes himself and the angels.

And, by the way, we're going to find in several verses they've been questioning whether or not he's a false apostle, these false teachers. You see, you discredit the man long enough, you can discredit his message. And that's what they'd been doing. And they said, "You're pleasing men is what's you're doing." This message of grace, they interpreted it as a license, and they said you're just pleasing men. Does it sound like he's pleasing men? "If I or anybody with me preaches anything other than the gospel of grace, let him be accursed! Let him be accursed!"

Well, nothing could be more destructive than that word "accursed." It's *anathema*. You've probably heard it before. Hey, there's no reprieve with this word *anathema*. It's eternal separation from God. Now what does this tell you about these false teachers? It tells you that they're lost. And I'm going to keep saying that. There are deceptive teachers that are lost. There are deceived teachers that are in a different category and need to be corrected.

But what grabs me here is the seriousness of this announcement, *anathema*! I mean, cut apart, separated from God forever, forever. Any man who preaches any message that leaves Jesus and His grace out of it is a man who's going to be separated from God forever. There's a serious indictment here. What grabs me, if the judgment is that bad, great, for people who preach a message like that that are lost, let me ask you a question. What about believers who are deceived and teach a message of works rather than a message of grace? What is that indictment to them? You ever thought about that? He's talking about lost people. They're going to be cut off from God forever.

But what about believers? I wonder sometimes, I wonder what we have in our church. Hey, I'm not throwing rocks. However, I'm going to ask a question. If the shoe fits, let's wear it. How many teachers right here in this church are preaching performance mentality and don't even understand the message of grace? Now, if error is that serious to God, what will be their judgment? Is there anything we can go to? Yes! James 3:1 is the only place I know I can go to. You know what it says? "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." Right now my hands are sweating. It's not

because I'm just hot. They were sweating when I walked in here today. My stomach gets queasy every time before I step up. You know why? I'm going to be held accountable for everything I say that's in this book.

And I want to tell you teachers out there, I want you to be praying that you understand something. I want to warn you ahead of time, we're going to stand in a stricter judgment before God one day. These people were preaching law. They were preaching works over grace. They were lost. But what about us that are saved that, like the Galatians, had defected; and now we're propagating the same message by preaching a message of performance mentality before God? Teaching error is a serious thing. A man once wrote, a great man, the outward person of the messenger does not validate the message; rather, the nature of the message validates the messenger.

Are we becoming Bereans? Are we checking it out to see if it be so? That's why I love to preach verse by verse, word for word. It's kind of hard to get messed up when you do that because it's just following the flow of what it says. Any text without a context is a pretext. You know what that means? It means when somebody has an agenda he's using God's word to say it. And that's what we've got to be careful about. Thank you for those of you out there that help me stay sharp. Iron sharpens iron. And some of you are good at it and I thank you. I'm serious, it helps me. The three years I spent in conference work were some of the best three years of my life. You know why? Because I was absolutely nailed after every message. I mean, I went all over the country. I've been asked a lot of questions. You know what that makes me do? That drives me back to this Book to check it out to see if it be so. And I'll tell you what, when I see that it's so, I won't back down come hell or high water. But I want to make sure that what I'm saying is what God says. Check it out. I am never the authority. Are you listening to me? God's Word is the authority. God's Word will always be the authority. Don't build your life on what I say. Build your life on what God in His Word says and we'll be safe and kept from the error of the Galatians.

## Galatians 1:10-24 Paul in Defense of Paul



We're going to see Paul in defense of Paul. He doesn't do that much. He does it in 2 Corinthians when he even says there "I'm doing something foolish." But, you see, he has been falsely accused. He has been backed into a corner and now he's going to come out and defend himself.

Well, would you turn with me to Galatians 1 and I hope your Bibles are getting more and more trained. Galatians 1. And today we're going to see something rather rare. You don't see it much in the life of the apostle Paul. We're going to see Paul in defense of Paul. He doesn't do that much. He does it in 2 Corinthians when he even says there "I'm doing something foolish." But, you see, he has been falsely accused. He has been backed into a corner and now he's going to come out and defend himself.

The apostle Paul is seen in Galatians as a man who loves the gospel of grace. He is totally committed to it. You could not get a clearer picture than that as you study Galatians. In fact, he says in Galatians 6:17, "From now on" he says, "let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand marks of Jesus Christ." He would ultimately die for his commitment to the gospel of grace.

Now this devotion that Paul has—and it is very clearly seen—is set in contrast to the wishy washy believers of Galatia, who had walked away from that wonderful message of grace and chosen instead the ridiculous message of religion. They chose to set aside, or frustrate the grace of God. Remember it is going to be in Gal 2:21 when Paul says I don't frustrate the grace of God. And that word means set it aside. As a believer he says I'm not going to walk away from that message. I cannot. God never said I could. He can. He always said He would. He said that is where I'm going to live from now on. I have been the religious route. I'm not going back to that religious route.

Paul shows his righteous anger towards those who preach the message of law. And he beautifully clears himself up as to how he thinks. It is not beautiful what he says, but it is beautiful in the fact that you have no doubt where he stands in Gal 1:8-9. Even though the Galatians were at fault for listening to these people, the apostle Paul says these false teachers should be accursed, separated from God forever! Now, that is strong words, folks. That shows you how strongly he's committed to the message of grace that completely transformed his life.

In Gal 1:10-12 what we're going to see today is Paul defending Paul. But in Gal 1:10-12 we see Paul defending the gospel of grace. He defends it beautifully. First of all he begins, and remember this, please pay attention, that he's making a contrast. He is not idly saying anything. He did not have some spare time to sit down and wrote the Galatians. This is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. And everything he says is a rebuke to the false teachers that are coming at them.

And it starts off with a motivation of the gospel messenger. Who are the people who preached the gospel message? What should be their motivation? He says in Gal 1:10, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?" You see, there is a contrast there. You watch your contrasts. "Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." You see, the false teachers, what he has just told you by implication, is that a false teacher, a religionist, people who try to put us back up under a set of rules, that if we obey them we can attain righteousness, he said those people are doing nothing more than pleasing men. That's all they're doing. And he said you cannot do that and be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. What is the motivation of the gospel messenger who is Paul in this case? He said, "I'm a bond-servant. I do what I do because I get to. I do what I do because I want to. I don't have to do this. This is a choice I have made. God changed me. I have something different in my motivation."

Secondly, he shows the origination of the gospel message. If you will think about it, how many times has he done this in chapter 1? You see what he's doing? Piece by piece by piece by piece he's building a foundation for the rest of the book. The origination of the gospel message, Gal 1:11, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man." Now, this is in contrast, again, to the false teachers that were preying upon the Galatian believers. They preached a message of works and that message, now listen, did not come from God. It came from men.

You see, this is what religion is. I wish we could understand that. All religions—I don't care what religion it is—you have to do something in order to attain something from whatever god you put out in front of you. And this is what religion is; it is all of man and man's rules. But the gospel is not according to man, it is according to God. You see, men in religion make up their own standards, but those standards anybody can attain. In fact, the Pharisees got bored and added 613 more. But, you see, Christianity is based on God's standards that no man can attain. That is why Jesus had to become a man, not to destroy the law that condemned all of us, but to fulfill it. And when He fulfilled it as a man, our representative, He went to the cross for us, paid a debt He did not owe, when we owed a debt we could not pay. That is your difference in Christianity and any religion. I don't care where it is, or what form it is in, or what name it has behind it.

And then Paul also shows the revelation of the gospel message. You see you can teach religion, but the gospel has to be revealed to the human heart. It says in Gal 1:12, "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it." You see, like I said, you can teach religion; you can teach principles; but you cannot reveal Christ. Only Christ can reveal Himself. "But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." It must be revealed. It had to be revealed to Paul. It had to be revealed to the Galatians that he's preaching to. In fact, when he was preaching to them at the first time he was there God was revealing Himself through what Paul was saying. Paul did not have a clue what was going on, but God was using the message to reveal it to the human heart. Man can convince a man of the gospel, but only God can convict him that he's a sinner.

Now, something precious happened in our family this past week. My little granddaughter was riding in the car with her mother. And I think it was John McArthur was preaching on the radio, and she leaned over and she said to her mother, she said, "Momma, if I died today, I don't know that I would go to heaven." And she said, "Momma, I'd like to be a Christian. How can I be a Christian?" Her mother said, "When we get home, we will talk about it." And so her mother and father met talked with her, and she got down on her knees and prayed to receive Christ in her life.

That had to be revealed by the Father. Do you realize she has heard that message every day since the day she was born, although did not understand everything she was hearing? Every day, but why was it that this week on that particular time at that particular moment, in that car, on that program did it finally come to understanding and the revelation came? That is the way salvation works. You can sit down with your child and you drop over in the floor, but until God reveals Himself that truth lodges in the brain and that is what religion does. It goes no further than the brain. You can teach religion, but God has to reveal the message of Christ to the human heart.

That is what happened to Paul. That is what happened to the Galatians. He said the gospel I'm preaching to you, it did not come from man. It did not come out of some seminary. It did not come out of some book. It came from God Himself. That is what He is trying to do in defense of the gospel. These men were preaching a message that came from men. He is preaching a message that came from God.

Well, today Paul is going to give us a narrative. If you will notice something, when I'm in something real heavy doctrinally we camp out, and some of you think we bog down. No, we don't, we just stay there a while. But, you see, when you get into a narrative, it flows like a river. This is story form and it carries us all the way down to the last of chapter 2. So it is going to move quickly. You wait till we get to chapter 3. But this will move quickly.

What a change had come into apostle Paul. Now, what he's going to do now in defense, first of all his message and secondly his apostleship, is going to show that it is totally in contrast to the legalizers. He had been completely turned inside out. And he's going to show them that what these false teachers are doing, he used to be one of them. That is what he's going to tell them. And he's

going to show them how grace changed him, and we're going to walk with him through this journey that he takes us on in Galatians 1 and then on into Gal 2.

Let me read for you what we're going to try to cover this morning, beginning in Gal 1:13:

"For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in **Judaism** ([ioudaismos - B-1](#)) beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God [Don't you love that phrase?], who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. I did not see any other of the apostles except James the Lord's brother. Now in what I'm writing to you, I assure you before God that I'm not lying. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, he who once **persecuted** (*dioko*) us is now **preaching** (*euangelizo*) **the faith** (discussion of "the faith") which he once tried to destroy. And they were **glorifying** (*doxazo*) God because of me."

There are two things that I want us to see this morning. First of all, I want you to see Paul's humiliation. You know, it is humbling when you go back and try to admit to somebody what you used to be before Christ came into your life. Have you ever discovered that? Now, I have found some people arrogant enough to spend more time there than they do what God has made them. And I understand that, but it is humiliating. The apostle Paul is so transparent. I want you to know that when you live under grace you can be transparent. Some people have even said from time to time, "I like the fact that you are transparent." Listen, let me tell you something, there is no secret to this. If God already knows it then what do I care if anybody else knows it? You see, what we have always done is reverse that. We don't want anybody to know. Well, buddy, God knows. And Paul is honest about his salvation, before his salvation.

But in Romans 7 he's even honest about his salvation and his struggles with the flesh. He wrestles with himself all the way through the last part of Romans 7. It is so humbling to do this. He says in Gal 1:13, here we go, "For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it." Now he starts off and says, "For you have heard." Now let me ask you a question. How did they hear? You see, these were over in the southern province there of Galatia. How would they have ever heard? Well, the only obvious answer to that is that Paul had to tell them. That is the only way they could have heard.

Paul had already told them, and you see this is something they don't want to be reminded about, of how the law had once been what Paul had believed. He so believed that the law was the way to righteousness that he had taken it to the extreme; he had even killed those who sought to disagree with him. Now that is taking it to the extreme. He was no deceiver. He did not come in and say, Oh, let me tell you something I have found. No sir, buddy, if you were a believer he put to you death. He stood there and held Stephen's garments when Stephen was stoned to death and no telling how many more not even recorded in God's Word.

"For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God." The word **persecute** there is *dioko*. *Dioko* means to pursue with the intent to kill. That is what it means. Remember 2 Timothy 3:12, if you seek to live a godly life you will be what? You will be sought after by somebody, who if they are not trying to kill you physically will try to ruin you spiritually in your walk with God. They are going to be on our trail till Jesus comes back.

One day I was up in the office and I caught a movement. There is a guy over walking his dog, but the mistake he made he did not put a leash on him. And that dog had a mind of his own, and as it was walking around out jumped a rabbit. And this dog; I don't know, it looked like a retriever of some kind, it took out after that rabbit. I wish somehow we could get that dog to talk and I would bring it in and introduce you to it and let him sit here for a minute, feed him a bone, and then I would say, "Let me ask you a question; let me ask you a question, Fido. What were you doing with that rabbit?" And I guarantee he would say "I was chasing it with the intent to kill it." And that is exactly what that dog was doing" Pursuit with the intent to kill.

You see, let me share something in a spiritual sense now. Religion doesn't tolerate anybody who doesn't agree with them, and they will kill you to look at you. I want to tell you something, in the church of Jesus Christ those that are living under the message of grace, but turn back to law, become as spiritual terrorists in the body of Christ. They will cut you down. They will slander your name. They will lie about you. They will divide the church. They will take their agenda and do whatever is necessary to kill the Spirit of God that is moving in that body of believers. That is what religion does to you.

Look what is going on in our news right now. Somebody would stuff a pack on their back with innocent people, you are talking

about cowards and get on a bus and blow themselves up and kill everybody else! You think that is not in the name of religion? Wake up folks and smell the roses! Now, Paul was one of these kind of people. "You disagree with me, I will put you to death." And he was on the Damascus road when God finally changed him. He says in Gal 1:13, he says, "how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it." Paul pushed it to the extreme, far beyond what his contemporaries would do. He uses the term "beyond measure." The word "beyond" is *kata*, and the word "measure" is *hyperbole*. That is where we get that word, pushing it beyond measure. He said "I took it to an extreme that these people who are deceiving you Galatians have never thought about before. I have been everywhere they have been, but I have been far beyond where they have been."

This hateful motivation is exactly what these false teachers had. Instead of killing the believers physically, however, their tactic was a little differently. Their tactic was to deceive them and kill them spiritually, mess up their walk, their spiritual fellowship with Christ. Law kills the fellowship that you could have in Christ.

Paul stood out among his contemporaries. In Gal 1:14 it says, "And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions." Paul says "I was advancing in Judaism." The word "advancing" we have seen before, *prokopto*. It is the word that means to cut forward, to blaze a path, a pioneer who goes where no one else have ever dared to go. Paul had excelled his contemporaries in Judaism. As a matter of fact, if you have studied him much he was the star pupil of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the greatest teacher of the law that ever lived in his day. And he was the star pupil; he was actually more religious than the religious.

Have you ever known anybody like that? You say, what are you talking about? This doesn't relate to me." Oh, it doesn't? I have known people that are so Southern Baptist they have to have it tattooed on their arm. I have known people that were Methodist and Presbyterian the same way, so you all just relax, okay, we're going to get us all. I mean, I'm telling you the history of the church. They know the by-laws and the constitution. They know the letter of the law, but they have not got a clue about walking with God, and they push it to the extreme and drive it down your throat. This is what these people were like.

And, you see, Paul says, "I used to be even beyond that. You think these people are religious, they are trying to deceive you; man, I was more religious than the religious." In fact, Paul says, the phrase "ancestral traditions" there, he says that the word "traditions" "ancestral traditions" refers to the traditions of the fathers. And let me explain something to you. By the time that Paul wrote this, those ancestral traditions had become so infected with man's input that it caused Jesus in Mark 7:6 to say something. He says in Mk 7:6, "And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you [listen to this] hypocrites. As it is written this people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"

Now how could these believers in Galatia possibly miss what Paul is trying to do here? What he's doing is he's putting one up against the other. He is saying, "Let me just give you a little history here. Let me just share with you where I have come from." He is pointing an accusing finger at these false teachers. Now he turns around and says "they are pitiful compared to what I used to be, and I know exactly their heartbeat. I know their motivation. I know where they are coming from."

I wonder how many of us would be willing to be as transparent as the apostle Paul. I will tell you what, we clean up good, don't we? We come to church and we've got our little clothes on and we've got our smile on our face, but are you willing to be honest enough to tell people what you used to be? And even more than that, are you willing to be honest enough to tell people the struggles you have every day? "Oh, no. We cannot let people know that." We'd better start letting them know it, because that is what is keeping them from even being interested in what we have. It is not about us, it is about Christ.

How many of us used to hold the message of attaining righteousness by what we do? I will tell you what, I'm ashamed to admit it, but when I was in youth work for 17 years I used to go on these youth camps. When we would on Wednesday nights they are worn out. They are emotionally drained. We know that. And so we have an emotional service, a lot of music to make them feel good about themselves, etc., make them tender and then tell them a death bed story of a dead dog someplace and they come forward to give themselves to a tree. I mean, they have not got a clue what they did. And they go home. And I would say, now listen, if you are going to walk with God you have to have your quiet time at 4:00 in the morning. You are going to do this, you are going to do this, you are going to do this.

And I took them home and put them right back up under law and did it for years and did not know the difference until one day I tried to accomplish the same standard I was putting on them. And I got so frustrated with my life and I bowed before God and said "God, what is wrong with me?" And God said, "You are what is wrong with you." God overwhelmed me with this message. And I will tell you what, maybe I'm not as committed to it as the apostle Paul, but I'm on my way, friends. And I will tell you, I will not tolerate it. I will not tolerate it. When people bring law into the church they are spiritual terrorists, and I don't want you to ever forget that. I want you to be able to spot them a mile off and I want you to immediately begin to pray for them. We don't want that here. We want a God of grace to permeate this congregation.

You say, Wayne, you talk down works. No, I don't talk down works. In fact, if you want to know somebody who worked, it is the



apostle Paul. But the difference is this, if you heard Dr. Zodhiates last week, he said you better go out and work. He said if you are under grace, grace in you will cause you to work, the doing of the Word. What do you think that is? The commands of Scripture. But the motivation is not to attain spirituality; the motivation is not to earn righteousness; the motivation is because we love Him. We're bondservants and we just want to say, yes, to Him. That is what Paul is trying to show these people. You have gone back to trying, trying to earn something that only God can give to you and that is the difference. There is works, yes, but the motivation is entirely different.

Well, I don't know about you, but I have been there and I feel just as humiliated about it as I'm sure Paul did when he had to share this with these people. But he said, "folks, I'm not telling you something I don't know." I have learned how to play church a long time ago. I did not get saved until I was eight years into the ministry. It is a good thing to have saved pastors as the ministers, isn't it? That is what changed me. That is why I can spot it so far off when somebody is trying to accomplish righteousness by what they do. No sir.

You heard that little thing when "Mary had a little lamb, it could have been a sheep, joined a Baptist church and died for lack of sleep." Better go to work, son. No, I change that around. Listen, you'd better learn to love Jesus, and if you love Jesus you will go to work and I will tell you what, you will work till your fingers are numb. But it will be in the energy and the power of the Holy Spirit of God and it will not be to attain righteousness. It will be because He has already attained it for you.

Well, first of all his humiliation and that was humbling for Paul to say that. And secondly, Paul's vindication. Boy, God is going to vindicate him and he's going to vindicate himself. Paul did not leave it there, no sir. He did not leave it back what he used to be. He wants them to understand what grace has changed him to be and what they had experienced in their own lives if they would think about it. He says in Gal 1:15, "But when God." Think back when you got saved, just right now. Just forget anybody else is here and draw a circle around yourself and think back to the day that you got saved. That is "But when God." I guarantee if we had time we would have testimonies in here today that would rock every one of us. What were you like when God entered your life and changed you?

"But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace." How clear the message of God's grace is right here. "But when God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb." I love this. Paul did not seek after God. And I want you to know straight out, there is no if's and and's about me. I believe the seeker-sensitive movement has done more damage to the church of Jesus Christ in our day than any other movement. I will tell you why. We're not seeking for God; God is seeking for us. The true seekers are believers. What is wrong with our mentality in the day that we live in? He said, "He set me apart in my mother's womb." God knew me before I was ever born.

Do we understand this about salvation? Like Jeremiah, even before Paul was ever born, God had a plan for his life. "But when God, who had set me apart." And the word "**set apart**" is *aphorizo*. *Aphorizo* means to mark off boundaries, to define boundaries, to select with a specific purpose in mind. Now, I would love to have been a fly in the wall in heaven. There are no flies in heaven, okay, but I would have love to have been there when the godhead was looking down at man and the religious bondage that men had put other men under. And I can imagine God saying, you know, we need a preacher of grace. They don't understand grace. We have got the law. That will frustrate them. They are certainly frustrated. We need a man to preach grace.

I tell you what, we need a man who knows law like nobody. We have so many legalists, but when they see the message of grace, I would rather have one of them than anybody else, because they understand sin and they understand confession, they understand cleansing. I will tell you what, they understand freedom and what it means to walk in the fullness of Christ. I love that. And Paul was the greatest legalist. I can just see God in heaven saying "I need a legalist. I need him to be the extreme. Let us push him further than anybody else has ever been pushed. Let us let him go further than anybody has ever dared to go. And, I see him. There he's right there. He is in his mother's womb right there. Paul, that is what his name is going to be later. It will be Saul of Tarsus to begin with. We will change his name to Paul later on."

Paul was born never knowing that God was after him. And all those years he grew up and grew up and grew up and he thought he was really gaining in the law. Philippians told us that as we studied it. And he said, "those things that were gained to me," he said, "I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." And then one day on the Damascus road going to arrest Christians, the Christ of Christianity arrested Paul and he was never again the same. And God said, "Pow, right on target, right on time and now we have got him. Now we have him where we want him. He's going to be the preacher of grace like nobody has ever known."

Paul says "But when God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace." The idea of called is to appoint, appointed me. It seems here to point to salvation. That is what our calling is all about. But in that salvation comes the purpose that God had for him in the fact that he was divinely appointed to be an apostle. "Through His grace" means by the virtue of His grace, by the means of His grace. Do you realize what the apostle, apostle Paul has already admitted? There was nothing about him that deserved salvation. It was only by the means of God's grace. And that is true for all of us here today.

"But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called be through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son."

I love these little words. "In me that I might preach Him among the brethren, or the heathen rather, to reveal His Son in me."

The word "**reveal**" *apokalupto*, to take the cover off of something that has previously been hidden. When the gospel was revealed to Paul, buddy, he was never again the same. That little phrase, "in me," I checked on that and some of the people believe that it might mean "in my case." That is possible. But I don't think so. Others believe it is the inward revelation of Jesus Christ to the human heart which we talked about earlier. This revelation is essential to salvation. I choose that latter meaning because to me it is far beyond the other idea, even though it could be implied. And so "in me" is that inward revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul. **I want you to ask yourself again, when was that, when was Christ revealed in you, not so much to you by somebody, but in you, in the inside of your life He just revealed Himself?** And by the way, He revealed Himself in Paul as *salvation* and now He is revealing Himself through Paul in *sanctification*.

**What was God's purpose for Paul?** That I might preach Him to the heathen. Now that word for 'heathen' is *ethnos* ([see A-1](#)). It is a word which refers to the ethnic groups of the world. It is translated as *heathen*, as *nations*, or sometimes as *Gentiles*. The definite article is used here to refer specifically to Gentiles. Paul supports this in Gal 2:7. He says, "But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter has been to the circumcised." Uncircumcised refers to the Gentiles, *ethnos*. "**Circumcised**" refers to the Jewish people which was Peter's assignment. So you have two groups here. Peter was assigned by God, appointed to go to those Jewish people with the gospel of Christ. Paul was appointed to go to the Gentile world.

Now Paul was going to answer his critics as he shows how the Gospel he preached did not come from man. Now this is very significant. First, Paul says, "I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood." Now, that is important. You will not see it at first, but you will in a minute hopefully. Paul had most likely been accused, and you can discern the accusation from his answer. He had been accused of copying the apostle's doctrine and gospel and message and then masquerading as an apostle: He was accused of not having the apostolic credentials and had just copied their message. Paul wholeheartedly disagreed. He clearly states that he did not consult with anybody. He did not go get a degree so he could hang it on a wall. He did not seek to be authenticated by men.

He adds "nor did I go up to Jerusalem." He did not even go to the apostles. He says, "nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me."

So what did he do? When he got saved what did he do? It says in Gal 1:17, "but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus." He said he went away to Arabia. Now, he returned once more to Damascus. At first glance if you know anything about Acts 9, and his salvation experience this appears to be a contradiction.

Do you not love it when people say the Bible contradicts itself? R. A. Torrey said, "When I first got saved the Bible had 1,000 contradictions in it." And right before he died he said, "I can only find one, but I'm too thick-headed to let God show me how clear it really can be." It is amazing, if you ever think that something contradicts itself in Scripture. Back off, take a longer look because this is God's Word and yes, all 66 books that were written in a different time by different men. However, it is incredible, the beautiful line that flows from Genesis to Revelation. No man could have ever come up with this.

But in Acts 9:17 let me pick up the story with you when he got saved and show you where it seems to be an apparent contradiction here. He went to Arabia. Acts 9:17 ([note](#)):

And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me to, so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

That is his salvation right there.

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus. (Acts 9:18)

Now wait a minute. He just got saved, the scales have come off his eyes. And he says he's with the disciples in Damascus. But it says in our text that he went to Arabia. Now Luke doesn't say anything about Arabia. What do we have here? It is really simple and I don't know why I'm even bothering to stop, but sometimes these things are helpful to work out for you. In Galatians 1:17 Paul writes "then he went to Arabia." If you will follow the wording it is very clear; "and then" what is the next word? "Returned once more to Damascus." So he had been there before! Well, I'll be! We have no way of knowing how long he stayed when he was in Damascus. Acts 9:19 says "several days." "Several days" in the Greek is an indefinite period of time. It could have been a short

time or it could have been a long time.

But the point is here is that there is no contradiction. He had been in Damascus and one Scripture emphasized one part and another Scripture emphasized the other part. But the main point that Paul is making in Gal 1:17 is that nobody told him the Gospel. God revealed the Gospel to him. Nobody walked up to him, handed him a tract and explained it to him! God revealed it to Paul's heart. That is what he's trying to explain in this section. In Gal 1:18 Paul says "Then three years later." In other words, he waited three years before he "went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas." - [Cephas](#) is the Aramaic name for [Simon Peter](#). "And stayed with him fifteen days." The point is that Paul was not mentored by any man. He was not approved by any man. He was not taught by anyone except God Himself.

Now, you say, why is he bringing this up? Hang on. When he finally goes to Jerusalem he sees Simon Peter and then James arrives. James, you know, was not saved till after the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:7 said the resurrected Jesus appeared to him and that is when he became the elder of the church of Jerusalem.

"Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become **acquainted** with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days."

Note the verb "**acquainted**," which is the Greek word [historeo \(#2\)](#) which means to find out the facts about someone. In other words, Paul just went to get acquainted with Peter. Paul did not go to Peter to ask him "Is what I'm preaching correct? Will you put your stamp of approval on it?" No! All he wanted to do was to get to know Simon Peter. Why? Because Simon Peter walked with Him.

And then Paul mentions James. Why would he mention [James](#)? Because James grew up as Jesus half-brother and he wanted to know more about Paul's encounter on the Damascus road. James would probably want to learn about those three wonderful years in Arabia that we don't have recorded in God's Word. Now, why is Paul going to all this effort to bring this out? His point is that he wants to demonstrate that he did not get his message from the apostles in Jerusalem.

Well, in Gal 1:20 it seems to suggest somebody has lied about him. They may have said something like "I know where you got your message Paul. You got a tape from the tape ministry and you just copied it word for word and you have been preaching that message and, and you have been masquerading as somebody you are not." Well, he said, "I did not get it off a tape." I'm being facetious of course. The point is that Paul did not get the message of the Gospel of grace from another person. He got it from God. He says in Gal 1:20,

"Now in what I'm writing to you, I assure you before God that I'm not lying."

He takes a solemn oath ("*before God*") and he assures them that he is not lying. Someone has apparently accused him of being a liar and he says "I assure you I'm not lying." They were saying that he had no authority from the Twelve Apostles and that he had stolen their message!

Paul goes on to reinforce the fact that he did not get the Gospel message from any man. He got it from God. In Gal 1:21,

Then I went into the regions of [Syria](#) and [Cilicia](#).

You say, why would he go there? Because God had instructed him to go to the Gentiles and he obeyed His Lord (Acts 9:15, 13:46, 22:21). These are Gentiles and he preached the message which God had given to him. And then it says in Gal 1:22,

"And I was still unknown by sight in the churches of [Judea](#) which were in Christ."

He has shown that he did not get it from man. He did not get it from the apostles.

Now he says I did not go over to Judea and get the message from the churches that were there. Instead, in Gal 1:23 he explains...

But only, they kept hearing, He who once **persecuted** (*dioko*) us is now **preaching** (*euangelizo*) **the faith** (discussion phrase "the faith") which he once tried to **destroy** (*portheo* - "to ruin by laying waste, to make havoc of").

The churches at Judea had heard about Paul and they were rejoicing. But they did not know him by sight. They would not have recognized him in a crowd. And he said, "I want to make sure you understand this. I did not go to the apostles. I did not go to any man. I did not go to any church in Judea. God revealed the message to me."

**Now you say, why is this so important?** Oh, now don't miss this. When God reveals the message to your heart and it will be a message that is exact. When you hear somebody preach a message that is distorted, it did not come from God. He is not the author of confusion. You see, somebody has added something to the message the Galatians have heard and that is what Paul is trying to get across. This message of the Gospel did not originate with the apostles. It originated with God Himself and God

revealed this truth to the human heart. And when that happens, the message is exact.

This message did not come from man. This message was revealed by God. And Paul is so committed to it one day he will give his life for it and die for it. That is how important it was to Paul.

**Now let me ask you a question. How important is the message of the Gospel of grace to you? How important is it to you to live it, to share it, to understand it; how important is it to you?**

Aren't you glad Christianity is not a religion, man-made for the favor of men, with standards that man can achieve? No sir, Christianity is a **message of grace**. It is a message of "I cannot, God never said I could; He can; He always said He would." And it did not come from man. It came from God.

Well, you don't want to miss next time because next time this really gets exciting. This story doesn't stop now. Next time we're going to see Paul's confrontation of the apostle Peter. He is going to get right in his face and rebuke him. You will begin to understand why Paul says "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:20)

Paul begins with his humiliation. He enters into his vindication of who he is and the message he preached. But then we're going to get into a confrontation that you never dreamed could take place, but it is going to take place, first with the big three, Peter, James and John. And then it is going to be with Simon Peter himself. But what does the gospel mean to us this morning? What does it mean to us? Is it something that has overwhelmed us, changed us?

**[Go to Galatians 2 Commentary](#)**