

1. Introduction: Background and Themes – why Galatians? April 6, 2008

For the next few months we are going to look at the 149 verses contained in the 6 chapters of Galatians and explore what freedom in Christ really is. This morning I am only going to read the first 5 verses of Galatians but it is not my intention to dig very deep into these first 5 verses until next week. This morning I want to give an entry level introduction to this book and answer the question – **Why are we studying Galatians?** But let's read the beginning of this book I hope we can study together – even in these first few words, we will begin to see the riches of this book:

Galatians 1:1-5 ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

So, why we are studying the book of Galatians?

The first answer is **1) Because all of the Word of God is worthy of our study.**

This may seem trite or passé but don't let it be a commonplace answer. I find within myself and I venture to say you would find this to be the case in your Christian walk, but I like to stay in my own familiar territory. There are books of the Bible we spend more time on than others (perhaps the Gospels or Romans or Ephesians) but there are 66 books in the Bible and some of them we avoid more than others. And if you don't believe me, let me ask when was the last time you sat down to do an in-depth study of the book of Numbers or Leviticus or Nahum, or more appropriate for our study, the book of Galatians? While I think we are all aware of what a good thing it is to read our entire Bibles including Galatians, and while I believe we have all read this book many times before, there should be more to our time in the Word of God than just merely reading words. We must dig deeper and that is one of the reasons I think we have Sunday School. Our study in Galatians will extend through the entire Bible and know upfront that there will be times we specifically focus on the 5 Books of Moses, the Acts of the Apostles, and several other Pauline epistles. But an overarching lesson that we can take away from this study of Galatians as well as the study of any book of the Bible is that the Holy Bible is one book, expressing the message of the same Divine Author who has a sovereign plan for the lives of men and for this entire universe.

The second reason why we are studying Galatians, is because **2) I needed to study it.** That may sound selfish or arrogant, but let me explain. Even now, I do not consider myself very knowledgeable about this book. Because of my upbringing and the influence my father had on me, I am more comfortable in the Old Testament than I am in the New Testament, but more than a year ago, I believed the Lord wanted me to study this book more in depth and quickly I was convinced that this book would be valuable for this entire fellowship. It is a privilege to be able to teach anything to this body of believers, and I pray that the Lord will continue to bless this endeavor as I know he has blessed me countless times as I have been preparing.

Now there is a second aspect to this answer that we are studying Galatians because I needed to study it. As I look at my own Jewish heritage, and as I think about my own testimony and walk with Christ, I cannot run away from the existence of legalistic tendencies. And I believe that whether Jew or Gentile, legalistic tendencies abound even to this day in the churches of Jesus Christ. I pray that this study will continue to help me and help you in combating such tendencies and we will all better appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for us.

Before I go onto my third reason for why we are studying Galatians, let me share with you some of the other resources I have been studying. In addition to studying the text of Galatians, these are some of the books I have and will continue to be using:

- 1) Warren W. Wiersbe's Be Free – Exchange Legalism for True Spirituality – This book provides a very simple and concise explanation Galatians and what I most appreciate about this book is the outline of Galatians it uses and the fact that Warren Wiersbe offers a lot of simple but thought provoking challenges in this book – some of which I hope to begin to mention later this morning.
- 2) Two of the commentaries I have also used a little in my preparation thus far are the commentaries by H.A. Ironside and the commentary by John MacArthur.
- 3) The next book I am using is the first one I read and that is Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians (which I will talk about more later).
- 4) At Pastor Brown's recommendation I also bought John Brown's commentary on Galatians which is a part of the Geneva Series of Commentaries. When I first started reading this commentary, I was a little surprised that Pastor recommended it so highly, because as I tried to read it I was frustrated. Not because of any theological differences but because despite my having a basic understanding of Greek & Hebrew, John Brown loves to quote Latin and within a few pages that drove me crazy. (Honestly, it made me want to learn Latin, but I'm not willing to take that time at this point in my life). When I told Pastor Brown that I didn't care for it a few weeks, he was surprised and when I told him why, he gave me some very wise advice (although contrary to the way I read), he said just skip the Latin parts. Based on his continued recommendation I have read some more and even though I had to force myself to skip over the Latin parts, it is a good commentary but honestly deeper than any other commentary I have ever read.
- 5) In addition to these books already mentioned I will of course be referencing several and various Word Study texts as we dig into this book.

So why do I tell you all these books that I am using. Is it because I am trying to impress you with my skills of reading comprehension? Certainly not. Is it because having read these books, you should now consider me an expert in the book of Galatians? I have already told you this morning - Absolutely not – not even close. I point out these books, because I want you to recognize up front that I will be depending on these works a lot for what I am teaching and I will tell you up front that I will be reading to you often, so I hope you will be understanding and forgiving when I do so. I also say all this because I am asking for your prayers as I study throughout this series as I need them because I need the Holy Spirit to help me understand what Galatians is saying and I need the Holy Spirit to help me draw out from this treasure trove, the gems we all need to hear and heed.

Now back to my answers to our question for this morning. The third reason we are studying Galatians is 3) **because of its influence on Christian history**. The book of Galatians has been called "The Christian's declaration of independence." Elsewhere it has been called "the Magna Carta of spiritual liberty", and repeatedly Galatians has been called "the battle cry of the reformation." With this said, Martin Luther was one Christian in history who greatly benefited from this book. In fact he once wrote "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock. Galatians is my Katherine." As I said earlier I have read his popular commentary on Galatians, but MacArthur wrote that this commentary was the foundation of the Reformation and his charter of liberty. But the influence of the book of Galatians can also be seen in the influence of Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians.

John Bunyan in the third part of his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* wrote about a time in the 1650's when he was in his twenties. He had been pleading with God to obtain good books written more than 100 years before he was born. And this is what he wrote "Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther; it was his comment on the Galatians-it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart." After making this statement, in the very next paragraph he writes "I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."

This same commentary by Luther on Galatians also had a great influence on the 18th century. According to one account, after returning to England, Charles Wesley taught English to a Moravian Peter Böhler, who prompted Charles to look at the state of his soul more deeply. During May 1738, Charles began reading Martin Luther's volume on Galatians while he was ill. He wrote in his diary, "I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the 2nd chapter [Epistle to Galatians]. I labored, waited, and prayed to feel 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.'" He shortly found himself convinced and journaled "The Spirit of God...chased away the darkness of my unbelief...I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoice in hope of loving Christ...I saw that by faith I stood."

His conversion is believed to have taken place on May 21, 1738 and two days later he began writing a hymn celebrating his conversion. Naturally, we can believe that Charles shared the good news with his brother John, and according to many accounts John came to faith that same week on May 24, 1738. While some accounts including his own journal say that John's conversion was spurred by someone reading the preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans, some authors (including Warren Wiersbe; also John R. Tyson <http://www.houghton.edu/Milieu/Winter07/exchangeb.html>) say that it may actually have been the same commentary his brother had read on Galatians and not Romans that he had heard from the pulpit at that time; but regardless, Galatians had a dramatic impact on at least one if not both of the Wesley brothers in 1738.

In looking back at these individuals influenced by the book of Galatians, Warren Wiersbe ends the first chapter of his book on Galatians with this statement "As we study Galatians, we are participating in a tremendous spiritual chain reaction that even today could result in another revival." Certainly this thought of revival provides another impetus for studying the book of Galatians.

The fourth reason I would give for our studying this letter to the Galatians is: 4) **because we cannot afford to miss seeing the beauty of Christ our Savior as revealed in this book.** As we study Galatians, I think we will repeatedly see the superiority of the Work of Christ to any work man can offer and as we study the truth of the gospel, we cannot help but to see additional glimpses of our dear Lord. Before we get through the first 5 verses, of Galatians I think you will see what I mean.

The fifth reason I would give for our studying Galatians is: 5) **because the problems of Galatians are still the problems of Churches today.** I believe in a study of Galatians you cannot help but encounter some questions and problems that still plague us to this day.

So often in the New Testament we are exhorted to Watch and there is certainly a need for us to be vigilant in detecting and confronting errors that may creep into our very midst. I think we are seeing this in recent news about Cedarville University. And this reaches to another problem that almost 2,000 years later still exists and that is false teachers in churches who debate and deny what is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Another dilemma that still exists involves what Larry McCord preached on several weeks ago, that being, what is the purpose of the Law of God? Sadly, there are many today who even deny that we even need to answer such questions. I do not believe anyone in this room can deny that this very day there are those who preach that salvation is by Jesus Christ + something else, whether that something else be baptism, or good works, or some other legalistic requirement.

These are my reasons for wanting to study Galatians, but before we finish this morning, I want to discuss one more thing. Now you may not have recognized it, but I specifically requested the hymn we opened with this morning, **At Calvary (#477)**. If you will indulge me, I am hoping during this study that I may frequently request specific hymns that we begin our Sunday School hour with. So if you want to get the entire lesson each week, I challenge you to be on time as much as possible so that you not only get what I say but you can begin your contemplation of Galatians from the very hymn we open with. This morning I asked for "At Calvary" to be sung because when we sang it many months ago, while I was in the midst of preparing for this study, I was struck at how many themes of Galatians were covered in this hymn.

William Reed Newell is the composer of this hymn and he was an Ohio native who lived from 1868-1956. In 1895, he became assistant superintendent of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. And during his ministry he wrote Biblical commentaries on Romans, Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation. But listen to what this hymn is saying, again.

Years I spent in vanity and pride, Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.

Refrain

By God's Word at last my sin I learned; Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary.

Refrain

Now I've given to Jesus everything, Now I gladly own Him as my King,
Now my raptured soul can only sing of Calvary!

Refrain

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan! Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!

Refrain

*Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary*

As we study Galatians, I believe the message of this and many other hymns will become clearer to each of us. In the weeks to come, may we all look again to Calvary as we study Galatians and may we be reminded that it is there, and only there, that our burdened souls find liberty. Thank you for your attention this morning. Lord willing, next week we will begin our journey into this book.

2. Who, What, When, Where, Why?

April 20, 2008

Last week I spent the entire time stating my case for why we should study the book of Galatians. You may recall my reasons ranged from a personal desire to study it, to historical proof of the impact this book has had on the hearts of men such as Martin Luther, John Bunyan, and Charles Wesley. Another reason I gave was our need to be vigilant about detecting and confronting errors in our very midst. This morning I want to begin our first steps into Galatians while still covering introductory material. With that said, let's begin, and just like last week, I am only going to read the first five verses. This morning I want to focus on the first 2 verses, and Lord willing, next week we will look at verses 3-5. So turn to Galatians 1 and let's begin. This morning I want to try to answer the fundamental questions you must ask when you try study any book of the Bible – those being Who? What? When? Where? and Why? We will answer these questions by looking at the authorship of Galatians, the audience of Galatians, and the arguments of Galatians.

Galatians 1:1-5 ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The first question we need to answer is who. By this I mean who wrote Galatians? Who is the author?

1. The Authorship

The very first word of the very first verse tells us the answer we all, already know – Paul. Paul wrote Galatians. While I believe we already are all familiar with who Paul is, as we study this book I am confident that we will certainly review much of his life as well as look closer at this particular struggle he endured and recorded in the book of Galatians. The first couple of chapters of this book examine quite a bit of Paul's life and the book of Galatians is considered to be only second to 2 Corinthians as being autobiographical. But as straightforward as this answer is, there is more here if you take the time to see it. But before we look at more words, let's discuss the authenticity of this book. I am a firm believer in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God, yet I think it good to know that even the skeptics believe in the genuineness of Galatians (only Romans, 1&2 Corinthians and Galatians are rarely challenged i.e. not being written by Paul). In fact one textual critic candidly admits "The Epistle to the Galatians has escaped unchallenged amid the sweeping proscriptions of recent criticism. Its every sentence so completely reflects the life and character of the Apostle of the Gentiles that its genuineness has not been seriously questioned." If only the skeptics had eyes to see what this book says and not just that Paul wrote it. There is so much truth contained in this book as we will hopefully see over the next several months. With the authenticity of this book established by even the skeptics, let's proceed further into the first verse. Words inspired by the Holy Spirit are never wasted. Let me read verse 1 again. In the KJV it says "*Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)*

While I believe we are all familiar with the word apostle, it deserves to be looked at briefly again this morning. The word apostle is not a word only used by Christians. The word ἀποστολος in the Greek means an ambassador, a delegate, a messenger or an envoy with a special function or message. It should be noted that in the days of Paul, even the Jews had apostles. In some regard Saul was an apostle of the Jews before he became an apostle of Jesus. And the Greeks used this word to refer to a naval expedition with a bill of goods for delivery. But even in this example, the core meaning is someone or something sent with a special task. In the case of Paul, we must recognize that there is no higher task for man than to be sent with the message or Gospel of Jesus Christ. But why does Paul tell us he is an Apostle?

As I was beginning my study, I read something rather interesting about Paul's use of the word Apostle. While Paul usually mentions that he is an Apostle, it isn't in every single epistle that he wrote (i.e. it's not used in Philippians and 1st or 2nd Thessalonians). Many expositors including H.A. Ironside say that Paul uses this term whenever his authority is being questioned within that particular group of churches. He's not throwing his title around in pride, but rather he is using it to establish his right to give correction and instruction. And this brings us to another significant theme in Galatians – that being the Apostolic authority of Paul and he begins his battle in this very first verse by making clear the source of his message. It is a theme we will see again in coming weeks.

He writes that he is an apostle, not of men neither by man. The key here is not as much the singular and plural forms of man and men, but rather the prepositions – of and by. The greek words used here help explain these tiny words. There is much more than how few or how many people commissioned him.

“Of men”, could also be translated “from men” (which is what the ESV uses), meaning that Paul's commissioning did not come ultimately from a group men, such as the Apostles in Jerusalem or from the church at Antioch. There are however, examples in the NT of men sent from or of men. One example would be Epaphroditus in Ephesians 2:25 who was sent by Paul himself with a message and task. There was no human intermediate in the sending forth of Paul. Additionally, the phrase “by man” could be translated “through man” and this means that Paul's message didn't come in anyway from any man. These phrases suggest that Paul's authority was being questioned. Some take these 2 defenses from Paul to mean that the false teachers who had infiltrated were saying that Paul was sent from the apostles in Jerusalem or from the church in Antioch and that he had the wrong message or that he had overstepped his authority in what he was preaching. But Paul makes it clear up front that both his commissioning and his message came from a Divine source – from Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul did not take or chose this honor of apostleship for himself. He was chosen before the foundations of the world, and he was transformed on the road to Damascus thereby beginning his apostleship.

The hymn we began with this morning was “Who is on the Lord's side?” and certainly this is a question that the Galatians were being challenged to ask both by the legalists and by Paul himself. Just as the first verse of this hymn states, it is by His call of mercy and by His grace divine that Paul and any of us for that matter are on the Lord's side.

The commissioning of Paul by Jesus Christ, Himself, is made clear several times in the N.T., starting with Acts 9, but let it suffice this morning for me to point out one other that we even heard this past week from Brother Morris:

1 Corinthians 15:3-10 where Paul writes "3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Before I leave this point, let me also point out that when Paul contrasts men, man, and Jesus, he is not suggesting that Jesus was not a man but rather that he was not merely a man – He was truly God as well as truly man, as evidenced by the next phrase of verse 1 stating the fact that he died and was raised to life again. Both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide us with ample evidence that Jesus was fully man and fully God.

We would do well to realize that in properly understanding the divine source and sending of Paul, when we read Galatians, we are hearing Christ, the living God. What better counsel could any of us seek than study the message of Jesus Christ recorded in the Word of God. No school, no ministry, no man who teaches anything other than the Word of God can have a better message than what we have the privilege of reading and studying on a daily basis and as a local body of believers. The lesson we must learn is that it matters where our message comes from. It is not from men or from any man, as so many cults and false religions are based. Our message is from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Before we move to the audience of this book, let me point out one other interesting thing about the authorship of this book. It is believed that Galatians is the only letter of Paul that he did not dictate. You can find evidence of the fact he wrote it himself in Galatians 6:11, where Paul states "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand." The postscripts to most of the epistles state who wrote them from what Paul said, but not Galatians (Romans – Tertius; 1 Corinthians Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus and Timotheus; 2 Corinthians - Titus and Lucas; Ephesians – Tychicus; Philippians – Epaphroditus; Colossians – Tychicus & Onesimus). So despite the stern message we will encounter in this book, Galatians is a true labor of Paul's love and more importantly a display of the Father's love. This is a letter about restoration.

Verse 2 also provides some insight into the authorship. While Paul is the actual author of this book, he wants the Galatians to know that he is not a lone wolf in the opinions he is about to put forth. By saying and "all the brethren which are with me" he is likely not referring to saints in church is writing from, but rather fellow ministers such as Timothy that he is working with. By writing this Paul is combating the false teachers and saying the true ministers of the Gospel of Christ hold to everything I am writing in this book, and we would do well to agree likewise.

With this said about the authorship, let's progress to the Audience of Galatians.

2. The Audience

While even we can and should consider ourselves a part of the audience of this letter of Paul and the Holy Spirit, the original, intended audience is revealed in verse 2 which tells us Paul wrote “unto the churches of Galatia.” So who are the Galatians? To answer that question, we need to look at a little bit of history and geography. So hang on tight.

The name Galatians is taken from the name of the province Galatia. This is another form of the name Galati which is a contracted form of the name Gallo-graeci. From this name we get another name, that being Gauls. Or perhaps we are more familiar with another name, that being the Celts. These are the same race of people as those from ancient Ireland, Wales, the Highlands of Scotland, France and northern Spain. So perhaps some of you in this room are distant relatives to the Galatians. It is believed that in 278 or 277 BC, a group of the Gauls left Southern Europe and pillaged the Greek city of Delphi before settling in Northern Asia Minor (in modern day Turkey). By 232 BC their territory was populated with a mix of Greeks and Gauls and became known as the state of Galatia. But in 189 BC, the Romans subjugated this territory even though they allowed them to maintain self-rule.

When the Romans reorganized the ancient world, they made Galatia a part of a larger province that included several other areas, and they called the entire province Galatia. So in fact there are 2 Galatias: the smaller country territory of Galatia and the larger Roman province of Galatia. We will see more about this confusion in a few moments. Semi-autonomous rule continued until 25 BC, when the last king of Galatia symbolically bequeathed the territory to Caesar Augustus and thereby Rome.

In addition to what is likely in your Bibles, I have provided some maps to help us understand who Paul is addressing, but it is not as straightforward with this book as it is with some other books such as Romans or Ephesians. By the time of Christ, the original territory of Galatia was a part of a larger Roman province that stretched North to South from Pontus on the Black Sea to Pamphylia on the Mediterranean Sea. Major cities in this province include Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe in the South and Pessimus, Ancyra, and Tavium in the North. While the Southern cities were flourishing cities due to their lying along the major Roman highways, the Northern cities were more agrarian and had very few roads and little commerce. So “the churches of Galatia” could be the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which Paul started on his first missionary journey in southern Galatia and which are described quite a bit in Acts 13 & 14. Or they could be unknown churches farther north which some believe he founded on his secondary missionary journey, although the book of Acts has no details of such a thing happening.

All of what I have mentioned leads to what are called the Northern Galatian theory and the Southern Galatian theory. This uncertainty about the location of the Galatian churches also results in uncertainty about when the book was written. Again, if the Northern theory is to be believed, then the churches rebuked in this letter are never specifically mentioned in Acts. But an estimate of when Galatians would be written is somewhere between AD 53 and 58 while Paul was in Ephesus. Because of the similarities to the book of Romans (I read there are at least 19 parallel passages) some believe they were written at the same time in the winter of AD 57-58 during Paul’s time in Corinth.

If the Southern theory is to be believed, then it would be the commonly referred to churches of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe that are being addressed. If this is the case, another debate rages and that is whether it was written immediately before or shortly after the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. If it was written before, then the likely date is the Autumn of AD 49 from Syrian Antioch. If it was written after, it would range from AD 49 to AD 53 and may have been written from Jerusalem, Corinth or somewhere in between.

Personally, it makes more sense to me that Galatians was written to the southern churches that Luke writes about in Acts. With a problem as large as what is presented in Galatians, do we think that Luke would ignore these churches? And certainly, Luke records numerous challenges and oppositions that Paul had in the southern portion of Galatia. It would seem to make sense to me that this book was written shortly after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, that we will look at when we get further into the book, but many others think it was written immediately prior to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. While we could debate this further this morning, let it suffice that the answer is not crystal clear and the question still remains to this day. Regardless, whether Paul is writing to the churches of Galatians in the north or the south, the members of these churches were a mix of predominantly Gentiles as well as some Jewish believers – in other words there were many Christians who had never submitted to the law and some Christians who had just recently been set free from the law. And regardless of north or south, the message of this book is still important to you and I this very day.

Maps for Our Galatians Study





3. Themes of Galatians

April 27, 2008

Last week we looked at the first two verses of Galatians which I will remind you read as follows: *Galatians 1:1-5 ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:*

During our introduction to this book last week, we looked at Paul as the author of the book of Galatians and also his authority as an apostle as established in these first 2 verses. We then proceeded to look at the audience of Galatians, which led to our brief discussion of the Gauls as well as the Southern Galatia and Northern Galatia theories. As stated last week, the original territory of Galatia was a part of a larger Roman province that stretched 175 miles east to west and 250 miles North to South from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea in what is modern day Turkey. But if Paul was writing to the northern churches, he was writing to cities such as Pessimus, Ancyra, and Tavium that are never specifically referred to in the book of Acts; however, if the Southern Galatia theory is to be believed, then we are reading about the struggles of the churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which are described quite a bit in Acts 13 & 14. Last week we also briefly looked at when this book was written, and the answers range from late 49 AD to AD 58. Regardless of which theory you hold too, I again remind you that Galatians represents a labor of love from the heart of the apostle Paul and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This morning, it is my intention to conclude our introduction to this book by quickly providing a basic outline of Galatians, and then summarizing the various arguments or themes that run throughout this book.

As I studied the book of Galatians, John MacArthur's Commentary, NavPress' LifeChange Series book on Galatians, and Warren Wiersbe's book on Galatians entitled Be Free, all three surprisingly provided the same basic, overall outline of the book of Galatians. They say chapters 1 and 2 are Personal; chapters 3 and 4 are Doctrinal; and Chapters 5 and 6 are Practical. Warren Wiersbe fleshes this simple outline a little further by saying Chapters 1 and 2 deal with Grace & the Gospel. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the Grace and Law and Chapters 5 and 6 deal with Grace and the Christian Life.

With this outline in mind, for the rest of this morning, I want to proceed into the four arguments or themes that are contained in the book of Galatians.

The first argument or theme confronted in Galatians is something we began looking at last week when we examined the first two verses of chapter one. The first argument or theme is that in Galatians, Paul fights to clearly establish his apostleship. And our understanding of Paul's authority and thereby the authority of Paul's message, will carry over to this very day as we recognize how very important it is for us to hear the clear and focused message of the Holy Scriptures. If Paul had the authority to correctly and faithfully instruct the believers in the churches of Galatia, then his teaching should be considered authoritative and correct even this very morning for the believers of Covenant Baptist Church. The truth of God's Word is authoritative from start to finish – both in content from the first verse to the last and in time from the dawn of creation to this very morning and into eternity. From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. And this authority certainly includes the six chapters of Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

A second argument is something I have mentioned in our first two lessons when I said we should study Galatians because the errors of the first century church of Galatia still exist as dangers today, and it is our duty to both recognize them and combat them. Just as in Paul's day, the Gospel is under attack by false brethren. And if there is someone in this room who thinks that error is not subtly trying to infiltrate and taint the Gospel in the 21st century, I would only need to point out to you the December 24, 2007 edition of U.S. News and World Report that has a front cover entitled "A Return to Ritual – Why many modern worshippers, including Catholics, Jews, and evangelicals are embracing tradition." This lead article attempts to describe some of the changes taking place in Christianity, Catholicism, and Judaism. Just listen to this excerpt from this article (p.42-44) – *"Daniel Wallace, a professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, which trains pastors for interdenominational or nondenominational churches, says there is a growing appetite for something more than "worship that is a glorified Bible class in some ways." Something curious is happening in the wide world of faith, something that defies easy explanation or quantification. More substantial than a trend but less organized than a movement, it has to do more with how people practice their religion than with what they believe, though people caught up in this change often find that their beliefs are influenced, if not subtly altered, by the changes in their practices.*

Put simply, the development is a return to tradition and orthodoxy, to past practices, observances, and customary ways of worshiping. But it is not simply a return to the past – at least not in all cases. Even while drawing on deep traditional resources, many participants are creating something new within the old forms. They are engaging in what Penn State sociologist of religion Roger Finke calls "innovative returns to tradition". You see this at work quite clearly in the so-called emergent communities, new, largely self-organizing groups of young Christian adults who meet in private homes, church basements, or coffee-houses around the country. So free-form that many don't even have pastors, these groups nevertheless engage in some ancient liturgical practices, including creedal declarations, public confession, and Communion. They may use a piece of bagel as the body of Christ, but the liturgy is a traditional anchor in services that may include film, skits, or a group discussion of a biblical topic."

Certainly, some of this description may not sound so bad, while other parts may be more disturbing than others, but I think as we study Galatians, we will even find areas of current day practice that may need re-examined – some which may hit closer to home than others. At this point I must echo Warren Wiersbe's statement "Galatians is a dangerous book. It was dangerous for Paul to write it. It was dangerous for the Galatians to read it..." Wiersbe continues on by stating he believes he would even lose friends or invitations to preach because of writing his book. But I tell you this morning, dangerous or not, I believe Galatians must be studied by us because the truth of God is never dangerous to a local body, unlike false teachers and veiled errors. May the Lord keep us safe from such dangers.

Martin Luther in the preface to his commentary on Galatians wrote this: "Wherefore do I admonish you, especially such as shall become teachers and guiders of consciences, and also every one apart, that ye exercise yourselves continually by study, by reading, by meditation of the word, and by prayer, that in time of temptation ye may be able to instruct and comfort both your own consciences and others, to bring them from the law to grace, from active and working righteousness, to the passive and received righteousness: and to conclude, "from Moses to Christ"."

This battle for the truth is not without effort.

This leads us to the third theme or argument of Paul's in the book of Galatians, and this theme is derived from the first two themes and is alluded to in this quote I just read from Martin Luther. It is also probably the theme given the most time and emphasis in the book. This third theme is that the only true Gospel is based solely on justification through Jesus Christ. As I stated last week, very early into this book we encounter challenges to Paul's authority, some suggest evidence of this as early as the first verse. The challengers in this book are commonly called legalists or Judaizers referring to their Jewish nature and their desire to bring believers into conformity with the religion of the Jews. These Judaizers had infiltrated Galatia and were teaching contrary to the gospel Paul was preaching.

Other than Galatians, the book of Philippians probably describes the Judaizers the clearest. Look for a moment with me at Philippians 3:2-3 "*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*" In these two verses we find 3 synonyms for the name Judaizer. The term "dogs" was a term of reproach both to the Jews and the Greeks and refers to someone with an impure or corrupt mind. The title "evil workers" implies not just doers of evil, but those who actively fight against good, in this case, the good of the Gospel. And the final name "concision" means mutilation and refers to not only the mutilation of the flesh, but even worse the mutilation of the true message of the Gospel.

The Judaizers were undermining the faith for both Jews and Gentiles but in two different ways. Regardless, the Judaizers were attempting to quote "straighten out" new converts by bringing them under their own wicked ways.

I plan to look more at the teachings of the Judaizers in a few weeks, but let it suffice this morning that we look at Galatians chapter 6 and verse 12.

Galatians 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

This aligns directly with Acts 15:1 where it says "*Acts 15:1 ¶ And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*"

In contrast to the Judaizer's teachings, the true means of justification is a major theme of the book of Galatians. And certainly everyone in this room needs to be sure they understand on what grounds they are justified before God the Father. The quick answer to this argument, Paul gives us in chapter 3 and verse 11.

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

The phrase "The just shall live by faith" should be familiar to us all as it comes from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. If you would, turn to the Minor Prophet Habakkuk and look at chapter 2. *Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."* This one OT verse is a very important and central text of three New Testament books including Galatians. The other two books are Romans and Hebrews

Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

This should remind us that it is impossible to study Galatians without touching somewhat on the books of Romans and Hebrews as well.

As I was studying this in H.A. Ironside's commentary, I read his opinion that these three NT books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews should be considered as a trilogy, and while I am still not convinced of that opinion that Paul is the author of Hebrews, this did provide an argument in favor of that understanding. But Ironside writes something else of interest on this trilogy. He says that with regard to the statement, "the just shall live by faith", Romans covers in-depth the words "The Just" as it answers the question how shall men be just with God, and I must publicly express my thanks to Mike Meadows for providing me with his notes on Romans that I have referred to some in my study and likely will do so again. Ironside continues saying Galatians covers the words "Shall Live" and answers the question, "If one is justified by faith, how is he maintained in that place before God?" Finally and understandably, Ironside says Hebrews covers the words "By Faith" as that book demonstrates what is the power by which men are made just and by which they live. We will hopefully be benefited in our further study of this very important thought – "the just shall live by faith".

But Galatians makes it apparent what is the source of our faith. It is not tradition or legalism as the Judaizers were persuading the churches of Galatia. To see this simply stated we need only look at *Galatians 2:16* "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ". Looking back at verse 1:1, we again see that Paul was "an apostle sent by Jesus Christ", but Paul also adds "and by God the Father which raised Him up from the dead." These words may just seem flowery or poetic to some, but in fact these words go to the heart of this challenge to Paul's teaching about justification by faith in the book of Galatians. As Martin Luther wrote, "They who go about to overthrow the righteousness of Christ, do resist the Father and the Son, and the work of both."

And I would be remiss if I didn't share with you more from Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians (as I will likely do many of the weeks in our study of Galatians). In the preface to his commentary, we find statements that bring us back to my question from our first lesson – why study Galatians. On the doctrine of faith and justification by Christ alone, this is what Martin Luther says:

- "we have to fear lest Satan take from us this doctrine of faith, and bring into the Church again the doctrine of works and men's traditions. Wherefore it is very necessary that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise, both of hearing and reading."
- "If this doctrine be lost, then is also the doctrine of truth, life, and salvation also lost and gone. If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish; religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things which are necessary for a Christian man to know."
- *** And then I think MOST succinctly*** "For if the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost."

May the Lord be gracious to us in the study of this book as we seek to hold firm to the truth of God's Word, particularly with regard to the gospel and justification of Jesus Christ.

This morning's hymn was #126 Rock of Ages and I would point you specifically to the second verse of that great hymn. "Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no languor know, these for sin could not atone – Thou must save, and Thou alone: In my hand no price I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling."

The fourth and final theme we will study in Galatians is closely interconnected with the second and third themes we just looked at. As I said earlier, much of the book of Galatians deals with the doctrine of justification and Paul's confronting of those who in error would add anything to the true Gospel. But after dealing with the battle between legalism and justification by the faith of Jesus Christ, Paul continues onto a fourth and final theme of Galatians – that being how Christians should live in freedom, thereby displaying what is the only means of restoring those who were mesmerized with the error of the legalists. Galatians is a book that clearly teaches on justification, but it also teaches about restoration. It does us no good to identify enemies and yet not wish them the same joy and the same understanding of the truth that we have. If we value the truth as we ought, our desire will be that others are brought to that truth as well. This liberty and means of restoration make up a large portion of what is taught in chapters 5 and 6 of Galatians.

Perhaps this is clearest and most simply demonstrated in Galatians 6:1.

Galatians 6:1 ¶ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Just in case some of you aren't so sure about these themes of Galatians that I have pointed out this morning, let me read to you John Gill's assessment of why Galatians was written. You will find that my ideas are not original – and for that I am very glad. John Gill wrote "the occasion and design of this epistle were to vindicate the character of the apostle as such; to establish the true doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to the works of the law; to recover those who were carried away with the other doctrines; to exhort the saints to stand fast in the liberty of Christ, and to various other duties of religion; and to give a true description of the false teachers, and their views, that so they might beware of them, and of their principles." That is the sum and summation of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians according to John Gill. And I believe this closely aligns with the four themes I have discussed this morning.

This morning, we have examined four significant themes of the book of Galatians: Paul's apostolic authority, detecting and defending against error, justification by faith in Christ alone, and restoration of those who fall into error. I hope that the study of each of these themes will keep us on the straight and narrow path of God's truth. Lord willing, in two weeks when I next teach, we will venture past the first couple of verses of Galatians and examine what I think is one of the greatest gems of this book.

4. Paul's Opening Prayer 1:1-5

May 11, 2008

What we have just sung (Hymn 112 – Blessed Redeemer) demonstrates well what we are going to look at this morning. *Blessed Redeemer, Precious Redeemer! Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree, wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading, blind and unheeding, dying for me!* What wonderful words are these! But before we get to this morning's lesson, let me recap the last lesson from two weeks ago. Last time I taught we finished our introduction to the book of Galatians by examining the four major themes of Galatians. Just to remind everyone, they were 1) the establishing of Paul's apostolic authority 2) detecting and fighting against error and false doctrine 3) the true doctrine of justification by faith of Christ Jesus alone, and 4) how to restore those who fall into error. This is our fourth lesson in the book of Galatians, and while I don't apologize for it, we haven't progressed very far into this book yet. But if I may, I must state at this point, that it has been with much anticipation that I come to this morning's lesson. Last time I referred to this section of Galatians as a gem. And I don't mean to be anticlimactic, but I believe what we are going to look at this morning is one of the most important sections of this entire book. I may be mistaken, but I am convinced from my own study of Galatians thus far, that if the first 5 verses of this great book are truly understood, then I believe the questions, themes, and arguments that arise from the whole rest of the book can be resolved. This section of Scripture has become very special and important to me. Keeping the third theme of justification by Christ alone in the forefront of our minds, I want us to begin looking at verses 3 through 5. But let me begin by re-reading in your hearing the first five verses of Galatians.

Galatians 1:1-5 ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I mentioned previously about the question on the back cover of Warren Wiersbe's book *Be Free*. I will remind you of this question again that should be a challenge to us all and you see it written here on the board – **How would you finish this sentence? If I want to be a really good Christian I must** As the back cover continues, "How you finish that sentence is critical. Finish it incorrectly, as many people do, and you fall into the same trap that ensnared the first-century Christians in Galatia." As we look at these three verses I think we will come to at least one correct way to finish that statement. With that said and even though it was mere seconds ago, look again at the three beautiful verses that we will be digging into this morning. I could stand up here all morning reading and re-reading them and I believe there would still be more profit to be gained from such an exercise.

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I do not believe anything I have prepared to say this morning is very astute, but rather I believe the truths of these verses are very simple. Much of what I will say this morning is simply stating the obvious but we will also be contrasting what is said with what is not being said. Let's begin with verse 3.

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Just as he begins every other epistle, the Apostle Paul begins Galatians with the traditional greetings of grace and peace. The Hebrew greeting of Shalom means not just peace, but also completeness, soundness, welfare, prosperity, safety, and health. While you can say one is the traditional Hebrew greeting, you cannot say the other is a traditional Greek greeting because the traditional Greek greeting is xara – joy. Or can you? The Greek word for grace is xaris – which also means favour, thanks, pleasure, good will, loving-kindness, or that which affords joy. Grace and joy are in fact linked – they are both derived from the Greek word χαριτω. But this is not just some happy greeting from Paul. While grace and peace may sound like a standard middle-eastern or archaic greeting, these words of grace and peace mean absolutely nothing unless their source is God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace from Paul wouldn't do much for anyone. When Paul uses these greetings, he is in a way saying "may you be the recipient of all heavenly and spiritual blessings" – similar to Ephesians 1:3 which says *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:"*

But this greeting while used in all of his other books, is also an argument in the book of Galatians, according to John MacArthur. From Ephesians 2:8-9 we know *"8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."* In other words, grace is the way by which salvation is accomplished. But we also know about peace from Romans 5:1-2 which say *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* In other words, peace with God is the positional result of salvation. But MacArthur correctly points out that even in this simple blessing, Paul is fighting the battle against what the Judaizers or legalists were teaching as the law does not provide for or result in either grace or peace. On this idea, Martin Luther says "For peace of conscience can never be had, unless sin be first forgiven. But sin is not forgiven for the fulfilling of the law;... Much less is sin taken away by the works and inventions of men, but sin is rather increased by works." How much better off would we be if we recognized that only Jesus Christ can bring about the grace and peace we so desperately need. Martin Luther says "These two words, grace and peace, comprehend in them whatsoever belongeth to Christianity. Grace releaseth sin, and peace maketh the conscience quiet." Oh that we may live in full assurance of this grace and peace that come from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the centerpiece of this prayer – verse 4, which is all about Jesus Christ. Similar to both the books of Romans and Hebrews (and in fact similar to the entirety of Scripture), Galatians teaches the superiority of Jesus Christ over everyone and everything. Again verse 4 says *"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"*

I want to deal with each phrase of this verse but not in the order in which I have just read them.

But before we do, let me point out another source that I used for this morning's lesson. Because of the majesty of this verse, I explored it in particular and came upon a specific sermon by Charles Spurgeon on this very verse that he preached on August 15, 1886 entitled "The Object of Christ's Death". One observation Charles Spurgeon made in this sermon was that Paul scarcely ever mentions the name of Jesus Christ without pausing to praise and bless Him. In saying this He implores his listeners to "keep a heart like the apostle's, so full of love to Christ that we have only to come across His track, and we shall at once fall down, and worship and adore Him, or upon the wings of holy love mount up nearer to His throne." I hope that is what we can do together this very morning – worship and adore Him and mount up nearer to His throne.

While it is not our topic this morning, what we will encounter in our next lesson, Lord willing, is that Paul is concerned about the Galatians leaving the Gospel. You need only look at verse 6 to see this. *6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:* On this point Spurgeon said something so amazing to me that I must share it. Spurgeon asked, "What is the best way to make them sorry for turning aside from the faith?" He answers "Why, to set before them Jesus Christ Himself, Who is the very essence and glory of the gospel." What a lesson to learn – if there is error abounding in our day, the solution is still to hold up the pure truth of Jesus Christ, for He is the only hope. I agree with Spurgeon that this is a key reason Paul opens the letter of Galatians this way and this will be the primary subject of this morning's lesson – the entrancing, life changing beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let's begin looking at the words and thoughts of verse 4. As I said earlier, I am not going to look at these words in the order they come. Rather, I want to begin with the last words of this verse which say "According to the will of God and our Father." Because of what we just read, whatever else we read in this verse, it is a sure thing. It is ordained of God. As Spurgeon preached, "I do not believe that there ever would have been a man delivered from this present world if it had not been according to the will, the purpose, the predestination of God, even our Father." With this as our foundation, we can know for certainty all the rest that this verse contains. So what was the will of God? The will of God is our deliverance.

The root Greek word translated "deliver" here is Strong's #1807 *εξαίρεω* *exaireo*. This is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint – the Greek OT – to convey God's deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egypt and that the Psalmist uses repeatedly to declare God our Deliverer. But this is not the word most commonly used in the New Testament to convey deliverance or Deliverer. This Greek word is only used 7 other times in the NT, twice in Matthew, five times in Acts, and here in Galatians. In Matthew 5:29 and 18:9 it is translated "pluck out" with regard to the offending eye. Except for its use in Galatians 1:4, the other five uses of this word are in the book of Acts. In Acts 7 Stephen uses this word twice – once to describe Joseph's deliverance out of affliction in Egypt to become second only to Pharaoh and a second time to describe God's deliverance of the Children of Israel in Exodus. The next use of this word is in Acts 12:11 which describes Peter's deliverance from Herod's prison. And the final two times are in Acts 23 and 26 to describe the chief captain of the centurions in Jerusalem rescuing Paul from being torn limb from limb by the Jewish mob. This is a violent word as the plucking out of an eye or a pulling away of a captive. As Kenneth Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek NT states about this word, "The gospel is a rescue, an emancipation from a state of bondage."

So this morning render praise to God for such a great deliverance that has plucked us out and rescued us from bondage.

So it is God's will that a people be delivered. But what exactly does this deliverance entail. Verse 4 describes our deliverance as removal from this present evil world. Spurgeon says at length that this deliverance involves deliverance from this world's condemnation, from this world's condition, from this world's customs, from the spirit of the world, and from the fear of this world. I think this is a good explanation of this present evil world. And it must be realized that even when this world is at its best, then the world is still at its worst. This world is corrupted by sin and its influence is enslaving all men. The very word "evil" is translated from a Greek word that is the basis of our word pornography and the word pernicious. This world is harmful and destructive as it will drag all men down into eternal destruction. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:10, "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,*" This is a demonstration of this world's harmful and destructive power.

But there is hope – there is deliverance. Deliverance means a change of heart so that we love a new age, we get our pleasure in new and higher ways than this age can offer. As Hebrews 6:5 says we "...have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come...". And just how does this deliverance take place? The answer is clear - Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins." In addition to twice in Galatians, Paul specifically extols Christ's giving of Himself in at least three other epistles. In Ephesians 5:2 we are told Christ loved us and therefore He gave himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. In 1 Timothy 2:6, Paul tells us Jesus gave Himself as a ransom. In Titus 2:14 we are told Jesus gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

As I thought about Jesus giving Himself, I could think of only one great passage and that is John 10. If you want, turn there for just a moment and I want to read a few verses that tell us about this One Who gave Himself for us.

John 10:11-18 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

But this thought of Christ giving Himself is one that we can easily give little to no thought about, but in fact it is of utmost importance to realize what these 2 words "gave Himself" mean. Let me begin by telling you what this phrase meant to Charles Spurgeon "The answer of the text is 'He gave Himself.' I will not say that He gave his royal crown, that diadem which did outshine the sun; I will not say that He laid his azure rest, and hung it on the sky as He came down to earth; I will not say that He gave up for us the thrones and royalties of heaven. You know that He did all this and far more; nor need I remind you that, when upon the earth, He gave up all that He had, even to His last garment, for they parted His raiment among them, and for His vesture did they cast lots. I need not say that He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, nor that He gave His hands to the nails, and His feet to the cruel iron. I need not say that He gave His body, His soul, and His spirit, but you have it all in these three words: 'He gave himself.'"

Before I tell you what John Brown says about these verses, look at what Jesus gave Himself for. He gave Himself for sins. The preposition “for” in the Greek implies substitution. He is our substitutionary sin offering – He is the fulfillment of the OT sin offerings. But He was given not just any sins – He gave Himself for our sins. Even this pronoun is of great importance. As Martin Luther said it, “Therefore, without the pronoun it is an easy matter to amplify and magnify the benefits of Christ, that He was given for sins, but other men’s sins which were worthy. But when it cometh to the putting of the pronoun “our” then our weak nature, and reason, starteth back, and dare not come nigh unto God, nor promise to herself that so great a treasure shall be freely given to her.” But Christ is a great Savior and He overcomes even our weak nature and reason. As we study this book of Galatians, we must recognize that the Galatian Christians were practically ignoring the substitutionary character of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, or else they wouldn’t have gotten into the mess Paul writes about.

While I am on this point, notice that He gave Himself for our sins, not because of our righteousness, not for our good works. On this point Martin Luther said “For if our sins may be taken away by our own works, merit, and satisfaction, what needed the Son of God to be given for them. But seeing He was given for them it followeth that we cannot put them away ourselves.” And we know this to be consistent with the what the New Testament teaches. Christ died for sinners. Christ died for the ungodly. Christ died for our sins. What a great Savior we have!

With this in mind, listen to this quote from John Brown on Galatians 1:4. “He here states the doctrine which pervades the whole volume of revelation, and is the very corner-stone of the gospel, ‘that Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate Son, voluntarily took the place of guilty men, did what they were bound to do, suffered what they deserved to suffer, and thus rendered their pardon and deliverance consistent with, and illustrative of, all the perfections of the Divine character, His holiness and righteousness as well as His mercy, and all the rights and interests of his moral administration. In the language of the Old Testament, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was on him;’ and in that of the New, ‘He became a curse for us’ – ‘He was made sin in our room’ – ‘He died for us’ – ‘died for our sins’ – ‘He bare our sins on His body to the tree’ – He bore away the sins of the world.”

And His death brings about our deliverance from sin. But that should not be some wishful thinking about the future heavenly, glorified state, but rather our situation now. According to Spurgeon, in His death, Christ makes sin hateful to us. Spurgeon says “Did sin kill Christ? Then we cannot play with that dagger that stabbed our Lord. How can we be friendly with the world that cast Him out, and hanged Him on a tree?” As we think about these thoughts, I imagine your heart breaks within you now, both in recognition of sin still in your very midst as well as it breaks forth in praise and exaltation to Christ and all that He has accomplished for us. When we recognize these truths, our response will be that of Paul in verse 5, *“To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

This morning I hope that you have seen the first answer to Warren Wiersbe’s question **How would you finish this sentence? If I want to be a really good Christian I must “be delivered from this present evil world by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.”** In conclusion this morning, I would mention again the hymn we sang this morning “Blessed Redeemer” and remind you of the third and final verse that should be our prayer and our response this morning: “O how I love Him, Savior and Friend! How can my praises ever find end! Thru years unnumbered on heaven’s shore, my tongue shall praise Him forevermore. Blessed Redeemer, precious Redeemer! Seems now I see Him on Calvary’s tree, Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading – blind and unheeding – dying for me!” To Whom Be Glory For ever and Ever Amen!

5. The Problem – Another Gospel 1:6-10

June 1, 2008

It has been three weeks since I last taught but during that fourth lesson, you may recall, we went through verses 3 through 5 that extolled the majestic virtues of Jesus Christ. And even though it is not our text for this morning, let me bring us back on track to this series by reading the first five verses of Galatians.

1:1 ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This morning I want to move beyond Paul's introduction into the book of Galatians and into verses 6 through 10. This morning we will find out quickly why it was so imperative that Paul write this book. After declaring the wondrous work of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul turns his attention to the problem facing the churches of Galatia and he wastes absolutely no time in doing so. This tactic by Paul makes the epistle to the Galatians unique among all other letters Paul wrote. In his commentary John MacArthur describes the book of Galatians as "a flashing sword wielded by a burning heart". But why does MacArthur say this? I could tell you in just a few seconds but I would rather walk you through the answer slowly.

Why is Galatians a flashing sword wielded by a burning heart? To demonstrate the difference between Galatians and other epistles of Paul, I want to read to you from the beginning portion of several of Paul's epistles to the various churches. So turn back to Romans and let's walk through the epistles of Paul.

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

1 Corinthians 1:4-6 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

Ephesians 1:15-16 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Philippians 1:3-5 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Colossians 1:3-5 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 ¶ We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

My family and I just returned from a trip this week that included a stop at Sesame Place in Pennsylvania and I remember as a child watching Sesame Street and learning the song “One of these things is not like the other”. Well, that is certainly true of Galatians so turn to Galatians 1 and let’s read our text for this morning, verses 6 through 10, keeping in mind what we have read and studied in the past four weeks in verses 1-5. See if you can identify why Galatians is different.

Galatians 1:6 ¶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 ¶ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Hopefully you all caught the similarity in the openings of the other epistles – in each of those books Paul begins early in the letter by giving thanks to the Lord for the faith of the members of the churches he is writing to. Galatians is the only epistle of Paul that does not begin with a commendation of the faith of the audience churches. There is no reference to their firm standing in Christ and there is no thanks offered up for them. Instead we have an immediate condemnation after a brief salutation. When John Piper preached through Galatians at his church in 1983, early in his series he made this statement: “You can’t read the first ten verses without feeling that something utterly important is at stake. You can’t read Galatians and think, ‘Well this is an interesting piece of religious reflection’—any more than you can examine a live coal with your bare hands.”

Warren Wiersbe writes about this opening section “As you begin to read Paul’s letter to the Galatian Christians, you can tell immediately that something is radically wrong, because he does not open his letter with the usual praise to God and prayer for the saints. He has no time!” ... “Paul is not going to stand by and do nothing.”

And that is what we find in the very beginning of verse 6. The KJV says “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed*”.

Several translations say I am astonished. But regardless this greek word translated marvel or astonished is the same word used to describe the multitude’s response to Jesus casting out demons. It’s the same word used to describe the disciples after Jesus calms the stormy sea. It’s also the word used to describe Pilate when Jesus doesn’t speak up in His own defense. And it’s also the word used to describe Peter after he ran to the tomb and saw the empty burial clothes of the risen Lord. Today we might say Paul was stunned, or baffled or confused or shocked. According to Martin Luther this word also implies grief and displeasure. And certainly he wasn’t just sad but in fact he gets pretty angry at points in this letter of Galatians.

So why is Paul stunned and so quick to find the Galatians guilty? Should we extrapolate from this opening that the Galatians were the worst of sinners - worse sinners than say even the Corinthians, that we know so much about? No it was not their volume of sin that earned this flashing sword wielded by a burning heart. So what was the difference?

The difference was the type of sin. They were trampling on the very gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul had preached to them. They were trampling on the very meaning of what it is to be a Christian. Despite what some may teach today, nothing matters more than the truth of the Gospel. That is an area that Paul saw no room for compromise or to use the big word thrown about today, there was no room for syncretism. As it says in this morning's text, they had removed themselves from the truth of the Gospel and I love the way it says removed from Him. This is very important for us to realize that Jesus Christ is the gospel. The gospel is not simply a set of rules or doctrines – the Gospel is the truth of Jesus Christ. So does it matter if we study God's Word which is the written revelation of Who Jesus is? Does it matter if we neglect communication with the Father in prayer through Jesus Christ? Absolutely it matters.

This is why the book of 2 Peter concludes by saying "2Peter 3:18 *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

But the question may come up – how removed were they? The Greek tense of this verb indicates that they were actively removing themselves. In other words when Paul was writing they were caught in the act. But they weren't beyond hope. That is why Paul writes about restoration in this book.

And before I move deeper into the problem of the Galatians, more into the reason why Paul is marveling or so stunned, let me speak for just a moment about an aspect of the fourth theme of Galatians. You will recall the fourth theme of Galatians is about restoration of those in error. In the combination of verses 3 thru 5 and now verses 6 thru 10, we see Paul's example that we don't just give up on brothers and sisters in Christ who disappoint us. Thank God for such Christian grace. Even though he is upset, Paul prayed for grace and peace for them as fellow believers. So to, should we. We should want the absolute best for them and that is grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ. Additionally, as I pointed out last time, Spurgeon said it best when he said the best way to make someone sorry for turning aside from the faith is "to set before them Jesus Christ Himself, Who is the very essence and glory of the gospel." Jesus is who our lives should be displaying in the midst of this crooked and perverse nation we live in as we are admonished in Philippians 2:15. He is their only hope both for the lost and for Christians who are succumbing to sin in their lives. There is no other gospel.

Now if you will indulge me for a few moments, I want to explain some specific wording in the King James Version. Now while some translations use different words, I want to look at a grouping of words in the King James that are absolutely imperative that we fully comprehend. Remember that the original letter from Paul didn't contain chapters and verses but these have been added for our convenience. With that in mind I want to look at 2 specific words by looking at 7 words in the English and 7 words in the Greek texts.
<Write on the board and Explain these words>

unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another

εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, 1:7 ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο·

While it might be more obvious in other translations, it must be pointed out that the word another in verse 6 and the word another in verse 7 are in fact 2 different Greek words. But this should not be looked at as any different than what happens with our own English language today. Let me give you an example that I had used in my learning of Greek many years ago to help me understand this very concept.

The sentence to help explain this point is:

"I am going to go into kitchen and make another sandwich"

In verse 6, the apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit used the Greek word heteros (like in our English word heterosexual or heterogeneous).

In our sample sentence than that would be like saying I made a turkey sandwich first, but now I am going into the kitchen and will make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

2087 ετερος heteros *het'-er-os* (often implies difference of kind

1a1) to number as opposed to some former person or thing

1b1) another: i.e. one not of the same nature, form, class, kind, different

But in verse 7, Paul uses the word allos. When this Greek word is used in our sample sentence, the example would be that I made a turkey sandwich the first time and I am going into the kitchen to make a second turkey sandwich.

243 (αλλος) as compared with 2087 denotes numerical in distinction from qualitative differences; 243 adds ('one besides'), 2087 distinguishes

('one of two'); every 2087 is an 243 but not every 243 is a 2087;

243 generally denotes simple distinction of individuals, 2087 involves the secondary idea of difference of kind.

If these 7 words in these 2 verses alone were understood and believed by more today, perhaps we wouldn't have "Christians" going around saying there are many roads to heaven or that the sincere of all faiths will be in heaven. These verses as explained explicitly by Paul forbid the idea of multiple gospels or multiple means of salvation. There is only one gospel and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On this section of Scripture, John Piper preached "The text is a radical and forthright denial of a pluralism which says that we are all on different roads to heaven, but our destination is the same. There are popular forms of this universalism, and there are technical, scholarly forms of it, but there is no biblical universalism—that is, no biblical teaching that a person can go on rejecting the gospel of Christ and still be saved. There are other religions besides Christianity, and there are other leaders besides Jesus Christ, but there is no other gospel, no other good news of salvation."

Warren Wiersbe on the point of these "other" gospels says a statement that ought to shut many a mouth that speaks lies. On this point he says "As if any man could 'add' something better to the grace of God!" How true that is.

But despite the beauty and the completeness of the gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul had preached to the Galatians, the legalists or the Judaizers had crept into this assembly and perverted the Gospel of Jesus by adding things such as circumcision to it. As Martin Luther diagnosed the problem by saying "This is as much as to say, Christ is a good workman, who hath indeed begun a building but hath not finished it: for this must Moses do."

Do you see also how blunt Paul is in his condemnation of error and yet so often today Christians are fearful of calling sin in another person's life, sin. Or we are afraid of offending someone by not being resolute about our convictions concerning the gospel. But Paul is not ashamed to do so. We would do well to take courage in our fight against error.

Despite being so serious, the language here is also so beautiful when it states that these Judaizers were troubling the Galatians. Again this recognition of trouble is for the benefit of those in trouble, not as a sign of pride and superiority of those who are not in trouble. We must endeavor to root out condescension with our brothers and sisters in Christ. That word “trouble” implies a combination of doubt and utter fear as evidenced by its use in 2 other places: when the disciples were afraid of the storm and saw Jesus walking on the water and thought He was a ghost and secondly, when Herod heard the news that the wise men had come in search of a king. And notice that what they pervert is the gospel. That is their target.

Sadly, many a commentator has written about this possibility and Martin Luther spends quite a few lines on this subject. He points out “That work which is built up of long labour, may be overthrown in a night.” So this is another reminder to us this morning that we must be vigilant (or may I dare say hypervigilant) and on guard against error creeping in to our midst. Martin Luther expands on this thought when he points out “So great is the weakness and wretchedness of the present life; and we so walk in the midst of Satan’s snares, that one fantastical head may destroy, and utterly overthrow, in a short space, all that which many true ministers have builded up in years before.” Numerous examples of this in Christian history and American history exist. And rather than identifying specific churches where this has happened, let me mention the Ivy league schools that we so often mention that have completely left their origins. This is what was in the process of happening in Galatia. And while I wish I didn’t think he was right, Martin Luther also wrote “Wherefore let us learn, that this is a special point of the devil’s cunning, that if he cannot hurt by persecuting and destroying, he doth it under a colour of correcting and building up.” There is no correction and no addition needed for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no updating it as so many state today. It is a lie to say that the Gospel and the way we give it to lost men needs to be changed to remain contemporary. The true Gospel, no matter what we do to it, will never become appealing to the natural man. Only by preaching and the new birth from above by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit can any man, woman, or child be saved. But as we fight this battle, Martin Luther rightfully points out the remedy to this problem of deception as well. He says “Wherefore it behooveth us to pray without ceasing, to read the holy Scriptures, to cleave fast unto Christ, and His holy word that we may overcome the devil’s subtilties.”

While we haven’t finished looking at our text this morning, if I had to sum up this entire section, it would be that in verses 6 through 10, Paul waged war against the false teachers because he loved the truth, and because he loved those whom he had led to Christ. And that is what we sang about this morning. **I Love to Tell The Story – #431**

First stanza

I love to tell the story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know ’tis true; It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

***I love to tell the story, ’twill be my theme in glory,
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.***

Last stanza

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest. And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, ’Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Next week, Lord willing, we will continue onto verses 8 through 10 and try to answer the question what is the only Gospel.

6. The Problem – Another Gospel (Part II) 1:6-10

June 8, 2008

Last week as we looked at verses 6-10 of Galatians 1, we began delving into the problem that was such a burden on the heart of Paul causing him to write his passionate letter to the Galatians. That problem which Paul immediately jumped all over was that the Judaizers or legalists had infiltrated the churches in Galatia and were teaching a different gospel than what the Holy Spirit through Paul's preaching which resulted in their salvation. And sadly they were beginning to doubt what they previously believed and some were living the way they did before they were saved – enslaved to the law. They were buying into the other gospel – that is the different gospel which as you recall from last week is not a gospel whatsoever.

With that said, let's read the first 10 verses of Galatians 1 to remind us of what we have studied and what is yet to come.

Galatians 1:1-10 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 6 ¶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 ¶ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Last week we looked at verses 6 and 7 and this morning our focus will be on verses 8 through 10. Paul's focus in these verses continues to be the supremacy of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is reliable and unchanging.

While I briefly mentioned this last week, we must ask the question why did the Galatians revert back? Would we dare say it was because of Paul's poor skills of preaching and teaching? Absolutely never! Verses 3-5 alone put that argument to rest. Was it because they had never believed in the Gospel and Paul was just mistaken that they were saved? This false notion is put to rest in chapter 4 of this epistle. So turn over to chapter 4 for a moment and see the initial response of the Galatians to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gal 4:13-16 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

The reason for their reverting back or perhaps better stated, the capability of reverting back is well explained by John Brown when he defines man. He says "the bias of his nature is decidedly towards what is false in sentiment, and towards what is wrong in feeling and action... And even after a man has thus become the subject of divine influence, how much ignorance, misapprehensions, and error – how much imperfection and impropriety, - still remain, just because he is not completely subject to that influence!... The partial apostasies of genuine Christians are fearful demonstrations of the power of natural depravity, -- clear evidences that, but for the constant operation of the good Spirit, every good man would soon become a bad man; and everything like right religious thinking, and feeling, and acting, would be banished from the earth."

Examples of these demonstrations of the power of natural depravity as John Brown describes are what we will be looking at this morning. With that said, let's progress into verses 8-9.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

While verses 8 and 9 seem very similar they are not identical. Notice the focus of verse 8 is the source of the message – any other gospel than what Paul and his companions preached. Verse 9 focuses on what the Galatians “received” when the gospel was preached. You might say verse 8 talks about the cause – the preaching of the gospel and verse 9 talks about the effect – the life changing salvation that results from the gospel. Paul makes it clear in these verses that there is *no other gospel* than the one he preached to them and which they received. Paul believed in the exclusivity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And Paul sums up the warning against both the cause of a false source and effect of a false belief as the same thing – “let him [or them] be accursed.” The Greek word, that we also carry over into the English, is anathema. I think the first time I read the word anathema was in John MacArthur's book, The Gospel According to Jesus which discussed the Council of Trent where the Catholic Church declared the reformers and those with reformed doctrine (including the doctrines of grace and consubstantiation), anathema. Repeated, those who hold to reformed doctrine, doctrine contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church are declared to be anathema. This might also be equated with excommunication and even eternal condemnation.

Strong's concordance defines the word anathema as a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed... or a thing doomed to destruction... a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes. A good example of this is found in Acts 23:14.

Acts 23:14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse (anathema), that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Being declared anathema is not a small thing when it comes from man, but when the apostle Paul declares it by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is no worse state to find yourself in. This provides us with another lesson this morning. Are you willing as a teacher or one who disciples a new believer to go so far as Paul that you would state a curse against those who seem to fall away? If you love the true Gospel you must be so willing.

The gospel is serious business. These two verses should make it very clear how dangerous it is for someone to say how it doesn't matter what religion you hold to as long as you are sincere. There is no room for variation when it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And verses 8 and 9 help us understand the foundation of many cults that lie in direct opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. These two verses are not just flowery language. Paul knew (perhaps firsthand) that some would teach that an angel or some other “great” man has provided clarity to the gospel. Remember last week I read the quote from Martin Luther that said Satan works to destroy the church under a colour of correcting and building up.

In fact, look at 2 Corinthians 11 with me and see the source of these forms of error.
2 Cor 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

We must recognize that the error that tripped up the churches of Galatia in Paul's day (in addition to other churches) was a "different gospel" but it was not a strange religion from a foreign land – it was a close counterfeit to the true gospel. This is evidenced partly by the fact that there hadn't been much time between Paul's missionary journey through their region and their falling away. And this should serve as a wake up call to us this morning. We cannot afford to fall asleep at the wheel. We can't even feel sleepy or groggy for fear of danger of infiltration. We would do well to heed our Lord's advice of "Watch and pray" (Mark 14:38).

As I read John Piper's sermon on our text from Galatians, I came across a section that startled me and yet I could not find room for disagreement. In 1983 this is what John Piper said – again this is 1983 - "There is the widespread sense that the Holy Spirit will guard the church from all error, and so rigorous study and thought about the gospel are felt to be not only a threat to joy but a failure of faith. The result over a generation is the emergence of a people whose understanding of biblical teaching is so hazy and imprecise that they are sitting ducks for the Galatian heresy.... doctrinal maturity is not a luxury [at Bethlehem]. It is a necessity. If a "different gospel," which is no gospel but only a perversion, can spring up inside the church, then surely we must make it our aim to become rigorous and discriminating in our doctrinal knowledge." May the Lord be gracious to Covenant Baptist and may we make it our aim to become rigorous and discriminating in our doctrinal knowledge.

Sadly, what Paul wrote about almost 2,000 years ago continues to the 21st century. And we don't need to search hard today to find examples of such modern cults with these problems. Apologist Josh McDowell defines a cult as "a perversion, a distortion of biblical Christianity, and as such, rejects the historic teachings of the Christian Church." I need only point to the origins of Mormonism to find someone claiming that an angel provided the true gospel. The Mormons teach that when Joseph Smith was a teenager, he began wondering which of the many Christian sects was the "true" Christian faith. At age 14 he claimed to have had a vision of God and Jesus telling him that all Christian denominations had fallen away from the true faith and that they would restore the true faith. And at age 17, Joseph Smith claimed that the angel Moroni appeared to him and led him to the spot where he found the golden plates, a brass plate, a breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim that helped him translate the plates.

And if we look at the origins of the Jehovah's Witnesses we find men attempting to change or clarify the gospel, and we also find a warning to ensure that our own children and the youth of this church truly understand what they claim to believe. Even though Jehovah's Witnesses claim to accept the Bible as their only authority, their theology denies every cardinal belief of historic Christianity. The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Charles Russell, was raised as a Congregationalist and at age 16 or 17 he tried to convert an atheist to Christianity which instead resulted in Charles becoming an agnostic. Shortly thereafter he went to an Adventist meeting and organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, PA. During this study he made it clear that his study of the Scriptures led to a denial of eternal punishment, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and the deity of Christ. Russell went so far as to claim that the Bible could be only understood according to his interpretations.

The list goes on and on of cults claiming their authorities or messages from angels or man. But if we spent all morning looking at these examples we wouldn't get through the whole list.

Our time would certainly be better spent by trying to better understand the true gospel that Paul and the other apostles received from Jesus Christ – the gospel which is the only source of salvation. This is partly why I asked for Hymn 228 to be sung this morning.

My faith hath found a resting place 228

My faith has found a resting place, Not in device or creed;
I trust the ever living One, His wounds for me shall plead.

Refrain

*I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

Enough for me that Jesus saves, This ends my fear and doubt;
A sinful soul I come to Him, He'll never cast me out.

Refrain

My heart is leaning on the Word, The living Word of God,
Salvation by my Savior's Name, Salvation through His blood.

Refrain

My great Physician heals the sick, The lost He came to save;
For me His precious blood He shed, For me His life He gave.

Refrain

Let's look for our remaining moments what the True Gospel of Jesus Christ is, which alone has power to save.

Years ago I heard John MacArthur preaching at Cedarville and he stated his belief that one passage, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 best defines the gospel. He said our mission, the Great Commission, is about reconciliation which is central to these verses.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

I learned more recently that Spurgeon preached on verses 20-21 and called them "The Heart of the Gospel" as he says "The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ."

This morning I hope you have seen once again how important it is to know, defend and propagate the one true gospel. Remember who you are serving and stay true to the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

6 Aspects of the Gospel Without Which There Is No Gospel

1. The gospel was *planned* by God beforehand (verses 3, 4: “according to the scriptures”)
2. The gospel is an objective physical *event* in history (verses 3-5: “Christ died . . . he was buried . . . he was raised . . . he appeared”).
3. The gospel is an objective *accomplishment*—the purchase or obtaining of redemption for all who would believe (verse 3: “Christ died for our sins”—the debt was paid)
4. The gospel is an *offer* to be made to all that what Christ accomplished is free and may be had only by faith in him (verse 2: “by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you *believed* in vain.”)
5. The gospel is an *application* through faith to specific people of what Christ accomplished (verse 2: “and by which you are being saved”).
6. The gospel is an eternal and infinitely *happy future destiny* (verse 1-3: implied in the word “gospel” and “saved” and “sins born by another”)

This morning I hope that you have seen a second answer to Warren Wiersbe’s question of how you would finish the sentence. This morning I hope that you have seen **If I want to be a really good Christian I must stand unwavering in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

7. Galatians 1:10-14 Saul the Old Man – Who I Was Is Not Who I Am June 15, 2008

So far in our study of the first 9 verses of Galatians we have seen Paul defending his apostleship, we have seen an exaltation of Jesus Christ, and we have seen “a flashing sword wielded by a burning heart” with Paul condemning those preach any other false gospel. I plan for our text for the next two Sundays to be Galatians 1:10-24. This section of Galatians is very autobiographical. And as we study this section of Scripture we will need to examine other passages of Scripture, particularly in Acts, that give us insight into Paul’s life. And while I don’t think anyone is unfamiliar with who Paul is, I think that this morning we can delve deeper into who Paul is and I want to make sure we all move forward together in some of what Paul’s perspective was when he wrote this epistle. With that said, let’s begin.

Galatians 1:10-24 10 ¶ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother. 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

You may recall when we covered the themes of the book of Galatians that the first theme I mentioned was Paul’s defense of his apostleship that was under attack by the false teachers in Galatia. Verse 10 represents Paul’s continued fight to prove his legitimacy and it also continues to explain the source of what he previously preached and still preaches to the Galatians. We know from recent lessons that there is only one true gospel. There is not another gospel, that is a means of salvation, than the gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul had preached. When we were looking at the very first verse of the book of Galatians, I mentioned that it is believed that the false teachers who had infiltrated Galatia were teaching that Paul was not a real Apostle and that somehow he was preaching the wrong message or that he had overstepped his authority in what he was preaching.

Multiple commentaries say that verse 10 reveals another part of the attack against the Apostle Paul that the legalists were filling the minds of the Galatians with. It is speculated that the legalists were using one of Paul’s self-declarations against him. Specifically, Paul’s statement about his ministry found in 1 Corinthians 9. Turn there for a moment.

1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Some speculate that the Judaizer's declared Paul to be a flatterer or a con-artist. They may have said he was not sincere or real. Or perhaps that what Paul taught you isn't the same as what Paul taught others. So Paul takes this charge head on. Remember that in verses 1 and 2 of this chapter Paul declares that neither his ministry nor his message come from man. So in verse 10, Paul is asking whose approval do you thing I am seeking – God's approval or man's approval. And Paul wastes no time to make it clear that it is God's approval that he is seeking as He is a servant or slave of Christ.

But the lesson to learn from verse 10 is *not* that the more people you can displease the more spiritual you are. It was never Paul's aim to alienate people. What Paul is doing in verse 10 is giving an account of why he is willing to talk to the Galatians so bluntly. He is willing to talk this way because pleasing people is much lower on his list of priorities than serving and pleasing Christ. Two things are at stake when the gospel is perverted: one is the glory of Christ; the other is the evangelization of sinners. If the gospel is twisted, the all-sufficiency of Christ's work is dishonored, and the way to salvation for sinners is non-existent. Therefore, in order to serve Christ—to advance his glory and achieve his saving purpose—Paul must oppose the perversion of the gospel with all his might, whether it pleases people or not. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is worth such an effort from Paul and we should be willing to fight for it as well.

But false teachers will go to great lengths to woo or please men. And it has always been so. In fact as I thought about this, I couldn't help but think about the contest in 1 Kings 18 between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. In that chapter we read:

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then a few verses later, we see the contrast with Elijah's behavior where he simply prays *"..... LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."* Paul, like Elijah depended solely upon the truth and power of God. And it was God alone that he was trying to please and serve. This is what verse 10 should inspire us to do also.

In the continuation of his fight for legitimacy, Paul, in verses 11 and 12 declares that no man, other than the God-man Jesus Christ had anything to do with the Gospel Paul preached. In a sermon Charles Spurgeon preached on Galatians 1:11, he began by saying "To me it is a pitiful sight to see Paul defending himself as an apostle; and doing this, not against the gainsaying world, but against cold-hearted members of the church." But that is exactly what Paul had to do and was willing to do to restore his brothers and sisters in Christ in the churches of Galatia.

If the story of Paul's conversion as laid out in Acts and here in Galatians 1 is true, then it is impossible that Paul learned His gospel from any other man. In verse 11 he simply states that "the gospel" he preached "is not after man." And then in verse 12 Paul begins going deeper into his life. His account covers what Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:21-24 – it covers his old man and his new man. This morning I want our focus to be looking at Saul or Paul's Old Man. I want to examine his argument in verses 12 through 14 that who he is now is not who he was before. Lord willing next week we will look at Paul's New Man in verses 15-24.

In verse 12 Paul once again eliminates any doubt about the source of his message. He states that he did not receive it from man nor was he taught it by any man. According to Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown "Received it, " implies the absence of labor in acquiring it and "Taught it, " implies the labor of learning. So in other words he wasn't parroting back what he had heard someone else preaching or teaching and he wasn't spouting off something he had read in his studies. And we know quite a lot from the New Testament account by Luke about Paul, or rather Saul's education. For a few minutes I want to talk about his education.

According to Alfred Edersheim in his work *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, by the time of Christ, the Jewish education system was pretty well established. Based upon the law of Moses (specifically Deut 4:9, 6:7, and 11:19), education was to begin with the child's mother and father. Among the basics of education I will describe in a moment, parents were also strongly advised by the community to teach their children how to swim for the sake of safety. At whatever point a father was unable to educate their child on the subject at hand, a schoolmaster would be hired – this was usually at age 6 or 7. According to Jewish tradition, if there were 25 boys of a suitable age in a community, the families were obligated to appoint a schoolmaster who would take over the responsibility of teaching all of the children with the hours of instruction typically being from 10AM to 3PM except in July and August when hours would be limited because of the heat.

Jewish education would typically begin at age 3 and would include simple verses of Scripture, benedictions, wise sayings and frequently they would utilize mnemonics to help them learn. For instance Psalm 119 was often used to teach the Hebrew alphabet as each verse in the 22 eight verse sections begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In teaching the child to read, the alphabet was to be imparted by drawing the letters till the child became familiar with them. Next, the teacher would point in the copy read with his finger or a stylus. To acquire fluency the child would be made to read aloud. At five years of age, the Hebrew Bible became the focus of the curriculum. Can anyone guess what book they started with? The Biblical education of a Jewish child commences with the book of Leviticus. But why? Because, according to Jewish tradition, it behooves a Jew to know as soon as possible what ordinances he must follow all life long. At this age, they would also begin teaching the history of Israel by communicating it orally. After Leviticus, the rest of the books of Moses would be taught followed by the prophets and then finally the poetic writings.

By age 10, for the best students, one half of the day would be spent studying the Scriptures and the other half of the day would be about the traditions and oral law of the Jews. This obviously was just beginning to explode in the first century AD when several of the great Jewish sages lived. By the age of 15 to 17, the best students would be sent to an academy where they would have only a few short years to make or break their changes at becoming an expert in the law by studying the Talmud, which again was only in its early stages during the time of Paul.

So what kind of student was Paul? Well for one thing, according to Acts 23:6, Paul was the son of a Pharisee, so his home life would have promoted that he learn the law well. But we know more than this. Turn to Acts 22 for just a moment.

Acts 22:1-3 ¶ Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 ¶ I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

From this we see Paul must have done pretty well as was one that was sent to the academy in Jerusalem. And he was taught by a famous Jewish sage, Rabbi Gamaliel. But who was Gamaliel? According to the Dictionary of Ancient Rabbis, Gamaliel or rather Gamaliel I (there are 6 famous rabbi Gamaliels in Jewish ancient history) was the grandson of rabbi Hillel, another extremely famous rabbi of Jesus' day. And like his grandfather he was the originator of many legal ordinances with a view to the "tikkun ha-'olam" a concept that continues to this day in Judaism involving doing certain deeds to cleanse or perfect the world. According to most accounts, Gamaliel was also the highest ranking member and president of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. He was thought so high of, that according to an arrogant Jewish tradition, "When he died the honor (meaning the outward respect) of the Torah (the Law) ceased, and purity and piety became extinct." We can only begin to imagine what Saul would have learned from such a man as Gamaliel. But it certainly wasn't salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

So back to our text in Galatians, in verse 12 Paul makes it clear he didn't hear or learn his Gospel while studying under Gamaliel or any other person. Paul's gospel was 100% received from Jesus Christ Himself, both during his Damascus Road conversion of Acts 9 and in what he learned in the following years by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

But in case someone would still hold onto the idea that Paul merely was preaching what he was taught, Paul points out that his old life and his new life are incompatible. So what was Paul's old life? Prior to his conversion the Apostle Paul wanted nothing to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In verses 13 and 14 Paul reminds the churches of Galatia that they know he was Jewish before he became a Christian, but he also reminds them that he wasn't any ordinary Jew. Paul states that he used to persecute the church. In fact he started at a very young age persecuting. Turn to Acts 8. We know according to Acts 7:58 that Saul as a young man watched the cloaks during the stoning of Stephen but then Acts 8:1-4 clarifies Paul's actions.

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

But Paul didn't just persecute the church, Galatians 1:13 says he persecuted it beyond measure. This phrase beyond measure implies superiority – he was the best of the best when it comes to persecutors of the church and we have clear evidence of this. For one thing in verse 13 it says Paul "wasted the church of God" which implies destruction and overthrowing.

To see this destruction and overthrowing, we need only to examine what Scripture says about the events surrounding his conversion.

Acts 9:1-2 ¶ And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Now skip down to verses 13 and 14.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

We will come back to Acts chapter 9 in a moment but quickly look over at Acts 26. We could look at Acts 22:4-5 but they say much like chapter 9; however, chapter 26 gives us a little different insight.

Acts 26:9-11 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

And as harsh and severe as these verses sound, the worst indictment against Paul takes us back to Acts 9. After being blinded and knocked down to the ground verse 5 says *Acts 9:5 And he [Paul] said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

Paul's persecution of every Christian was ultimately persecution of Jesus Christ Himself and Paul would live the rest of his life knowing this condemnation that the grace of God delivered him from. And in conclusion, this brings me to the hymn of this morning, Hymn 474 – Only a Sinner Saved By Grace.

**Naught have I gotten but what I received;
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;
Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner, saved by grace!**

Refrain

*Only a sinner, saved by grace!
Only a sinner, saved by grace!
This is my story, to God be the glory—
I'm only a sinner, saved by grace!*

**Once I was foolish, and sin ruled my heart,
Causing my footsteps from God to depart;
Jesus hath found me, happy my case;
I now am a sinner, saved by grace!**

Refrain

**Tears unavailing, no merit had I;
Mercy had saved me, or else I must die;
Sin had alarmed me fearing God's face;
But now I'm a sinner saved by grace!**

Refrain

**Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows,
Loving his Savior to tell what he knows;
Once more to tell it would I embrace—
I'm only a sinner saved by grace!**

Refrain

Next week Lord willing, we will finish our look at Paul's old man and then we will venture into Paul the new man.

8. Galatians 1:15-25 Paul the New Man – Who I Am is Not Who I Was June 22, 2008

Last week we began our look at our look at Galatians 1:10-24 where Paul defends his Apostleship and even more he defends his message – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this section Paul argues and I believe proves that he did not invent what he taught and preached – he received it from above. In verse 10 we saw that Paul wasn't trying to impress any man because he was a dedicated servant of Jesus Christ. Then in verses 11 thru 13 we saw Paul's defense that the Gospel he preaches had to be of divine origin because it was completely contrary to what he was taught as a student of Rabbi Gamaliel and because his life was characterized by persecution of Christianity. It didn't match his old man. While we only managed to look at four verses last week, this morning I want to finish looking at this section of Paul's defense that the Gospel he preached had to be divine as it was completely contrary to who he was. Once we finish looking at Paul's old man, we will progress into Paul's new man and just as his old man, Paul's new man limits the possibilities of the source of Paul's message.

But before we go further I want to read our text to help clarify where we have been and where we are going.

Galatians 1:10-24 10 ¶ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

We finished last week looking at Paul's hostility toward Christianity and Christ himself as revealed in verse 13. But beyond verse 13, verse 14 makes it clear that Paul's focus before his conversion was the Jews' religion 110%.

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

This verse states he excelled his peers and was more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the Jewish sages. And what was Paul's way of exceeding his peers? He followed in his father's and his teacher's footsteps and became a Pharisee himself. For part of this morning I want to discuss what being a Pharisee means.

One insight into being a Pharisee is found in Acts 26. So turn there for a moment and see what Paul states in his defense before King Agrippa.

Acts 26:4-5 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect [or in the ESV strictest party] of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

The Pharisees were the portion of Judaism that claim to be the strictest and most devout and dare I say narrow minded. They lived lives that were seen as never deviating from law, at least not according to their standards. So what is a Pharisee.

The word Pharisee is derived from the Aramaic word Perishaya and the Hebrew word Perushim פרושים meaning “one who separates himself”. In other words, they lived lives of separation from anything considered impure, whether that be people or things. They were scrupulous observers of the Law as interpreted by the scribes. But in fact this interpretation of the Law rose to the point of being more important than the Scriptures themselves that were being interpreted. This was very consistent with Rabbi Gamaliel’s emphasis on the Oral Law. This Oral Law, they say was also revealed at Sinai along with the written commandments, but the Oral law as the name implies was not written down. Instead it was preserved across the generations by oral tradition including according to the Jewish legend amongst the prophets. The Oral Law is foundational to the understanding of the Pharisees mannerisms as well as the 5 basic beliefs of the Pharisees those being: 1) immortality of the soul 2) existence of angels 3) divine providence 4) freedom of the will; and 5) resurrection of the dead.

The Pharisees were a rather exclusive fraternity even though Josephus estimates 6,000 Pharisees in Israel around the time of Paul. “A true Pharisee observed the same degree of purity in his daily meals as did the priest in the temple.” The only men admitted were those who in the presence of three members pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, avoidance or no close relations with the ignorant, scrupulous payment of tithes and giving to the priesthood and the poor. These practices extended the priestly laws to all Jews. The Pharisees as a class frequently instituted rites in the Temple which originated in popular custom and were without foundation in the Law. The Pharisees added new restrictions to the Biblical law in their attempt to keep the people at a safe distance from forbidden ground. As they termed it, “they made a fence around the Law” → taken from a literal translation of Leviticus 18:30 - “Ye shall watch my watch” to mean “Ye shall place a guard around my guard”. An example of this that we see come into play in the NT is that the Pharisees forbade the Jewish people to drink or eat with the Gentiles, in order to prevent associations which might lead either to intermarriage or idolatry. This demonstrates well that legalism and separatism are the chief characteristics of the Pharisees.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was completely contrary to his commitment to the way of the Pharisee. In other words, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with Paul’s old man. This is the very perspective that Paul comes from and we would do well to see the example of Paul leaving everything behind when it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As he states in Philippians 3, he counted all these traditions, all these ways, all the honor as dung in order that he may win Christ. He didn’t retain any of his Pharisaical beliefs in his preaching. And with that said we come to verse 15 and following.

Verses 15 and 16 provide us with the life changing moment in Paul’s life that caused him to change 180 degrees from his Pharisaical ways. And it all happened at the perfect time – the time when it pleased God, not when Paul was ready, not when Paul was looking for a change of life or to turn over a new leaf. And it happened the perfect way. It was by God giving him life and calling Him that Paul was brought to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is part of the defense that his gospel had to be divine – a man made gospel doesn’t fit with his past and it doesn’t fit with his conversion and early Christian walk.

And to add to this defense, look at these 2 verses again and notice how clear these verses make the divine working of God in the life of Paul. *15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

This was why I asked for hymn #467 to be sung this morning. The hymn "Since I Have Been Redeemed" helps demonstrate the utter transformation that takes place in the life of all believers including the Apostle Paul by the redeeming work of Christ. And the 2nd stanza fits the Apostle Paul so well:

*I have a Christ Who satisfies
Since I have been redeemed,
To do His will my highest prize,
Since I have been redeemed.*

Paul's life was utterly transformed. And while verses 17 through 21 provide us with the first 3 years of Paul's life as a Christian, I feel we must first look at the conversion experience of Paul. But instead of looking at Acts 9, I want to look at Paul's testimony declared to the Jewish mob that he had to be rescued from near the temple in Jerusalem. Turn to Acts 22.

Acts 22:6-21 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Summarized so well is Paul's conversion and linked to the conversion of all believers in 2 Corinthians 4:6 which says: *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

But before I move further into chapter 1, I want to look at an additional account Paul gives of his conversion. Look with me at Acts 26.

Acts 26:12-20 ¶ Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. 19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

With these 2 accounts of Paul's testimony in mind, let us quickly look at the rest of Gal 1. Since it has been a few minutes, let me reread verses 16 through 24 and pay attention to the timeline Paul lays out here.

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

We are told here that be the leading of God (as denoted in the phrase "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood"), Paul spent his first three years of his Christian walk in Damascus and not with the Apostles in Jerusalem. But these three years are summarized in seven short verses in Acts 9.

Acts 9:19-25 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23 ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

So after 3 years, Paul's stay in Damascus ended with Paul being secretly let down in a basket. After this Paul finally ventured back to Jerusalem – his old stomping ground. But again by the leading of Christ Himself (according to Acts 22:17-18), Paul only spent 15 days in Jerusalem. These 15 days are also expounded upon in Acts 19.

Acts 19:26-30 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

This passage tells us of the disciples fear and apprehension. But Galatians and Acts combined tell us that Barnabas was able to introduce Paul to Peter and eventually to James. Lord willing next week we will discuss James, but regardless, the point is, the message Paul preached to the Galatians before and what he preached still could not have been just an overextended version of the Apostles' gospel because Paul didn't spend time learning from the Apostles. Paul's formative learning came apart from the 12 Apostles. In fact we read this earlier when we looked at Acts 26, but I would remind you again what Jesus says in verse 16 of Acts 26.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:

Jesus' revelation to Paul did not end on the road to Damascus. Paul was taught more by Jesus Himself later on.

This verse in fact not only helps support Paul's defense that His Gospel is from Christ Himself but by being kept separate from Jerusalem and the other Jewish Apostles, many believe that his ministry to the Gentiles was less hindered.

This morning, I hope that you have once again seen that the Apostle Paul was a man who personally understood the transforming power of Jesus Christ. And as such, what he preached to the Galatians was completely inconsistent with his past as well as the teaching of the Judaizers who had infiltrated. And additionally, his message could not have been a version of the other Apostles in Jerusalem. As Warren Wiersbe asks in his study of Galatians "In the light of Paul's conduct, his conversion, and his contacts, how could anybody accuse him of borrowing or inventing either his message or his ministry?" The Judaizer's denial of Paul's apostleship is akin to a denial of his very conversion.

And having mentioned Warren Wiersbe, let me provide you with a third conclusion to the question on his back cover. **If I want to be a really good Christian I must know that the Gospel is the very truth of God and not the invention of men.**

Lord willing, next week we will begin looking at chapter 2 of Galatians.