

Unlocking Freedom: A Study in Galatians

Galatians 1:1-10

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

Have you ever tried to relay a message and somewhere from when it left your brain and headed south toward your mouth it came out a little mixed up? For example, the other night we had a Super bowl party at Church... “*You know what I love, Patty?*” The message was trying to be relayed, and yet with the wrong grammatical pause, it turned in to something entirely different. Or perhaps you’ve played the game where a phrase gets passed down through a line of individuals and when it arrives at the end of the line, the message is nowhere close to what it began as. Often times what we hear and what was actually said can be two different things. Perhaps a little of this was happening in the hearts of the Galatians – as they heard the Gospel message crystal clear and yet were being persuaded that it was something else altogether.

Open your Bibles to **Galatians 1:1-10**, read with me **verses 1-10**.

Open in Prayer.

Last week we keyed in on the author and the recipients, we even highlighted some of the various themes found in these 6 chapters – as a way to introduce you to the letter Paul wrote to his beloved children in the region of Galatia. Today, I want to take a closer look at verses 3-10, as we understand the motivation for Paul when he writes this letter. He is motivated by the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and the defense of it. And so we will spend some time this morning looking at the elements of the True Gospel of Jesus Christ, and then we will spend some time looking at that which grieved the heart of Paul.

Paul had spent much time conveying the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection to the churches in Galatia while he was with them on his missionary journeys, and yet it would seem that in a short period of time they turned away from the very undeniable elements of the Gospel. But in order to understand that more, we must start where Paul does – by defining these undeniable elements of the true Gospel.

1. **The True Gospel** (vv. 3-5)

In these 3 verses we see 3 undeniable elements.

a. “**Grace** to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”

In these few words, Paul tells us a remarkable truth. And that is that both Grace and Peace is fully offered by God to humanity. Many spend their entire lives searching for both Grace and Peace, and never come close, because their journey never leads them to the cross of Jesus Christ, where He gave Himself as payment for our sins. Grace is undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor and is nearly unheard of in today’s society – where the mantra is all too often, “Eye for an eye”. And yet at the center of the Gospel is grace flowing forth from the Father toward undeserving sinners. This is the hallmark

of the Gospel. And because of God's amazing grace we can have peace both relationally to God and practically with others in our lives. What a divine bundle offered to us through salvation and highlighted in the first few words of this verse. We could easily spend all day camping out on this undeniable element and remarkable truth of the Gospel. But Paul continues on and says...

b. **"Who** gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age..." We see two undeniable truths in this one phrase. First, our sins have created an evil and wicked reality within our hearts – and that wickedness eating away at our souls has created an uncrossable chasm between us and the very God who created us. Now, compound that with the sins of a world, one stacked on top of another, then you understand just how evil and wicked this world is. What I'm trying to say is - **There is a great need to be rescued!** This present age, us included, is wicked. This is why God's love is categorized as "grace" – because we have done far too much wrong to deserve His love at all. Which leads us to the second remarkable truth found in this phrase - Through faith in Jesus Christ alone, we can be rescued from our sins – *He gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us.* What an immense thought it is to consider *"How wide, and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."* (**Eph. 3:18**) that He would give of Himself for us.

c. **"According** to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore, Amen." Did you catch that seemingly simple verse? Grace and Peace can be ours, because of the actions of Jesus Christ – who rescued us from our sinfulness by giving of Himself on the cross – and all of this is offered to us **purposely by God the Father.** He desires for us to be rescued. And as a result of this we respond in praise and worship – *"to God be the glory forevermore. Amen."* (v. 5)

The True Gospel, understood in Scripture, is remarkably beautiful – it is the most precious truth in all of life. It gives life meaning. It explains our value. It answers our deepest questions. It rescues our souls from the depth of sin. And it motivates our every step, inspiring our very words. **It is the very message we are commanded to proclaim to the whole of creation.** *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."* (Mark 16:15). **It is the Gospel message that we are to strive together in service of.** Philippians 2:22 and 4:3 speak of those who labored with Paul in the Gospel. **It is the Gospel that we are to be willing to suffer for** *"Join with me in suffering for the Gospel according to the power of God..."* (1 Tim. 1:8). For the sake of the Gospel men and women have given their lives. This true gift of love from God is the most precious truth in all of life – and it should be valued above all things.

This is why Paul was so troubled and grieved when he heard of the problem within the Church in Galatia – this problem had everything to do with the perversion of the Gospel. It was a disease that was infecting the Church and threatening its very message and ministry – there were souls that depended upon the correction of this false doctrine. And so Paul skips over the pleasantries and gets right to the point in verse 6.

2. The Problem (vv. 6-10)

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel..." (v. 6).

We learn a few things from careful observation of **verse 6**.

First, Paul is amazed, astounded, that the Church, this group of believers he had seen not too long ago – perhaps only a year prior - entrusting them with this precious Gospel – and already they had turned away from it and God. – this is what causes Paul’s astonishment. It’s as if Paul is asking the question, “how is this even possible?” *I am amazed (shocked) that you are so quickly deserting Him!*

Second, they have turned away from the true Gospel and have replaced it with another. This Greek word used for *deserting God*, is the same word one would use to describe an individual who left one political party to join another, it was also used of military desertion, which was so offensive it was punishable by death. Paul is pointing out to us that these new believers in Galatia have not simply turned away from the Gospel, but from the very One who called them to it. And they have replaced it with something else.

Paul then continues on, “*Which is really not another, only that there are some who are disturbing (stirring up trouble) you and want to distort (pervert) the Gospel of Christ.*” (**v. 7**). This is the scary thing about what Paul is saying here. What these believers are being sold is a false, yet close, Gospel. It is as if they are being given cubic zirconium (false gold) and are told it is real gold. There are elements to this distortion of the Gospel that sound like the truth – but are only being spoken of by these false teachers in order to stir up in the hearts of these believers doubt concerning Christ and His Gospel. I must also say that according to this verse, these false teachers have not succeeded in doing so – they are merely in the process of disturbing (or causing trouble) in the Churches in hopes to pervert the truths of the Gospel within the heads and hearts of the believers – they have not completely succeeded yet. Paul is writing in order to prevent their success.

He then in the most direct way states that if anyone is seeking to pervert the Gospel of Christ, they are bringing down destruction upon them. “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*” (**v. 8**). Paul gives an extreme hypothetical in order to help the Galatian believers understand the seriousness of knowing and valuing the true Gospel – he says that even if I or even an angel comes to you and preaches a false gospel – they are to be accursed - anathema! This word carries with it the meaning of handing them over as a gift for destruction. He then moves from the hypothetical to the literal as he reiterates his concern in **verse 9** – “*As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*” Serious judgment and destruction will come to those who preach a contrary gospel to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul then concludes in **verse 10** by saying, “*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*” In this sentence Paul is striving to give the logical reason for his passion and his expertise on this subject. The Judaizers were seeking to discredit him both as an apostle and lead others to believe that for selfish reasons Paul took out the vigorous requirements of the law. Paul is saying, you can trust me and the Gospel, because my allegiance is solely to God and my focus is alone on Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to ask you a few questions.

Do you value the Gospel of Jesus Christ above all else? Or have you too allowed the truth of the Gospel to be watered down in your living? Have you allowed yourself to be tempted and persuaded by false teachers? The Devil is constantly seeking to subvert God's true Gospel with perverted versions of it in order to spite the One who made him. Have you set up the proper gates in order to keep him out? You do this by being in constant communion with the Lord and by careful observation and meditation upon His Word. You won't be fooled, if you know the real thing inside and out.

Let's pray.