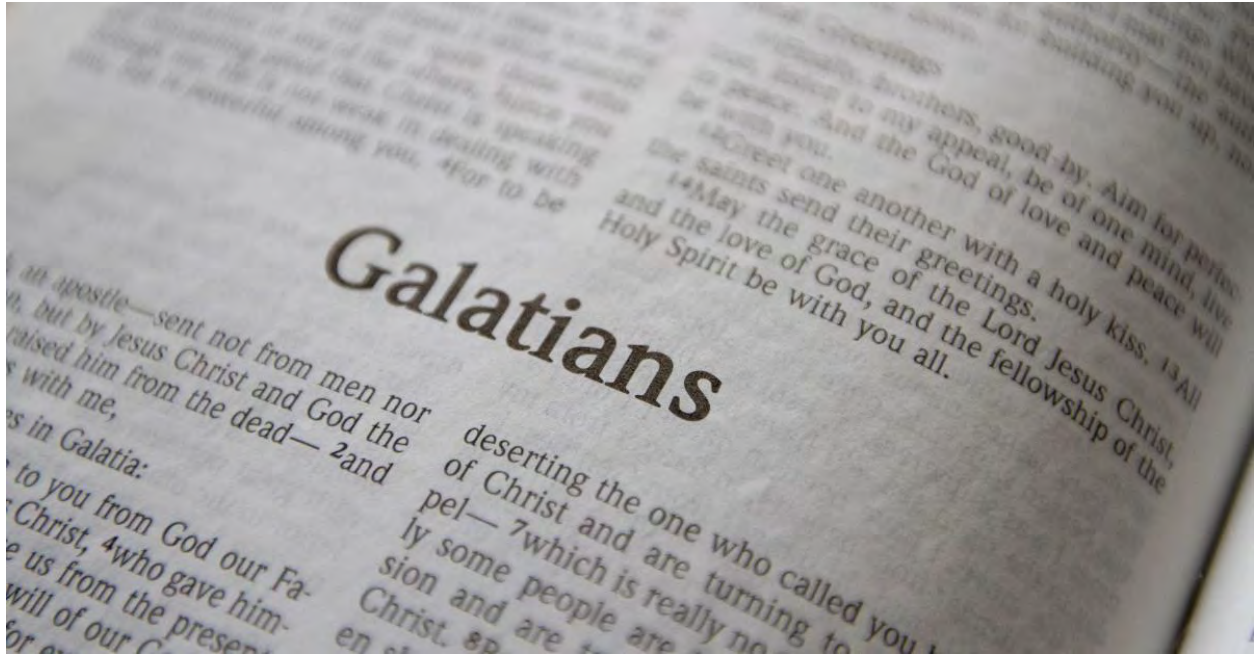


SO SOON FOOLS?

GALATIANS 1



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Galatians 1

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Galatians: Introduction

Paul was not merely an evangelist and church planter. He was that, of course, but he was more.

He was a true shepherd of the churches God used him to start, and he watched over and continued to minister them all, as he was able. His epistles show us Paul's pastoral heart. They also reveal him to be ready apologist for the truth of God and a skilled polemicist against all the lies of Satan.

Galatians is in many ways typical of Paul's pastoral letters to churches. Problems are addressed. The Gospel and the Christian life are reviewed. Evidence of God's grace is cited with thanksgiving. And all are called to renewed vigilance and dedication to the Lord.

But although Paul loved those to whom he wrote, he could be stern and even unsparing. Unless you think "foolish" is an epithet to wear proudly.

We hope you find this study of the book of Galatians to provide abundant stimulation for your walk with and work for the Lord.

For His glory and praise!

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1 A Short Course on Salvation

Opening Prayer: Psalm 46.1-3

God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear,

Even though the earth be removed,

And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though its waters roar *and* be troubled,

Though the mountains shake with its swelling.

Sing Psalm 46.1-3

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.

Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea consume the mountain range.

Waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

Read and meditate on Galatians 1.1-5.

Preparation

1. How did Paul introduce himself?

2. Why did Jesus die for our sins?

Meditation

The Galatians were a group of believers meeting in several churches—probably all in homes—in the region of northern Asia Minor. Paul had opened the way for Christian faith there during his third missionary journey (Acts 16.6), and the Lord gave a good beginning to the work.

But it was not long before false teachers arrived and began leading the Galatians astray. Their “turning away” from the Gospel Paul preached was the occasion for this letter. Paul always had high expectations and goals for his writing. He didn’t simply scold or threaten; rather, he wanted the believers to know more of the grace and peace of the Lord (v. 3) and to keep their focus not on persuasive men but on the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. Jesus has delivered us from our sins and this present evil age (v. 4). Now, though we live in an age of wrong-belief and lies, Jesus has removed us from it. He has delivered us into the age to come, the new world of the Kingdom, which is coming on earth as it is in heaven as a foreshadowing and foretaste of the new heavens and new earth.

We who, like the Galatians, have believed in Jesus are called to this Kingdom and to the glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12); and we are thus to live as people whose priorities, values, agendas, and daily lives are determined not by this present evil age, but by the new age of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit which is here now and is coming. Thus, full grace and perfect peace will be ours, and God will be truly glorified in our works (vv. 3, 5).

The Galatians were in danger of losing sight of this and lapsing back into an effort to gain salvation

by their works. Paul sought to intercept them in their waywardness and lead them back to the Jesus Path of grace, faith, and good works of love. His letter to the Galatians offers a short course on God's great salvation.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Man's attempt at keeping the law has been an abject failure from the very beginning—Adam and Eve being the first. “She took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3.6).

They did the very thing they had been told not to do (Gen. 2.16, 17). A rebellious response.

Then we have the example of the rescued-from-bondage Israelites, who, while waiting a bit for their leader Moses to return from receiving the Ten Commandments—the quintessential Law—demanded of Aaron the priest, Moses' brother, that he make them gods “that shall go before us” (Ex. 32.1). A treasonous request.

And now, the Galatian church, after having started out well, was turning from their salvation by faith alone, back to the impossible salvation by works. A ridiculous removal from sanity.

Paul, full of grace and mercy, spelled out the work of Jesus, to remind them of the true way of salvation:

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who gave Himself for our sins,
that He might deliver us from this present evil age,
according to the will of our God and Father,
to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1.3-5).

“...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,
according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us...” (Eph. 1.6-8).

God says, “For I know their works and their thoughts” (Is. 66.18).

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,
and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6.5).

This is exactly why we need a Savior. We could not, can not, will not be able to work our way into heaven.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5.8).

So, in the book to the Galatian churches, “Paul sought to intercept them in their waywardness and lead them back to the Jesus Path of grace, faith, and good works of love.” He seeks the same for us.

O God, give us hearts to live in the realism of your righteous reign and choice for our means to salvation.

Reflection

1. Salvation is not *by* good works but *unto* them. Explain.

2. How does Paul's love for the Galatians, who were drifting from true faith, instruct us?
3. To whom will you minister unto grace and peace today?

He likewise declares the design of our redemption to be, that Christ, by his death, might purchase us to be his own property. This takes place when we are separated from the world; for so long as we are of the world, we do not belong to Christ. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Galatians 1.4*

Pray Psalm 46.4-11.

Thank the Lord for delivering you to Himself through Jesus. Pray that He will guide you step-by-step into His good and perfect will for this day.

Psalm 46.4-11

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

God's everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat'ning the earth with sore distress.

Nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.

God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God's Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth,
shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside.

Them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the Lord and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail.

Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!

God is our stronghold, never to fail: thus may our hope and joy increase!

2 A Different Gospel?

Opening Prayer: Psalm 87.1, 2

His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God!

Sing Psalm 87.1, 2

(St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

Upon the holy mountains rest the footings of the Lord,
Who loves of Israel's flock the best the keepers of His Word.

Read Galatians 1.1-9; meditate on verses 6-9.

Preparation

1. To what were the Galatians beginning to turn?
2. What did Paul say about those who preach “another gospel”?

Meditation

As was often the case, shortly after Paul moved along from the Galatian churches false teachers arrived, corrupting his teaching and confusing the followers of Christ. Among the Galatians it was the Judaizers who came preaching “another gospel”. They taught that, yes, it was important to believe in Jesus and be baptized and all that. But one also had to be circumcised to be a true Christian, or so the Judaizers claimed.

A council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) had already rejected this teaching and clarified the Church's teaching on the Gospel and what it requires. But that didn't stop the Judaizers. Their message troubled the Gentile believers among the Galatians, as we can perhaps imagine. Nevertheless, they were almost persuading them of the necessity of circumcision.

Paul would cut these false teachers no slack. Here he described their teaching as “a different gospel” and warned the Galatians against turning to “any other gospel...than what you have received”. Those who pervert, distort, and corrupt the Gospel were to be “accursed” and rejected.

The apostles are the “last word” on the Gospel. All claims and teaching about the Gospel must be measured against their instruction. It doesn't matter if the preacher or teacher you're listening to is successful in gathering large crowds, or if his eloquence or charisma leaves you transfixed, or whether he is a prolific publisher of books, or even if he is an angel from heaven. If he does not preach the Gospel Paul preached, let him be accursed.

That's stern and serious language. But perverting the Gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom is a serious transgression. Stay in the Word of God. Let Scripture teach you the Gospel and proclaim it to you

day by day. This is the best way to keep from being drawn away to another gospel, which is not the Gospel at all.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar” (Prov. 30.5, 6).

Circumcision is not the only way to fall off the true Gospel path. Think: health and wealth, all about grace, whatever feels good, happy-clappy ban unhappy, and a plethora of other deviations to the Truth.

Jesus said, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14.6).

There is no room in that statement for another word, thought, suggestion, or idea. No addendum necessary.

Only Jesus, and to know Him, is the long and the short of it: “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 21.6), as it were.

“Therefore behold, I AM against the prophets,’ says the LORD...‘for you have perverted the words of the living God” (Jer. 23.30, 36).

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3.11). Only Jesus—His death and resurrection—is needed for the message of the Gospel.

Jesus did teach about the seeds of the Gospel falling on a variety of spots: some fell by the wayside, some on stony places, some in spots so shallow and arid that it was scorched and withered, and some fell on good soil. (Matt. 13.1-23; Mk. 4.1-20; Lk. 8.1-15).

Some people try to rewrite the story to fit the circumstances, whereby they fall desperately short of the truth. If the Galatians’ lives were not living up to the Gospel’s expectations, well then, just change the requirements. Make it more about activities and less about heart change. If some of the seeds that Paul sowed fell on lazy sod, could it all be made right by surgical procedures or incantations?

“I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down” (Prov. 24.30, 31).

“Why is there in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom, since he has no heart for it?” (Prov. 17.16).

The true Gospel is firmed up in a heart and life by the study of God’s Word, and prayer. But we must have a heart for it. We cannot be lazy about our sanctification (Phil. 2.12).

Otherwise, we are easy targets of the enemy by not daily seeking God’s guidance and Spirit. It is when we are sailing rudderless that we are easily blown off course and start to believe things that aren’t right. Paul finds us questionable persons... “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel...” (Gal. 1.6).

So, “Stay in the Word of God. Let Scripture teach you the Gospel and proclaim it to you day by day.”

If we do, we will never fall for a different gospel.

Reflection

1. Do you have a soul friend or a prayer partner? How could having one help you continue faithful along the Jesus Path?
2. Some people might say concerning the Gospel, “Yes, believe in Jesus, but also believe in this or that doctrine, if you want to be saved.” What’s wrong with this?
3. How do you guard yourself against false teachings that waft across your path from time to time?

By using the present tense, ("ye are removed") he appears to say that they were only in the act of failing. As if he had said, "I do not yet say that ye have been removed; for then it would be more difficult to return to the right path. But now, at the critical moment, do not advance a single step, but instantly retreat." John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Galatians 1.6

Closing Prayer: Psalm 87.3-7

Give praise and thanks to Jesus, that He is building His Church and advancing His Kingdom, and that no false gospel will keep Him from fulfilling His agenda.

Sing Psalm 87.3-7

(St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

For glorious things are spoken of the City of our God;
the nations know His matchless love wher'er His feet have trod.

From south and north, from east and west they come, called by His grace;
thus Zion stands, full strong and blessed, before the Savior's face.

The Lord will count and tally all in Jesus born again;
then let them sing, who on Him call, “We joy in God, Amen!”

3 Persuading God

Pray Psalm 119.41, 42.

Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD—
Your salvation according to Your word.
So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me,
For I trust in Your word.

Sing Psalm 119.41, 42

(Dix: [For the Beauty of the Earth](#))

Let Your mercies come to me, Your salvation by Your Word.
From reproaches set me free, for I trust in You, O LORD.
Let my life an answer be for those who may question me.

Read Galatians 1.1-10; meditate on verse 10.

Preparation

1. Whom was Paul trying to please?
2. Whom did he hope to persuade?

Meditation

This seems like a strange verb to use in relation to God and the Gospel.

Paul is saying that, in his work as an apostle of God (v. 1) and his ministry of the Word and Gospel of God (vv. 6, 7, 11, 12), his desire was to persuade God, not men. If he were trying to persuade men, then he would couch his preaching and teaching in language and according to demands to which they could readily accede.

In the case of the Galatians, he would have tried to convince them to receive the Gospel by saying, in essence, that they could remain Jews and retain all their familiar and comfortable religious practices, simply adding Jesus to the formula, but leaving nothing behind. He would not have challenged their holding to the elementary principles and practices of their Greek, Roman, and pagan culture, or the rites and protocols of their Jewish faith (4.8-11). All they would have had to do would have been to fit Jesus in and they would be fine.

But Paul was not trying to persuade men. He was trying to persuade God. But of what? Of the genuineness and faithfulness of his ministry, for one, since he would not accommodate his message to the preferences of men. But even more, like the suppliants throughout the psalter who sought to get God to act in one way or another by reminding Him of His promises, Paul was hoping to persuade God to act according to His Word and promises, and to pour out the blessings of His Spirit on his ministry.

This gets at the question of Paul's orientation and motive in ministry. He did everything only to please God. He sought only to see God do the things He had promised when the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed. Unless God is persuaded that our preaching and teaching are true, according

to His Word, He will not be moved to bless our work, for His way of working is always according to what He has declared or promised.

Paul sought to persuade God to do His work among the Galatians, whereas the false preachers were merely trying to convince men to receive their teaching and thus become their disciples and, incidentally, supporters.

Whom are we trying to persuade?

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Do we now seek to persuade people?

Do we seek to please people?

Because as Paul stated, If we are people-pleasers then we would still be enslaved to that way of life and thinking—we would definitely not be persuading God of our seriousness to be bondservants of Christ (Gal. 1.10).

However, if our one goal in life is to please God, to: love Him supremely and live for Him single-mindedly, then we can assuredly say with Paul, that we too are “persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8.38). And nothing will be able to push us off the Jesus Path that we so long to traverse.

For we are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith”” (Rom. 1.16, 17). We will not be diverted by any other means to salvation, “which is not another” (Gal. 1.7) means, but merely a big whopping lie from the father of lies (Jn. 8.44).

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4.12). Or can be saved. No other way (Jn. 14.6).

Although circumcision is a painful procedure for an older person, and no doubt for infants as well, it is a matter that is run and done. An out-patient procedure with a bit of recovery. But hey, once it’s done, it’s done. So much easier than having to daily keep God’s Law and live for Him only. Or as Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9.23). Or that pesky notion that we must keep His commandments to prove our love for Him (Jn. 14.15; 15.14).

But in this love for Him, we persuade Him of our wholehearted desire to serve Him. If we have wandered, He welcomes us back. If we have been trying to please ourselves or other people, He forgives when we ask.

As the prophet Samuel said to God’s disobedient people: “Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name’s sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people” (1 Sam. 12.20-22).

“Seek the LORD and live” (Amos 5.6); and seek to persuade Him “of the genuineness and faithfulness” of your work in the Kingdom for Him and for His glory. Circumcision, and/or any other gewgaw of faux faith, are not the means to that end.

Reflection

1. Prayer is a way we try to persuade God. Explain.
2. What would you like to persuade God to do in you, for you, or with you today?
3. What can you do to keep from adding other requirements to the Gospel of grace?

The essential point is that we preach God, not people. All human beings are liars, and so whatever they make up in their own mind is uncertain, dubious and unstable. In his own being, God is eternal, and so he always stays the same and does not change... Rudolph Gwalther (1519-1586), *Sermons on Galatians*

Pray Psalm 119.43-48.

Thank God for His Word. Plead with His Spirit to take you deeper into the Scriptures and to equip you for every good work that is before you today. Commit yourself to growing in the Word of God and the power of His grace.

Sing Psalm 119.43-48

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

Let my words be Your words, LORD; strengthen me to keep Your Law.
All my hope is in Your Word, and I seek Your precepts all.
I will ever keep Your Word, for I trust in You, O LORD!

LORD, take not Your Word from me, for I trust it day by day.
I will walk in liberty as Your precepts I obey.
I shall keep Your truth, O LORD, for I hope in all Your Word.

I will speak Your Word to kings, and I will not be ashamed.
In Your Word my glad heart sings, as Your truth I have proclaimed.
In Your Law will I delight, which I love with all my might.

To Your Law I lift my hands to embrace and hold it dear.
In Your truth my glad heart stands, knowing You are ever near.
I will meditate, O LORD, on Your statutes and Your Word.

4 The Gospel of God

Pray Psalm 71.23, 24, 3

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You,
And my soul, which You have redeemed.
My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long;
For they are confounded,
For they are brought to shame
Who seek my hurt...
Be my strong refuge,
To which I may resort continually;
You have given the commandment to save me,
For You *are* my rock and my fortress.

Sing Psalm 71.23, 24, 3.

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; LORD, humble all who do me wrong.
Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read Galatians 1.1-12; meditate on verses 11, 12.

Preparation

1. What did Paul make known to the Galatians?
2. How did he learn this?

Meditation

Paul's Gospel was pure gold, without any human accretions. This is what he declared when he was among the Galatians, and to this he called them again to hold fast in this brief epistle. He learned this Gospel from no man. The Lord Jesus saw fit, over an extended period, to teach Paul Himself, thus validating his apostolic office and bringing to completion the excellent instruction he had for so long received at the feet of Gamaliel.

Even a cursory glance through Paul's epistles will reveal that the Gospel Jesus taught him is heavily dependent on the Old Testament. Those pastors who teach that we don't need the Old Testament, or that the Old Testament is somehow not as important as the New Testament, are out of sync with Jesus and Paul. You should not listen to them.

Jesus revealed the Gospel to Paul by revealing Himself throughout the Old Testament (Acts 20.27; 28.23-31). Paul described the Gospel as "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 12). We can understand that phrase in a couple of ways. First, the revelation of the Gospel *came from* Jesus Christ. It is His Gospel and He taught it to Paul without the intervention of any human assistance.

But second, the Gospel is the revelation *about* Jesus Christ. He is the centerpiece of the Gospel, not any works or particular church or manifestation of ecstatic gifts or any other thing. The Gospel is Jesus. Jesus is the Good News because He brings the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy to the world through His life, death, resurrection, and reign. The Gospel is not Jesus plus something else. The Gospel is Jesus, and Jesus is the Good News.

That should simplify the work of evangelizing our lost friends and neighbors.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul is conveying to us important truths about the power of the Word of God.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4.12).

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1.14).

Jesus imparted the Gospel to Paul in His own special way: as Paul said, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15.8). Paul also had a direct encounter with Jesus as he traveled to Damascus to persecute God’s children (Acts 9.1-6). Paul also knew the Old Testament, having studied with Gamaliel. But mainly he was taught the Gospel by the Holy Spirit through His Word—the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1.12).

This Word is available to us. We can be taught in the very same way. We can gain knowledge, and wisdom, and power for living by this very same means (2 Tim. 1.7). In fact, we not only *can be* taught, but it is also incumbent upon us *to be* taught the Word, sitting at the feet of our dear Savior, Jesus—reading, studying, and meditating upon this Word in our Bibles, and hearing the Holy Spirit teach us (Jn. 16.13, 14).

Corporate worship should not be an evangelistic tent meeting, nor should it be a time to be schooled in the finer things of doctrine. Worship is our time to come together with other believers to extol God for His greatness, praise Him for His forgiveness and love, bask in His grace and mercy, sing songs of praise to His glorious Name for His creation, power, and might. Give glory only to Him for His majestic reign in heaven and on earth, and to persuade Him of our diligent hearts, desirous of living for His honor and glory. Worship is a time to tithe and a time to take communion—in remembrance of Jesus’ suffering on the cross and His miraculous rising from the dead.

Learning about the Word, studying the Word, and working out our own salvation in fear and trembling is our job (2 Tim. 2.15; Phil. 2.12, 13). Just like Paul: truth received “not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1.11, 12).

Certainly, a helpful word shared from the pulpit is uplifting; and words of encouragement and wisdom shared by fellow believers are a joy, no doubt. But the serious work of knowing God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; and meeting with Him, in prayer and fellowship, while reading His Word is the truest way to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18). So that we should no longer be children, or behave as such, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all

things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4.14-16).

The Gospel of God is right at our fingertips; we need only open it, and dive in, to learn all the Good News shared within.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 103.1-5).

Good News straight from His heart to yours.

Reflection

1. What have you been learning about Jesus lately during your time in His Word?
2. Jesus said that all Scripture was about Him (Jn. 5.39). Do you find this to be true? Explain.
3. Whom will you encourage with the Good News of Jesus today?

When Paul says that his gospel is not manmade he does not mean that it is more than human, since that is obvious and the false apostles also claimed that their gospel was divine. What he is getting at is that he did not learn it from other people . . . but from a direct revelation that came to him from Jesus Christ. Martin Luther (1483-1546), Lectures on Galatians

Pray Psalm 71.3, 12-18

Pray that you will know the Lord’s Presence throughout this day, guiding, directing, teaching, and empowering you in all your walk with and work for Jesus.

Sing Psalm 71.12-18, 3.

(Solid Rock: [My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less](#))

O God be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!
Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.
Refrain, v. 3

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.
Refrain

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.
Forsake me not when I am old, ‘til I Your mercies all have told!
Refrain

5 Paul's Conversion and Calling

Opening Prayer: Psalm 18.1-3

I will love You, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.

Sing Psalm 18.1-3.

(St. Columba: *How Sweet and Anful*)

I love You, LORD, my Strength, my Rock, my Savior and my Fort;
my God, my ever-shelt'ring Rock, You shield my trembling heart.

My Stronghold, LORD, my Saving Horn, I call to You with praise!
From those who Your salvation scorn You save us all our days.

Read Galatians 1.1-18; meditate on verses 13-18.

Preparation

1. What was Paul's "former conduct"?
2. What happened to change that?

Meditation

Here Paul takes a step back to remind the Galatians that grace had been the operative power in his life from the beginning of his faith in Jesus.

Everybody knew what Paul was like before he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. He fiercely and cruelly opposed the faith of Jesus out of zeal for the traditions of his forebears and hunger for the approval of his superiors. But the grace of God worked powerfully in Paul, first to bring him to faith in Jesus (v. 15) and then to equip him with deeper understanding of the Good News he had come to know.

God sent Paul into Arabia for an extended season of deprivation and rebuilding. How we would love to know more about that time! But Paul tells us only that Arabia was where the Lord prepared him for his life and ministry. The goal of this time was that God might "reveal His Son" in Paul, as He had on the Damascus Road, that both in his life and words people might know convincing proof that Jesus was alive, just as Paul proclaimed.

Paul sought no man's approval in those early days with Jesus. He didn't ask his superiors and teachers if this could be so; and he didn't turn to the apostles in Jerusalem (vv. 15, 16). He got away from everything familiar and comfortable because that's what he needed to do to concentrate on knowing Jesus.

Get with Jesus—alone, in an undisturbed place. He wants to show you more of Himself, more clearly, consistently, and convincingly, so that you reveal Him to the people in your world. This kind of transformation comes only by being in the Lord’s Presence, in prayer and in His Word.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Although the Gospel is wondrously simple to explain and accept, the full Gospel is more complex. Yes, the beauty of God’s forgiveness, grace, and mercy towards His enemies is astonishing, and the nature of all that being given to us as a gift is beyond comprehension. Yes, yes, and yes.

But the hard work of sanctification is often overlooked and downplayed. For we fear that if we explain that salvation might entail work—things other than fun and games, joy and bliss, financial security, health and happiness and wealth—then people might not be so eager and willing to sign up for it. And then we, like the prophets, disciples, and apostles of old, might not see abundant responses to our evangelistic efforts and we might even have to suffer a tad for our faith. Heaven forbid!

A full-on walk with the Lord involves more study, work, and preparation than most are led to believe. It is an ongoing, lifelong process whereby we are becoming more like Jesus every day. Sanctification does not just happen—it is accomplished by conscientious, daily, dedicated time in God’s Word and in prayer.

Paul, who was confident enough of his own growth that he could say “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1), did not become that person overnight; nor did he become sanctified by rubbing shoulders with lots of Christian folks or conferring with great Christian minds. No, as he points out to his readers, “I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me...[but] after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter...” (Gal. 1.16-18).

We might be tempted to think that Paul needed this “time out” because of his destructive past; but as he said, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.23). All. We all share the same past of being displeasing to God and rejecting the glorious gift of His Son. “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51.4, 5).

Nowadays, the *modus operandi* is:

1. Get saved.
2. Start talking.

And although we all are told to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience...” (1 Pet. 3.15, 16), there is something to be said for taking time out to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3.18).

Peter encouraged people to do this, to dig deep and study hard, because in the Scriptures, and he singled out Paul’s epistles, “some things [are] hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3.15, 16). Peter warned them, “since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own

steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked..." (2 Pet. 3.17).

Our time of early sanctification can be a both/and time of growth in the Lord and talking about Jesus, but heavy on the getting to know Him. And then throughout the rest of our lives, being sanctified should always be heavy on the learning Jesus part. When we love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, the very essence of Jesus should be oozing from every part of our lives. Jesus will be all in all. And He cannot be hidden within our being—even if we tried.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5.14-16).

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1.5). There is nothing wrong with taking time to carefully fulfill this calling.

Reflection

1. Why must we take the time to invest in our own growth in the Lord?
2. How would you counsel a new believer to prepare for a lifetime of sanctification?
3. How can believers encourage one another in the work of growing into Jesus? Whom will you encourage today?

All who are savingly converted, are called by the grace of God; their conversion is wrought by his power and grace working in them. It will but little avail us to have Christ revealed to us, if he is not also revealed in us. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Galatians 1.15-24

Pray Psalm 18.25-36.

Give thanks and praise to God for your salvation and for the calling He has issued you. Call on Him for wisdom, grace, and strength to fulfill your calling today.

Sing Psalm 18.25, 26, 29-36.

(I Am Thine: [*I Am Thine, O Lord*](#))

You are kind, O LORD, to the kind at heart; with the blameless You are pure.
To the pure of heart You Your grace impart, to the crooked You are sure.

Refrain v. 49

I will thank You, thank You gracious LORD, I will lift Your Name in praise
'til the nations hear Your saving Word and amend their sinful ways.

In Your strength, O LORD, I can leap a wall, I can stand against the sword.
For Your way is pure, You're a shield to all who depend upon Your Word.

Refrain

Who is God but You, there's no other Stone where we find the strength to stand.
Let my hands and feet be for You alone as I walk in Your commands.

Refrain

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You have saved me, LORD, and Your gentleness holds me up and makes me strong.
You enlarge my steps as You guide and bless and preserve me all life long.

Refrain

6 Rumors of Glory

Opening Prayer: Psalm 110.1-3

The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.

Sing Psalm 110.1-3

(Aurelia: [The Church's One Foundation](#))

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the LORD says to my Lord,
“until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”
The LORD sends strength from Zion: “Rule all Your enemies.”
While those who Him rely on go forth their LORD to please.

Read Galatians 1.1-24; meditate on verses 18-24.

Preparation

1. Whom did Paul meet with in Jerusalem?
2. How did the churches of Judea respond to the report of Paul's conversion?

Meditation

We could learn a lesson here (see yesterday's *Treasure* section to prepare). For three years the believers in Judea had heard about Saul's conversion to Christ. Somewhere toward the end of that time, his initial training in Jesus' school completed, Paul went to Jerusalem to submit to the Church leaders there.

Peter and James received him and, probably, examined the genuineness of his faith. I can only believe they wept tears of joy at what God had done in Saul. Word continued to spread among the churches in Judea: “He's been converted!” “He's in Jerusalem right now!” “Peter and James have confirmed him!” Praise and thanks rose to God throughout the region as the people realized how great His grace is, that the one who formerly persecuted them now was preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. “Praise the Lord! Praise Jesus!”

But notice the wisdom of God in Peter and James: No big rallies, showing off the great-persecutor-turned-preacher-of-Jesus. No immediately giving Saul some prominent place of leadership alongside Peter and James. No booking him to speak in the local churches. No. None of the kind of thing we typically do. He didn't want it and they wouldn't do it. Back Saul went to his hometown *for fourteen more years!* (Gal. 2.1)

In the early church, it took a while to become a church member. Yes, you began with a profession of faith. But then you would be assigned a shepherd to help you bring your life in order behind that confession, so that how you lived began to match up with what you professed. After some months, even a year or more, your shepherd would present you before your house church, who would have witnessed your progress as you lived and worshiped among them; you would give your testimony, and then you would be received as a member of the Body of Christ. The process culminated in your being baptized and taking the Lord's Supper.

Why don't we do the kinds of things they did? And why *do* we do things they wouldn't have?

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Why don't we do what they did? And why do we do things that the early church wouldn't have done?

Could it be that we "think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think?" (Rom. 12.3).

Or could it be that "there is no fear of God before [our] eyes"? (Ps. 36.1; 55.19; Rom. 3.18).

Neither choice is a good one, and I can't think of another feasible reason to follow our own "good" ideas as opposed to His.

Taking on the Name of Christ is a monumental decision, worthy of great care and dedication.

We are warned from the get-go not to take it on lightly: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20.7).

Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9.62).

Paul, the former persecutor of Christians, now our diligent, hard-working, brother in the faith, the one for whom we glorify God because He is in him (Gal. 1.24); the one God called through His grace to reveal His Son in (Gal. 1.16), this Paul, said to us and other believers past: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12.1, 2). And there is nothing simple or easy about that assignment. That will take all the effort we have, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish.

And for all that, we should not expect nor want, "big rallies", fame, fortune, popularity, or a spot on "Christian" radio or TV.

Jesus told the disciples this story when they requested of Him to "Increase our faith": "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?"

Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do" (Lk. 17.7-10). His way.

And truly, when we are striving to be like Jesus, to walk on His path (Ps. 1), in His way (Matt. 22.37-

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40; Jn. 14.15, 15.14) according to His commands (Ex. 20.1-17), others will glorify God because of the Jesus that is in us. Knowing full well, that we too, have been called of God through His grace to have His Son revealed in us (Gal. 1.15, 16). But let's do it His way and not ours.

Reflection

1. What does it mean for God to reveal Jesus in you? How does that work?
2. What would you say to a new believer about what to expect in the life of faith? How to make the most of it?
3. How can we know when or whether there is anything in our lives which is not what the Lord wants there? What should we do then?

See here too how exactly he follows the principle of humility. For he says not "they were amazed at me," "they praised me" or "they were astonished," but he has shown that all was of grace by saying "they glorified God in me." John Chrysostom (344-407), Homily on Galatians 1.24

Closing Prayer: Psalm 110.3-7

Praise Jesus for His excellence, His greatness, and His victory over sin and the devil. Thank and praise Him for saving enemies of Jesus like Paul and you and me.

Sing Psalm 110.3-7

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

Your people in Your power, arrayed in holiness,
like dew of morning's hour shall serve like youth refreshed.
The LORD has sworn and never will He His promise check:
"You are a priest forever after Melchizedek."

The Lord is at Your right hand to execute His wrath,
and judge all kings and all lands—doomed sinners in His path.
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed.

7 The Cure for Turning Away

Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.4-6

Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.4-6

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise To God Who Reigns Above*](#))

I called to God, “O LORD, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The LORD is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies—
I rest in Him forever!

Read Galatians 1.1-24; meditate on verses 6, 7, 22-24.

Preparation

1. Why were the Galatians turning away from the Gospel?
2. How did the Judean churches respond to Paul’s preaching?

Meditation

Here’s the long and short of it: If you (or your church) should turn away from the Gospel of the Kingdom to add something to that Gospel or to refocus it on anything or anyone other than Christ, know for certain that you will not glorify God. You will only glorify yourself or some other human being or some form of teaching.

The churches in Judea only heard about Paul’s preaching. They hadn’t actually heard him preach. They’d only heard the *reports* that he was preaching Jesus. And their response was to glorify God.

The Galatians, meanwhile, *had* heard Paul preach. They *had* listened to his teaching. But he was gone now, and they were beginning to drift toward “another gospel” than the one Paul preached. He warned them they would only be glorifying something or someone other than what God approved.

So, how to rescue them from their drift? Go back to the same Gospel he preached before and preach it all over again. The cure for drifting from the truth is more truth. The antidote for turning away from Jesus is to turn back to Him. Conviction, confession, repentance, return. Galatians in a nutshell.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Well, bless your heart! Aren’t you doing a good job.” If you are from the South, you are in the know, that that is really a back-handed compliment. You may as well say, “That is the worst job ever, and I cannot for the life of me figure out why you have done that. But bless your heart,

anyway.” The bless your heart is a requirement regardless.

Paul is sort of going the southern route in his statement here: “I marvel that you are turning away so quickly. Bless your heart.”

Imagine the other synonyms he could’ve used: I gape and stare, I gaze and goggle with wonder; I’m awed, feel surprise, and stand in awe of your sinful stupidity.

Why are you turning away from the best thing that has ever happened to and for you?

“I am amazed that you are turning away so soon from God who, in His love and mercy, invited you to share the eternal life He gives through Christ; you are already following a different ‘way to heaven,’ which really doesn’t go to heaven at all. For there is no other way than the one we showed you; you are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ” (Gal. 1.6, 7 TLB).

Do we want Paul to say to us, “I marvel at you”?

“I’m agape and amazed that you would deviate from the Jesus Path.”

Or do we long to hear from our Savior, “Well done, good and faithful servant”? (Matt. 25.21, 23)

The best way to hear the latter, and not the former, comes from Wisdom, regarding the Word of God:

“Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways.

Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it.

Blessed is the man who listens to me,

Watching daily at my gates,

Waiting at the posts of my doors.

For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD;

but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;

all those who hate me love death” (Prov. 8.32-36).

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

but his delight is in the law of the LORD,

and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1.1, 2).

Paul was a marvel in all the right ways.

Others gazed and goggled with wonder at him, but for the right reason.

They glorified God in him. Without even having to bless his heart.

Reflection

1. How could you know when you might be drifting away from the Lord? What should you do then?
2. How can believers hold one another accountable in love for staying close to the Lord and the Gospel?
3. What can you do to keep your church from drifting?

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Paul says that the churches of Judea gave glory to God for what they had heard, and this was a rebuke to those of Galatia, who did not do the same even though they had seen the power of God at work in him. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Galatians

Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19

Rejoice in the Good News of Jesus, that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Commit yourself afresh to following only Jesus.

Sing Psalm 116.7-19

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))

Full well the LORD has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the LORD for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart—make me Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your Presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What was the problem in the churches in Galatia? Does that problem exist in churches today? Explain.
2. How did Paul begin his response to this problem? Why did he begin here?
3. What aspects of Paul's personal example did he use to remind the Galatians of what they were losing?
4. How did Paul try to show the Galatians that the Gospel is all about grace, not works?
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from Galatians 1.

For Prayer:

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