



*November 24, 2024*

*“We Are Saved Because...”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

*News:*

NO Wednesday Classes this week – Happy Thanksgiving

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**Galatians 1:6&7a** ~ <sup>6</sup>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel, <sup>7a</sup>which is not just another account...

This is an extreme...

Paul nearly always starts with praise for the churches and thanksgiving to God for them...

They have replaced the Gospel of Grace with their own personal performance.

This is a Salvific issue.

The “Him who called you,” is God the Father.

Christianity is an all or nothing proposition and reality.

The Judaizer’s position made a certain amount of sense...

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

The problem wasn't Judaism the problem was, and is, and always will be, legalism.

Pride is precisely why legalism exists.

Back then was the requirement to "keep the Law of Moses."

Today it is...

Salvation, Sanctification, Glorification is entire Salvation.

From God's perspective...

Now, from your perspective, it's a very different story.

Were you Saved and filled with the Holy Spirit when you...?

According to the Bible, who chooses whom? Why? (Ephesians 2:8&9, I Corinthians 1:29–31), even the faith that you have that enables you to accept the free Gift of God is itself a free Gift of God!

1) He gave it all to you and you did not and cannot earn any of it.

2) There is nothing in you that deserves any of it.

The consequences of grasping that concept can only result in a humble, grateful, acceptance of His Love and Forgiveness and Fellowship. A full acceptance, of God's full acceptance, based upon His character and work, not on mine.

We are commanded to Love unconditionally...

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Last week we dug into the greeting section of Paul's Letter to the churches in and around Galatia. You'll remember that shortly after establishing those churches and appointing Elders for each one, Paul and Barnabas returned to their sending church in Syrian Antioch.

Once there Paul learned that Judaizers had followed the course of his missionary journey and had successfully convinced many, if not all, of the new Galatian Christians that they needed to be circumcised and strictly adhere to Jewish Law and practice in order to be Christians.

Paul wrote them this Letter in response. He started it off by declaring that he, unlike the Judaizers, was an Apostle, not sent by, nor taught by, human beings, but rather sent by and taught by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ... personally.

Paul then went into a very brief doxology giving honor and glory to God that is, nonetheless, quite nuanced and profound.

In a handful of words, he subtly declared that Jesus and God the Father are One. He reaffirmed that Jesus

was the Messiah or Christ, that the Father Resurrected Jesus from the dead proving that Almighty God fully approved of Jesus Himself, fully endorsed His earthly ministry, and fully accepted His substitutionary sacrifice.

Further, Paul reiterated that Jesus, as God, handed Himself over to His horrific fate for the purpose of providing rescue for us from this evil age, because that is precisely what our God and Father desired, which is to His eternal glory! Amen.

Galatians 1:6&7a, 6I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel, 7which is not just another account...

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him.” This is an extreme rebuke. How ever bluntly offensive you think Paul was with this opening; I promise you that it is far worse in Greek. It would be difficult to come up with a more dramatically shocking way to begin a letter than this. It’s difficult to capture the forcefulness of Paul’s reprimand in English without using three times the words.

Paul wasted no time getting directly to the point, which in itself shows the seriousness of the issue, but then he essentially exclaimed, “What in the world is going on?!?!” He was stunned, shocked, and completely dumbfounded by their traitorous rejection and abandonment of God the Father Who had hand-selected them to be His Own Children through the Grace found in Christ. Paul was flabbergasted.

Here's an interesting fact to help drive home the unusual seriousness of this opening. The Apostle Paul wrote 13 Letters over a roughly 16-year span between about 48 and 64 A.D. Writings that we have now possessed for well over 19 centuries as Books of the Bible. In addition, Paul was, at the very least the Apostolic authority behind both the Book of Hebrews and the Gospel of Luke.

We know that Paul used to call the Gospel of Luke, “my Gospel,” according to the early church historian Eusebius. Beyond that, Paul also had a significant influence on Mark even though Mark wrote under the Apostolic authority of Peter.

In none of those Bible Books do we ever see anything like this, where the author so quickly and vigorously

launches into a rebuke of the recipients. In nearly every other case, even when addressing very crazy, sinful, and blasphemous behavior, Paul starts with a conciliatory note, with praise for the churches and thanksgiving to God for them... not here – not by a long shot.

Paul began the body of his Letter with such an aggressive reprimand and with such dramatic black or white language that it shocks the sensibilities of many modern people, once they realize just how in-your-face it is. For Paul there was not only no time for pleasantries, there was no justification for them either.

Paul cannot give thanks to God for hundreds or even thousands of Christians who have just replaced the Gospel of Grace with their own personal performance.

As far as Paul and God were concerned, the Galatians had abandoned Grace and thereby they had deserted God the Father and His Holy Family. Further, they had treaded underfoot the Sacrifice of the Father in handing over His One and Only and they had repudiated, they had cheapened, and they had diminished the completed work of Christ Jesus on their behalf.

Now, if that seems extreme; it is! Nothing could be more deadly serious because what was, and still is, at stake here, is the very meaning of Christ, of Salvation and of Christianity itself. This is a Salvific issue, meaning that Salvation itself is at stake.

For 2,000 years Christians have haggled over the fine points of Theology and Doctrine and in nearly all of those divisive cases, where churches and denominations have split, where Christians have been pitted against each other and where, in some cases, Christians have even burned other Christians at the stake... They were not Salvific issues. This one actually is Salvific.

So, it was not merely another way to do Christianity, like the difference between the Baptists and the Presbyterians or the Lutherans and us... This was the difference between God's provision and Satan's deception.

Paul was not saying that the Galatians had abandoned him and his ministry work among them, as the so-called Complete Jerusalem Bible so obviously gets wrong.

The key to grasping that point is the “Him who called you,” bit. Always in Paul, the One calling is God the Father. You can clearly see that a little later in this chapter, in verse 15&16, where Paul talks about, He who “called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me...” The NASB gets it right by capitalizing the word “Him.”

So, Paul was saying, that the Galatians had rejected God the Father by throwing His incomparable Gift in the mud at His feet. “Here, God, I don’t need this, I can do it on my own.”

Again, that’s extreme, and probably none of the Galatians, or even the Judaizers themselves, saw it that way. Paul was declaring that Christianity was an all or nothing proposition and reality.

You cannot have 99.999% Grace and 0.001% your performance, your good looks, good intentions, good deeds, good whatever, and be a God-honoring Christian. It is 100% Grace, or it is a false Gospel spawning a false Christianity.

Let’s get down to specifics... What was the problem back then, specifically? Specifically, it was the



requirement to “keep the Law of Moses” including immediate male circumcision (Acts 15:5, etc.).

Like I said before, it made a certain amount of sense. Almighty God, the Father of the Jews, had given them the 613 Laws, which prominently featured circumcision, He then promised to send them a Messiah Who would Save them, meaning that they would then be enabled to obey God from their heart.

It probably seemed obvious to the staunch, already extremely legalistic, Jews that they would strive to be Super-Jews now that the Messiah had done His thing. Further, it would seem intuitive that God’s Jewish Messiah would want His disciples to be holy and set apart from this evil age. Of course, Jesus would require Christians to be better Jews than those Jews were able to be before believing in Him.

Finally, add to the mix that there were already those among the Judaizers who thought that the entire reason that Jesus hadn’t yet returned was because His Followers were not following the Law well enough. Add a bunch of Lawless Gentiles to the mix and Jesus would never return!

The problem wasn't Judaism the problem was, and is, and always will be, legalism. Legalism is the idea of adding anything to the Gift of Grace. Anything that you or I add to Grace changes it from a gift to a transaction. By factual reality it diminishes the Gift and therefore the Gift-giver and it elevates the person who added something to it. They are less indebted.

My analogy is you and a friend go to dinner and your friend happily picks up the check, wanting to bless you with that gift, and then you insist on paying the tip. Your friend paid \$100, and you paid \$20. That extra \$20 wouldn't have made much difference to your friend, but by you adding that to the gift, it diminished the gift, and it diminished the gesture and the generosity of your friend. It robbed them of being able to give you what they wanted to give you.

And for what reason? Let's be perfectly honest about it, there is only one reason that you chip in, and it isn't because you think your friend can afford to spend \$100 but can't afford \$120. The reason you eagerly participate in the cost of dinner by paying the tip is pride.

You don't want your friend to give you a completely free, no strings attached gift. You don't want to be totally beholden to them.

Pride is precisely why legalism has flourished as long as human beings have existed and why it is the default setting for all religious endeavors created by man. We want to feel good about ourselves and so whenever we are blessed in some way, we have an innate need to justify that.

We will work to repay, or to earn, or we will go the other direction and conclude that we deserve the blessing because life has been unjustly unfair to us or because we are special. That is the basis of legalistic thinking and practice.

Legalism for us is anything that mitigates and thereby diminishes the completed work of Christ. Back then it was, the requirement to "keep the Law of Moses" including immediate male circumcision to either be Saved, to be Sanctified, to be Glorified, or all three.

Today it is... Believer's Baptism, First Communion, church attendance, tithing 10%, going door-to-door, or standing on a street corner with a bullhorn. It is

avoiding tobacco, alcohol, streaming services, foul language, pornography, women who wear pants, women with short hair, women who show too much skin, women in general, just avoiding women altogether – even if you are a woman.

There is no end to the list and the list varies from one legalist to another. Now, other than the silly part about women, most, if not all, of those things that I mentioned would be a good idea.

Just like the features of Judaism, it isn't the things themselves, it's the belief that doing certain things or abstaining from other things will make you more worthy of Salvation, or Sanctification, or Glorification.

That's the second time that I have mentioned the Holy triad of Christian existence. Some groups believe in a God/human cooperation to be initially Saved. From the internet we have this... "You must hear the Gospel, must believe in Jesus, must repent of your sins, must confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and must be Baptized by full submersion under water." From that group that's what is required in order to be initially Saved – no Believer's Baptism, no Salvation.

Many other groups believe that initial Salvation is 100% Grace, but then the Christian must actively and progressively participate in their own growth into Christian maturity, called Sanctification, or they lose their Salvation. Again, from the internet, “You must continue to grow as a Christian, must obey Jesus, must abide in his teachings, must keep his commandments, and must remain faithful to God all the days of your life.” That’s in order to maintain your Salvation.

Other groups believe that both initial Salvation and Sanctification are the result of Grace but that a Christian can be Saved and Sanctified but then choose to reject Christ and still lose Glorification – Heaven.

We humans break Entire Salvation into these three parts, but the Biblical concept of Salvation means the entire process from beginning to end. From God’s perspective we are all already in Heaven enjoying the eternal Feast of the Lamb.

Again, from God’s point of view, He hand-selected His children before He began to speak the universe into existence and He is simultaneously, at the same instant, enjoying His eternity together with all of His children. Therefore, at the point of your initial Salvation

God the Father transferred you into your eternal Glorification in His Kingdom where He was already enjoying your company before He began creating.

Can you see that? Now, from your perspective, it's a very different story. You are not a timeless, immutable, omniscient, omnipresent, pure being of immeasurable power. From your perspective you imperfectly grasped a bit of the Gospel, and then you chose to believe in Jesus for at least part of your Salvation. Then, ever since, you've struggled, being pulled in one direction, by the world and your human desires and in the other direction, by the Spirit within.

Were you Saved and filled with the Holy Spirit when you clearly understood the theology of Christianity and followed all the doctrines of the Bible? Were you transferred into God's Kingdom Family when you perfectly obeyed His commandments and stopped sinning? Or is it possible, that you were Saved before you got all that straight, and that you remain Saved even though you still haven't gotten any of that perfectly, right? In the opening of chapter 3, Paul will rhetorically ask, "did you receive the Holy Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" Then he

will go on... “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

According to the Bible, God chooses us. The mechanism of how and why we step into God’s Call and become His children is as complicated as the Trinity.

The easy part is this... it is by faith in Christ alone that humans become Children and even that faith is not of our own but is also received as a gift from God lest any person boast. Ephesians 2:8&9, 8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Everything we have and everything that we are is due to Him... Everything. In I Corinthians 1:29–31, God has chosen us... “so that no human may boast before Him. Because it is due to Him that you are in Christ Jesus, (It is due to God, not to us, not to Him and us, due to God that we are in Christ Jesus) who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written: “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Again, proving that wanting to pay the tip is pride. We want to boast in ourselves, and that is the driver of legalism. We are Saved solely by faith in Jesus as the Word of God made flesh who takes away the sins of the world. And we could say that we have faith. We could say that our faith is sufficient where the faith of others is deficient and there, we encounter pride and boasting again. No, my friends, even the faith that you have that enables you to accept the free Gift of God is itself a free Gift of God!

If you want to boast, boast in the Lord! Anyone who thinks that anything must be done, or must be avoided, in order to be Saved Entirely is a legalist whether they understand that or not. It is never Jesus plus anything. Not Jesus plus Baptism, not Jesus plus good works, not Jesus plus obedience to the Law, not Jesus plus circumcision. It's only faith in Jesus and the humble, grateful recognition that even that was a gift from Him.

So, where does that leave a person? It should leave you completely overwhelmed by God's goodness to you. By His unfathomable love for you and by His incredible Self-sacrificial Grace granting to you the forgiveness of your sins and the adoption of you into His family forever.



That's the first bit... He gave it all to you and you did not and cannot earn any of it. The second bit is the deep, down to the innermost parts of your being, down to the core of your soul, realization that there is nothing in you that deserves any of it. He magnanimously gave you everything even though you deserved nothing.

How do you respond to that news? Does that cause you to be a little uncomfortable? Do you want to justify yourself a smidgeon? Do you think that there must be something special about you? All of that is the natural response from a human.

Here's the less human, more Spirit driven response... I accept that as Truth... I accept the obvious... I accept the inconceivably vast chasm between a Holy God and me. As a result, I am completely blown away by the indescribable love and graciousness of Almighty God. That He would do all that He has done and would see me. Would Love me, would Lift me, and would Befriend me. What words can express the proper response to that understanding?

How could I mess that up? I mean really, God Saved me when I hated Him... Now, I love Him... What

stupidity could I come up with that would cause Him to cast me away? How arrogant to think that I, as a Christian, could offend God so much that He would take me back to the orphanage and say this one's a reject – He's just too unlovable and therefore, even I cannot love him. What does such thinking say about God? It is actually blasphemous.

The consequences of grasping the nature of True Biblical Christianity can only result in a humble, grateful, acceptance of His Love and Forgiveness and Fellowship. A full acceptance of God's full acceptance based upon His character and work, not on mine.

Only when you get that straight can you be conformed to Christ because you desire to be like Him. Your obedience to His commands comes eagerly and enthusiastically not to gain His favor but because you dwell within His favor as a member of His Family.

Then you do certain things and avoid others because that's just who you are in Christ – that's just how we roll in the Family of God.

Let me leave you with this... These things that we do and avoid... What makes the list? Today we have

stripped the foolish human blinders off of religiosity. Today we have explored some of the rational consequences of a pure Being who speaks galaxies into existence and holds them together by the Word of His power and by the Breath of His mouth.

Today we have examined some of the logical consequences of the reasonable comparison between us and Him. Let's not stop with that... Let's consider what it is to sin, and what it is to be righteous.

Do you imagine that sins are the things that we've talked about today? Things like smoking, drinking, gambling, profanity, and pornography? Avoiding things as Baptism, Communion, church, circumcision and giving?

Take a deeper dive my friends. We are commanded to Love. That's of course the command to love unconditionally. You and I cannot do that. Only God can truly Love without conditions. To obey this single command that we want to obey we must allow His Love to have its way within us and then allow it to pour out of us.

Unconditional Love cannot sin and is the definitive embodiment of righteousness. Concentrate on Love. Doing certain things and avoiding others is now the product of God's Love not human legalism. As a negative example, I don't get drunk because that loss of judgment will likely lead to saying and doing what is unloving to others and to myself, which is then unloving to God.

As a positive example, I do get Baptized because it shows my love for God by wanting to be part of His Family, it shows love to my Christian family, and it shows love to myself that I can be humble enough to publicly declare that I need and that I have a Family.

Under such an understanding I'm less concerned with the outward appearance of things and far more aware of the underlying issues. Now I'm concerned with the inward source of unloving behavior like Arrogance, Avarice, Bigotry, Callousness, Contempt, Deceit... We're only up to the D's... Can you see that gossip is a much bigger deal than smoking? Can you see that betrayal is a much bigger deal than a woman having short hair or a man having long hair? Can you see that lying is a much bigger deal than cussing?

Legalism, whether it's the doing and avoiding of things to earn or repay, or whether it is the more subtle belief that you are otherwise special enough to deserve... All boils down to an elevation of you at the expense of Christ.

Paul was dramatically insisting that this wasn't just another way to look at it, a slightly different method of being, or a variation on the theme... Paul, inspired by God the Holy Spirit declared that it was the difference between Christianity and a cult. It was the difference between accepting God's Grace and rejecting it.

Here's what I know about those who hear this message. For those who are not legalists, this is easy. For those who are legalists, this is nonsense. Some will dismiss it outright thinking of their favorite verses to refute what I've said. Most will slowly reject it a bit at a time without consciously realizing that they are doing it.

Too bad. If you want to obey Christ the only way to do it is to let go of pride, accept acceptance, and be what the Holy Spirit guides you to be.