



December 1, 2024
“Attacking Leaders”

Hope, the First Sunday of Advent.
Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Monday Ladies Night, Wednesday Classes, Thursday Leadership Meeting
 Next Sunday is our Potluck Christmas Party.

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Advent is...

Legalism isn't another way to do Christianity, it is anathema to Christianity.

The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God.” ~ Martin Luther

GALATIANS 1:6–10 ~

The Judaizers were literally disturbing the peace of the Galatians.

When people are well, they're not buying medicine.

Paul didn't care whom they followed as their messenger, as long as they followed the True Message.

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!

“Accursed” is ἀνάθεμα (ä-nä-thě-mä), meaning to lay, or place, up (Galatians 3:13).

Anyone preaching a false Gospel should be turned over to the wrath of God.
(Matthew 12:33-37, Hebrews 10:31).

You don’t ever want to get what you deserve from a Holy and Perfect God!

Paul now needed to justify his claim, that all that was required, was the faith to accept the completed work of Jesus.

The Judaizers had bashed Paul to the Galatians.

They didn’t argue the message – they made it about the messenger.

The issue is one of cause and effect. The legalist makes the cause their own effort and the effect God’s favor. God makes the cause God’s favor and the effect our own effort.

Verse 10 begins as a transition to delve into that defense.

“Bond-servant,” is a feel-good term for a slave.

GALATIANS 1:11–2:10 ~

Remember, it is impossible to be Saved by Grace, if it is not Grace.

This is the only Gospel...

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

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

The First Week of Advent (Arrival), The Candle of Hope: Isaiah prophesied “The Lord himself will give you a miraculous sign. The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called ‘God with us’ (Immanuel)” (Isaiah 7:14). The great prophet went on to declare, “A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace. The authority of his rule will continue to grow. The peace he brings will never end” (Isaiah 9:6&7a).

In Luke chapter 3:4&6, we read, “Isaiah had spoken of John (the Baptist) when he said, ‘He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, “Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him! 6And then all people will see the salvation sent from God””” (Luke 3:4–6).

Advent is a four-week-long time to mentally and more importantly, spiritually prepare to celebrate the first coming, or arrival, or advent of Jesus, who is Immanuel – God with us.

It can be done as a legalistic way of justifying yourself, or it can be done as a genuine desire to be closer to God.

Last week we talked about legalism. 1) We defined it as anything that diminishes the completed work of Christ Jesus on your behalf. 2) So, more simply, it is anything that mitigates, minimizes, reduces, or decreases, God's free gift of Grace.

3) What that means in even plainer English, because I don't want there to be any misunderstanding on this vital Salvific point, active legalism consists of doing "good" things, and/or, avoiding "bad" things, as well as the passive legalism of believing that you, in some way, deserve even the smallest portion of the Salvation that God has bestowed upon you.

We thoroughly examined the simple Truth that legalism isn't another way to do Christianity, it is anathema to Christianity. It is a false Gospel spawning a false Christianity. Here's an example... I watched Shawn Ryan interview Megyn Kelly. She is divorced – no kids, and remarried, now, with three kids. Her church insists that she must go through a complex process to get her

first marriage annulled by the church, thus allowing her second marriage to be valid and her children to be legitimized.

If she wants to do that in order to feel better about herself and her family. If she wants to do that for her kids. If she wants to do that to fit more comfortably within her church, it's her choice and it is fine.

If she does it to be right with God, she's a legalist living out a false Christianity, because she's accepted a false Gospel.

Martin Luther was a Catholic monk, priest, and seminary professor. Earning his Doctor of Theology degree in 1512, Luther eventually became the head of the theology department at the University of Wittenberg, in the state of Saxony, within the Holy Roman Empire. Of that empire the French philosopher Voltaire famously joked, "The Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire."

In any event, Luther meticulously took his seminary students through the Psalms, then the Books of Hebrews and Romans, finishing with Paul's Letter to the Galatians. The cumulative effect on Luther of

carefully working through those Bible Books in that order was profound.

He was thunderstruck by the revelation of the plain meaning of those Scriptures. His recognition that it was God's Grace as opposed to human worthiness that enabled a person to be counted as righteous before the Lord, led him to protest against the legalism of Roman Catholicism, with the desired outcome of reform. His protest against legalism and his petition for the church to be reformed was called the Protestant Reformation.

It was only after the Church excommunicated Luther as a heretic and sought to torture him to death for blasphemy, that he realized his hope to reform the Catholic Church wasn't in the cards.

I bring all that up to give you a review of your Christian heritage, but mainly to read for you what Luther wrote in conclusion about Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: "Therefore, God accepts only the forsaken, cures only the sick, gives sight only to the blind, restores life to only the dead, sanctifies only the sinners, gives wisdom only to the unwise fools. In short, He has mercy only on those who are

wretched and gives grace only to those who are not in grace.

Therefore, no proud saint, no wise or just person, can become God's material, and God's purpose cannot be fulfilled in him. He remains in his own work and makes a fictitious, pretended, false, and painted saint of himself, that is, a hypocrite.

The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow, he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God." ~ Martin Luther

Galatians 1:6–10, 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; but there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8But 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! 9As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! 10For am I now seeking the favor of people, or of God?

Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

In verse 7, it seems like Paul switched gears in the middle, doesn't it? In the first half he says the different Gospel is not just another account, but then he talks about "some who are disturbing you." The Judaizers were literally disturbing the peace of the Galatians.

Why did they disturb their peace? For the express purpose of getting them to embrace a different Gospel, in order to move them to accept their distorted Gospel of Christ instead. Distorted as in a false Gospel, of a false Christ, leading to a false Christianity.

Let me use a real-world comparison. I'll go back to Megyn Kelly. She is very confused and is stuck trying to figure out how to proceed. She got that way because her church, from the clergy to the people, have successfully disturbed her peace about her marital status and the legitimacy of her three kids.

They have disturbed her in order to get her to change her belief and follow their solution.

That's why the second half of verse 7 seems a little weird to us. It doesn't translate easily into English, but that's the meaning. The Judaizers disturbed the peace of the Galatian Christians and then offered them their solution to regain the peace they had lost. My friends, it's a tactic as old as time. When people are well, they're not buying medicine. First, you must convince them that they are sick.

In verse 8, Paul doubles down with stressing the unchangeable nature and divine origin of the Gospel that he preached to them by saying that it was the Message, not the messenger that mattered. Paul was a vessel through whom Jesus spoke. The Judaizers spoke their opinions about what Jesus wanted.

We see that today. There are preachers who try to empty themselves and allow Christ to speak through them and there are preachers who try to influence people the direction that they think they should go. It might be difficult to tell the difference so focus on the Message, not on the messenger.

Paul was saying that, it was irrelevant who spoke... Even if it were him, or even if it were an angel from the throne room of God... if it a different Gospel from the

Gospel that they had first accepted, it would be a false Gospel. Now, the problem is that many Christians, like the Galatians long ago, have a hard time discerning the True Gospel from another gospel.

Paul will get to that part. For now, a simple test is asking the question, “does this teaching elevate Christ or does it elevate man?” While a True Message doesn’t necessarily tell you what kind of preacher you have, a consistently false Message does.

Paul placed himself in mix, not just to show that no one, including him is above the True Gospel of Christ, but also that he had no personal agenda. As we saw last week, he wasn’t concerned that the Galatians had abandoned him, he was alarmed that they had abandoned God. Paul was again showing that he didn’t care whom they followed as their messenger, as long as they followed the True Message.

Then Paul moved to the next logical step declaring that anyone, or anything for that matter, who presented a Message contrary to the True Message, that Paul had first delivered to them, must be accursed. “Accursed,” seems bad. Sometimes I’m a little “fuzzy on the whole

good/bad thing,” but I’m pretty sure that accursed is bad.

Accursed is the Greek word ἀνάθεμα (ä-nä-thě-mä), which has made its way unchanged into English. According to Webster, anathema means someone or something intensely disliked or loathed. It includes a person who is so disliked that they are cursed by the church by being banned, or excommunicated, or burned, back in the day.

I thought it was bad. That seems to confirm it. Here’s what the word means the way Paul used it... ἀνάθεμα actually means to lay, or place, up. Isn’t that odd? It was the word used by both Jews and pagans for a guilt offering sacrificed to God, or a god. The underlying idea was that the sin, or the offense, or the evil committed by the person was transferred from the person to the sacrificial substitute. The substitute was accursed instead of the person. The resultant curse of death due to the wrath of God was upon that substitute.

The sin of the world was transferred from the world to the Lamb of God. Instead of the world being cursed, the entire curse was upon Jesus. All of God’s righteous

wrath was poured out upon the Word of God made flesh.

Jesus was accursed on our behalf just as the Apostle Paul will say a bit later in chapter 3, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: ‘Accursed is everyone who hangs on a Tree’” (Galatians 3:13).

Paul was telling the Galatians that anyone preaching a false Gospel should be turned over to the wrath of God. Now, that is bad. In fact, it is far worse than Webster’s definition. Notice that it is the turning over of them to God’s wrath, not our wrath. It is God Who curses, not man, not the church. God alone is the Judge. He is the One Who Punishes, not us. This was a little point missed by the Spanish Inquisition and missed by all the wannabe Torquemada’s with their subtle little inquisitions still going on in the church today.

As a free aside, it may start with a prideful judgmentalism, but it can’t get off the ground apart from people’s willingness to gossip. Your words can be either Life, or death. According to the Lord Jesus Christ

Himself, you will account for every one of them that spills from your lips (Matthew 12:33-37).

Verse 9 functions as an extreme form of emphasis by repeating verse 8, but there's more. This wasn't an exaggeration, or hyperbole. Paul wanted them to know, just as God wants us to know, that there is only one True Gospel leading to only one True Faith which is entire dependence on the only one True Savior that God has provided.

In addition, when we look carefully, we can discern that Paul had already told them as much. Paul was telling them this again. That bit of information will help us understand where Paul goes from there.

Paul has made the claim that the Gospel that he shared with them was the One True Gospel and that any other Gospel was not only a false gospel, but that those espousing it, were accursed under God's unrelenting wrath.

That what Hebrews 10:31, is talking about when it declares, "It is a dreadfully terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

You don't ever want to get what you deserve from a Holy and Perfect God! His justice misses nothing, and His judgments are True, meaning that they are without mitigation. There is no bribery, no sentimentality, no mercy, no appeal. To be judged by God, is the most horrifying thing possible... There is no chance of acquittal and no chance of escape.

Praise His Name forever, He has provided Himself as the accursed sacrifice. Accept that Truth, and you bypass God's Judgment of your sin.

Anyway, Paul now needed to justify that claim, that all that was required, was the faith to accept the completed work of Jesus. To do that, Paul chose to first address the elephant in the room.

That elephant was the gossipy, pejorative, undermining of Paul as a bad messenger in order to cast doubt on his message. Where Paul said the Message is what matters, the Judaizers said the credibility and validity of the messenger was the only way to validate the message. A feature of legalism is the common practice of putting the cart before the horse – of focusing on the wrong things.

The Judaizers had bashed Paul to the Galatians. I know all too well how that goes. The fastest way to disturb someone's peace is to bad mouth their leaders. As an example, all of those political attack ads that we were just bombarded with start with some bit of truth about a candidate and then overblow it misrepresenting it into something unrecognizable with reality, all for the purpose of damaging that person's standing in our eyes.

They don't argue the message – they make it about the messenger and do everything possible to ruin their reputation. Solomon said that there was nothing new under the sun. This is precisely what the Judaizers did to Paul.

The Judaizers had easily convinced the Galatians that Paul had presented the Galatians with an overly simplistic, seriously lacking, watered-down, easy grace that in reality would make the Galatians feel good about themselves but would end up being insufficient to save their souls! The Judaizers had quickly persuaded the Galatians that what Paul had taught them was woefully inadequate.

And why would Paul do that? Why would Paul give them only a softened ineffective version of Christianity? Well, because Paul only cared about pleasing people. Paul was trying to win their approval, not their souls. Paul did that by stripping all the personal work and sacrifice from Christianity.

This is always the argument of legalists... They always arouse the natural pride within people to convince them that they need to perform in order to be worthy. Not only did Paul preach cheap grace that cost the recipient nothing, such a message would certainly result in outrageously sinful behavior.

If God forgives sin without requiring people to feel horribly guilty, and without needing them to jump through a bunch of religious hoops, and without demanding them to work diligently to get their act together and clean themselves up, then of course people will abuse His Gift of Grace and become completely depraved. We need discipline or there will be debauched chaos in the church! That's the argument. Let women wear bikinis at church camp and all the men will lose their Salvation. We actually had a couple push that one.

If you argue that point with a legalist, you've already lost the argument. Living as a God-honoring, Christ obeying Christian and what that entails, isn't the issue. The issue is one of cause and effect. The legalist makes the cause their own effort and the effect God's favor. God Himself, the Bible, the Apostle Paul and I, all make the cause God's favor and the effect our own effort.

That's what verse 10 begins as a transition to delve into the defense of Paul's position. He starts by reasoning that He was never presenting a cheap grace to please people because if he were doing that why would he be in service to them as a slave of Christ?

Why would he have come to them? What did he gain from them and at what cost to him? If Paul had wanted to please people, he wouldn't have preached a message that got both Jews and Gentiles so angry that they tracked him down and stoned him.

“Bond-servant,” is a feel-good term for a slave. Slave is a term from the incredible number of Slavic people enslaved by Muslims over a span of more than 1,000 years. Make no mistake about it, Paul was a slave to Jesus – he was at the constant beck and call of Jesus

and did whatever Jesus wanted him to do because he knew that Jesus owned him. That was not a special kind of call on Paul as some kind of super-Christian. My friends, we are all slaves of Jesus and are supposed to respond just as Paul did.

That might seem legalistic... No, not at all. A legalist obeys Jesus to gain His approval. A Christian obeys Jesus because they already abide in His approval. So being His slave comes from love, not duty and is just one aspect of our relationship with Him.

Next Paul will give a short summary of his ministerial history to show where he was coming from and from where his authority derived. Last week we only covered a verse and a half – that groundwork will allow us to move very quickly through chapter 2, verse 10...

Galatians 1:11–2:10, 11 For I would have you know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel which was preached by me is not of human invention. *\he had already said as much in verse 1, that he was “an apostle (not sent from men nor through human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father”*

Vs 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ *\literally that Jesus Christ revealed it to him*.

Vs 13 For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when He who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. *\He who called was God the Father. God's Will had set Paul aside for his ministry as an Apostle before he was born and of course, even before the start of creation. The Will of God – the Heavenly Father selected Paul for this purpose. What purpose? To be a vessel through whom He could present Jesus to the world... Paul was excelling in being a superior Jew who obeyed the Law better than nearly anyone and yet he was knocked from his not-horse by Jesus on the Road to*

Damascus. Why interrupt Paul if he was doing what was pleasing to God?

Paul understood what Jesus revealed to him and, under duress, he left Damascus for Arabia, the Nabataean kingdom of Aretas IV, headquartered in Petra, modern-day Jordan. After approximately 3 years there, Paul returned to Damascus and preached Christ to them, again. In short order, the

Damascenes... I'm not cussing them, that's what you call people from Damascus – Damascenes, well they wanted Paul dead, and he had to flee the city, again.

Vs 18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Peter, and stayed with him for fifteen days. *19* But I did not see another one of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. *20* (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) *21* Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. *\meaning his hometown of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia and Antioch in the province of Syria*

Vs 22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which are in Christ; *23* but they only kept hearing, "The man who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

24 And they were glorifying God because of me. *1* Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. *2* It

was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that somehow I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. *\There is confusion over the visit to Jerusalem. I won't go into all the details but rest assured that the 14 years is reckoned by Paul from his conversion on the Damascus Road, not from when he arrived in Syria and Cilicia. The visit to Jerusalem here is not the visit we will start with when we get back to Acts chapter 15. Here Paul is talking about the visit detailed at the end of Acts chapter 11, where he and Barnabas and others, evidently including Titus, brought the Judean churches famine relief*

Vs 4Yet it was a concern because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy on our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us. 5But we did not yield in subjection to them, even for an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. 6But from those who were of considerable repute (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism)—well, those who were of repute contributed nothing to me. 7But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted

with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8(for He who was at work for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised was at work for me also to the Gentiles), 9and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Peter and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

Paul's point here was to show that he was given the same Gospel as Peter, John, and James, but not by them, but independently by Jesus Himself as recognized by them. As he said in the opening verse of the Letter, Paul's call, his training, and his commission as an Apostle was entirely independent of the Jerusalem church and the Apostles who walked with the Lord prior to His Crucifixion.

Yet, at the same time, Paul's Gospel was the same exact Gospel of Peter and the rest and so, Paul was in full communion with the Jerusalem church. There was unity within all of Christendom and yet, there were challenges as well.

Legalism was and still is a very easy trap to fall into. We will see that even Peter was susceptible to it. Legalism must be fought continuously. Be ever vigilant for it to raise its ugly head when you least expect it.

Remember, it is impossible to be Saved by Grace, if it is not Grace. I cannot possibly overemphasize this principle... It is not just another way to look at Christianity, this is the difference between the True Gospel of Christ and a false gospel of Satan. Please, please, please, if you never get anything I ever teach, please get this thing.

Your Salvation from eternal damnation has nothing to do with you. It is completely, fully, perfectly, 100% God. To whatever degree that you think that it's about you – some inherent good in you, some desirable quality you possess, some future value that you'll have, some mass of good work that you've done, are doing, and, or will do... To whatever degree that you think that it's about you – you diminish the completed work of God on your behalf to that same degree.

This is the only Gospel... The Will of Almighty God, known to us as the Heavenly Father, had a plan and a purpose regarding creation and to accomplish it, He

sent the Word of Almighty God to be sacrificed. The Word took on flesh as Jesus – hence He's known to us as the One and Only Son, He dwelt among us, He lived a perfectly sinless life, He was the only one to ever wear an earth suit Who earned Heaven, but instead of taking what was His, Jesus emptied Himself and allowed the Sin of the world – the totality of all vile depravity – the whole of evil rebellion against God – the entirety of your sin, my sin, everyone's sin, past, present, and future to be placed upon Him as though it were His sin (Philippians 2:7–8). II Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Jesus who knew no sin at all to be sin itself...

For our benefit and on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.