

## Sermon

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# Gospel=Grace

Today we are starting a new series from the New Testament book of Galatians that will take us through the summer. We have chosen a theme for our study: Everyday Grace. Our hope is that as we walk through this message of grace, first sent by the Apostle Paul to the churches he founded in Galatia (today's Turkey), we will find our days filled with grace. We want these days, each and every one of these summer days, to be marked by an overwhelming sense, and regular demonstrations, of God's grace. **Wouldn't that be the best summer?!**



So each Sunday, with a few exceptions for guests, we will devote our sermons to Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. In addition to segmenting Galatians into ten parts for our sermon series, we have provided a daily guide for reading through the book with us for the summer. Take the list provided today and use it as a book mark in your Bible. Take a few moments every day and read the short passage assigned; use it as an opportunity to reflect, study, and pray with us as we walk together through the series.



We will also use our blog at [www.thechapelblog.com](http://www.thechapelblog.com) as a place to reflect together (if you would like to participate as an author on the blog, please contact Pastor Dan). We are looking forward to pursuing God's grace together every day this summer.

It could be that Galatians is the first of Paul's letters. In every case in our New Testaments, we understand Paul's writings to be letters. In most cases, these were letters sent back to churches that Paul planted on his missionary journeys.

Most commentators agree that these Galatian churches, the area of Asia Minor first settled by the Gauls and then expanded and designated as the Province of Galatia by the Romans, were among the churches started on Paul's first missionary journey.



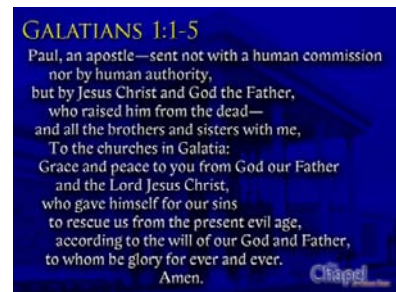
This leads us, then, to arriving and the commonly held conclusion that Paul likely wrote the letter to the Galatians, from Antioch, before heading to the Council at Jerusalem (found in Acts 15).

This book of Galatians not only gives us a picture how the Apostle dealt with early questions and problems in the church, it also gives us a picture of Paul's theology... his understanding of God. Some consider Romans to be Paul's *heaviest* theological text; some characterize Galatians as the *mini-Romans* or a *condensed theology* of Paul.



We can, of course, understand a lot about this entire book of Galatians by giving careful consideration to these opening verses.

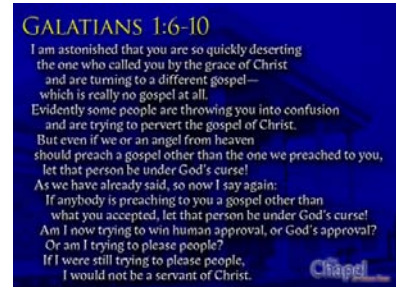
Brad read for us the first 5 verses of Galatians; I'm going to extend our consideration to these first 10 verses for this first study in series of ten sermons.



**1** Paul, an apostle—sent not with a human commission nor by human authority, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—<sup>2</sup>and all the brothers and sisters with me,

To the churches in Galatia:

<sup>3</sup>Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



<sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—<sup>7</sup>which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse! <sup>9</sup>As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let that person be under God's curse!

<sup>10</sup>Am I now trying to win human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

One way we could think of these first ten verses, these words that *set up* the rest of the book, is with this simple description:

- 2 assertions, and
- 1 problem.

Right here at the beginning Paul makes two very important claims (assertions) and exposes the problem that serves as the instigation for this letter.

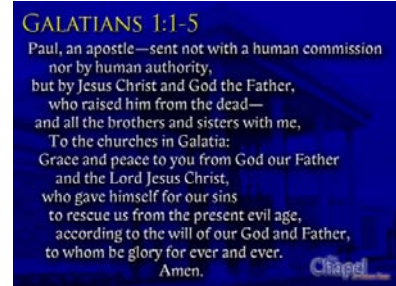


We are going to get into more of the details of **the problem** as we look into the text, but let's begin to scratch the surface of the problem. Paul planted these churches by preaching the Gospel of Grace through Faith in Jesus. We will see it unfold before us again throughout the Book of Galatians, and we see it as the consistent theme throughout Paul's life, ministry, preaching, and writing. Salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus. The problem was that shortly after Paul moved on from these churches, people came in behind him asserting that the real Gospel was **grace +**. Grace plus works... grace plus the law... grace plus ceremonies and rituals and circumcision... **grace +** was **the problem**.

We can see the assertions in that first section of five verses. First is the critically important assertion of Paul's apostleship.

Paul, **an apostle**—sent not with a human commission nor by human authority, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—<sup>2</sup>and all the brothers and sisters with me,

To the churches in Galatia:<sup>1</sup>



This first assertion, that Paul was rightfully an apostle, needed to be established to refute the first attack of the **grace +** people. It appears that the first attack by those who wished to *undo* Paul's work in Galatia, or at least *add to* his work, was a personal attack on his credibility.

This is a common tactic today... right? Who do you think you are? What right do you have to make such claims, take such action, or make such decisions? Are you qualified? Do you have the right credentials?

In Paul's case, he might have seemed like an easy target.

- He was not among the followers of Jesus when Jesus walked the earth.
- He was not among the followers of Jesus in that upper room, on the *birthday* of the Church, when the Holy Spirit overwhelmed those gathered on the Day of Pentecost.
- Worse yet... he was that same man who persecuted the earliest Christians.

So Paul, in the very first words of the letter, makes this first important assertion boldly. He tackled the attacks on his credibility head on, acknowledging that he did not have credentials from any regular authority... but his authority as an apostle was rooted in his calling. Paul was an apostle on God's authority. He had not met Jesus when he walked the earth, but he met the resurrected Jesus... that Jesus knocked him down on that Damascus road, turned Paul around, and elevated him to be a servant of Christ and herald of the message of God's grace.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:1-2.

Paul was called to be an apostle by God alone... but Paul was not alone.

and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia:<sup>2</sup>

This matter of deciphering God's calling can be tricky. There are all sorts of crazy things that have been done under the banner of "God told me so." Paul has it right in starting by basing his calling on God's leading; and Paul also has it right to place his calling in the context of community.

We should all pursue a deep, and even certain, sense of God's calling directly from God... and we should expect that calling to be confirmed by others. Sometimes that calling is confirmed in casual ways over time, in other cases that calling is confirmed by far more formal means. In most cases, it takes work on our part to be able to meet the demands of that calling... to carry the call.

So, for example, I could arise from prayer one day with a sense that God has called me to be a doctor. Should I walk into a hospital saying:

I am Dan, a doctor—sent not with a human commission nor by human authority nor with a human license, but by God.

Of course not! In order to be a doctor "all the brothers and sisters with me" would include Medical School professors, supervising doctors, and governmental agencies that would accredit me only after passing rigorous tests. If I were called to be a doctor, God's calling would be foremost in my mind and motivation, and all of the other work and authorities in the mix would not decrease the importance of God's calling one bit.

I believe that God has called me to the posts of ministry service and leadership that I now hold. God's calling is **foremost**... "and all the brothers and sisters with me" **confirm** that calling in community. They include professors, and those who have conferred degrees... it includes mentors along the way... and religious authorities who have honored me with ordination... and "all the brothers and sisters with me" include you. Your participation here in our church may be the most important confirmation of God's call to this work.

Paul's first assertion was his apostleship; his second, and arguably far more important assertion, was the very nature of the Gospel. Gospel=Grace

<sup>3</sup>Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:2.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:3-5.

This is the Gospel. Grace to you, grace to us, from God. Jesus gave himself for our sins, paying the penalty once and for all for our failings before an awesome and holy God. This is grace. With nothing worthy of such a sacrifice, no currency that would be worth anything in this transaction, Jesus paid the entire price.

He not only paid the price for our place in eternity, he made the way “to rescue us from the present evil age.” Not merely a promise of paradise to come, but grace to change our lives today, and every day.

This is God’s will, this is the Gospel, this is God’s wonderful grace!

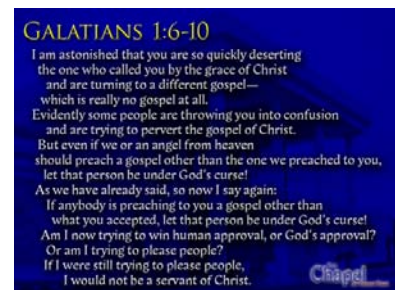
We will have opportunity to rehearse this message of grace throughout our study of Galatians. This will be our theme: Everyday Grace. This is not only an assertion in these first verses; it is the overarching assertion of the entire book.



This is God’s will, this is the Gospel, this is God’s wonderful grace!

But it will also help us in our study to keep in mind the problem that needed to be addressed... the problem that instigated the writing of this letter by Paul to the churches he started in Galatia.

It appears that rapidly after Paul moved on from the region, others moved in teaching that these new believers were obliged to adopt Jewish custom and follow Jewish law. They came in behind Paul with a message of grace +.



Paul responds with astonishment.

<sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel<sup>4</sup>

The words here are strong:

- Astonished
- Quickly
- Deserting

This wasn’t just a matter of thinking differently about the gospel... Paul positions the path that the Galatians are starting as a path of deserting God. They were abandoning the Gospel of grace for some other gospel

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<sup>4</sup>The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:6.

<sup>7</sup>which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

The gospel of grace + is not the Gospel... it is a perverted gospel. There is no other gospel. Paul goes on to say:

<sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse! <sup>9</sup>As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let that person be under God's curse!<sup>6</sup>

Paul contends for the true, pure gospel... the gospel of grace alone through faith in Jesus. There is no grace+ gospel. Accept no imitations. Accept no additions, edits, or perversions. If anyone tries to bring any other gospel, that person (even if we go crazy ourselves and preach some other gospel) should be cursed, judged and rejected by God.

This is the problem that we will see addressed in the chapters ahead.

Finally, Paul returns to underscore his first assertion, that he is a servant of Christ not seeking the approval of people. If he wanted to please people, if he wanted to take the easy road, he would go along with what was being said. Of all people, Paul (a devoted and zealous Pharisee) would be expert in imposing and keeping rules and rituals. But Paul, constrained as a servant of Christ, could only preach the Gospel of grace.

That was then... this is now. How do we apply this today?

We ask ourselves "so what?" and search for real, relevant meaning for us today.

Does anyone need grace today? Come to this Word and find it. This Gospel is grace.

Do we face precisely the same problem that we find here in Galatians? I come to you making my best efforts to bring the pure Gospel of grace through faith in Jesus... and then as soon as you get out of my sight, someone talks you into some other gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Is that happening here?

I suppose it is possible... but I think it unlikely.



<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:7.

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:8-9.

Regardless of the folk who may knock on your door with a different gospel, no matter what message you may see on TV or in books or on the Internet... I'm confident that you're not being led astray by the teaching of some other Gospel.

Let's also be mindful that this is Spiritual business... and we have spiritual adversaries that would delight in nothing more than us pursuing some other gospel. A gospel that is something other than a gospel of grace, a gospel that relies only on the grace of God carried out through Jesus Christ our Savior.

As I've thought about this... I'm not all that worried about being led astray to another gospel by false teachers... and I'm even not all that concerned about spiritual adversaries tripping us up and leading us from the Gospel of grace.

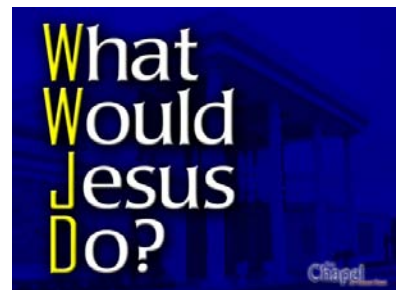
I am a little worried though... I'm worried about the sneakiest of our foes in these regards. More than a false teacher, more than a devil that seeks our demise... in this matter of relying only on a Gospel of grace I'm most worried about us, ourselves, the one we see in the mirror.

Let's face it. We need grace, but we don't always act like we want it. We need grace, but we so often choose the junk we can do for ourselves over the treasure of grace that Christ offers us. We pridefully choose our own measly works over the Gospel of grace.

We sneak up on ourselves in such treacherous ways... usually in the guise of religion. Take for example what seems like the most innocuous of pop-religion icons:

WWJD

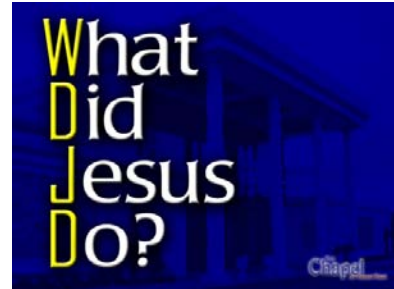
I want to speak very carefully here, so please listen very carefully too. I really appreciate what has been behind this simple little phrase. There is no doubt that Jesus stands as the best example of love in action. If we are going to hold ourselves to any standard, if we are going to make a goal out of any person's behavior, Jesus is certainly the best model.



But on what word do we place our emphasis? It seems that the intent of the phrase is, "What would **Jesus** do?" But it isn't too far off for us to turn it into, "What would Jesus **do**?" When we take the emphasis off of **Jesus**, and onto the **do**... we have a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.

Even with our ruler being the perfect standard, the very life of Jesus himself, we miss the mark when we as "What would Jesus do?"

The better gospel question might be, “What **did** Jesus do?” This question reminds us that the doing that has any impact on our salvation and eternity has already been done.

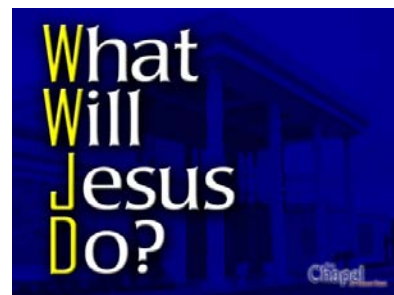


<sup>3</sup>Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>7</sup>

Or better yet, understanding that we have been rescued in this life too, filled with the Holy Spirit to actually be the Body of Christ. We are called, and filled with the Holy Spirit to be “Jesus with skin on” to the lost, hurting and oppressed. If we are sensitive to God’s calling and filled with His Holy Spirit, we can ask ourselves a different question:

WWJD: “What will Jesus do?”

What will Jesus do to work through us to glorify God?  
What will Jesus do to work through us to build up our fellow believers?  
What will Jesus do to work through us to allow others to hear the Gospel of grace? To be healed, and fed, and released?



As we walk through Galatians together, we’ll see that the life of faith has a great deal to do with doing... but it isn’t doing that leads to salvation... it is doing that grows out of salvation.



The Gospel of Grace is all about what Jesus did... and what He will do in and through us.

Let’s receive that grace.

Let’s allow that grace to flow through us.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ga 1:3-5.