

Let's Worship God

20th-25th May 2024
Galatians



Galatians

Monday - Galatians 1:11-23 - The Gospel is Jesus' Plan

In this letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul is responding to accusations that he has plagiarised his gospel message. That is, that he's taken something he's heard others saying, and passed it off as if he got it directly from God himself. In fact, it's worse than that. They're saying that Paul has either heard a faulty gospel message or that he's heard the right one and then managed to corrupt it. So in vs 11-24, Paul confronts head on the allegations that his gospel is a man made fabrication - or at best a corruption of the true gospel.

There were a group of false teachers who history has called the Judaizers. And they're called this because they were telling these young Christians that to believe in Jesus wasn't enough. That they also had to keep certain Jewish rituals - like circumcision and the religious festivals. It sounded innocent enough. It can sound innocent enough today if someone says that to get to Heaven you need to believe in Jesus and also keep some religious traditions. But it's absolutely deadly because trying to add anything to Jesus is like putting a drop of poison in a glass of water - drinking it will kill you.

From vs 11 & 12, it's clear that Paul's opponents are saying that that the idea that Jesus is enough is man-made nonsense. But Paul is absolutely clear here that he didn't get his message from men - even good men - but directly from Jesus Christ himself. So where did he learn the gospel? He says in v12 that it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. He got it right from the source. Of course, if he had got it from man, that wouldn't necessarily have meant he'd heard a corrupt version, or gone on to corrupt it himself. But hearing it from Jesus left him in no doubt. Paul's telling the Galatians this because he wants them to be absolutely confident that they can trust his message. Then, to reinforce this, Paul spells out in detail some of his movements for the last 15 years or so. So the gospel is Jesus' idea, because Paul's life is a testimony to the fact that it couldn't have been anybody else's.

Questions

1. What accusations is Paul responding to?
2. Where did Paul get the gospel?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God's Word is trustworthy.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 50 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Tuesday - Galatians 1:13-16 - The Gospel Shows Jesus' Power

The greatest evidence that Paul can point to against claims that his gospel is from man is the change in his own life. Verse 13 can't have been an easy verse for Paul to write. 'I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it'. 'Violently' is literally 'beyond measure'. Now, writing as a Christian, did the pleas & screams of those he'd carried off still echo in his head? Husbands taken from their wives. Mothers separated from their children. No sudden psychological switch can explain what happened. One writer says: 'Only God could reach a man in that condition - and God did'.

And what did God do? In v12 Paul received a revelation of Jesus Christ. The gospel is a message of hope that comes from beyond this broken world. Outwardly Paul was religious, but he was really just a thug and a murderer. But God began to transform him so that he looked more and more like Jesus Christ.

And then is v. 15 not one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible? If you trust in Jesus you'll find that he has loved you from before you were even born. From before the world was even made. He has a good plan for you. Before your mother ever held you, he was holding you. Nothing that's happening to you is a mistake.

So the fact that a Christ-hater like Paul could have his life turned completely around is further proof that this message is not from man. But then in the rest of v. 16 we have even more proof of the truth of the gospel from Paul's own life. He began to preach to the Gentiles. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. v14 says he was advancing in Judaism beyond many of his own age among his people, so extremely zealous was he for the traditions of the fathers. Paul would have wanted absolutely nothing to do with Gentiles. But he not only becomes part of a religion in which they're equal members, he's commissioned to spend the rest of his life preaching to them.

And really every conversion since then denies human explanation as well. We may not all have been persecuting Christians - but we all hated Christ. Anyone can sit in a church building or even be a member of a church. But only Jesus can transform a life. Whether it happens like a train wreck as it did with Paul, or whether it's so gradual you don't know when it actually happened. Only Jesus can transform a life. Has he transformed yours?

Questions

1. What happened in Paul's own life?
2. Who alone has the power to change a life like that?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the power of Christ to change lives.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 51 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Wednesday - Galatians 1:22-24 - The Gospel Shows Jesus' Purpose

Jesus' plan and power are shown clearly in the conversion of the Apostle Paul. But what was the ultimate purpose in all this? And what is the final thread of evidence that Paul's gospel isn't man-made?

We're shown the answer by the Christians in the churches of Judea. They'd never met Paul. All they heard about him was that he was preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And 'They glorified God because of me'. Ultimately the reason why God saved Paul wasn't for Paul's sake or even for the sake of the Gentiles - but for the same reason that God does anything - for his own glory.

This is the final nail in the coffin for the idea that Paul - or anyone in the early church - made up the gospel. It's the final proof that it's not man's gospel. Never mind trying to explain the sudden transformation of anti-Christian Gentile hating Paul into a Christian and a missionary to the Gentiles - Who would make up a religion that says we're all dead in sin? And that there's absolutely nothing we can do about it? Who would make up a religion where man gets no glory, but God gets all the glory from beginning to end?

Every other religion leaves plenty of room for human effort - and human self-congratulation. If you're saved by Jesus + circumcision, and someone else down the road who only trusted in Jesus isn't saved - then Jesus doesn't get the glory - you do. But the God of the Bible does everything he does for his own glory. No one would make up a religion where they get absolutely no glory. So in a world that's so obsessed with glorifying people - we need to fight our natural tendency to try and take some of God's glory for ourselves.

What an amazing purpose to live and die for! God has created us to live for something bigger than ourselves, bigger than anything humanity can offer. Only in him will we be fully satisfied. The final proof that the gospel is true is that it's not about us.

Questions

1. What was the purpose of Paul's conversion?
2. What does every other religion have in it?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would glorify God in everything we do?
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 52 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Thursday - Galatians 2:1-9 - The True Gospel: Revelation From God Recognised By The Church

Paul has made the claim that he received the gospel message he was teaching directly from Jesus Christ. But he had nothing to fear from other people examining his claim. Because he knew that since it really was a message from God, others would recognise it as that. And so in v1, fourteen years after his conversion, Paul goes up to Jerusalem a second time. He takes two witnesses with him - Barnabas and Titus. These two will be able to tell the Apostles in Jerusalem what Paul has been preaching.

True Christianity has nothing to fear from scrutiny. Those who teach have a huge responsibility from God. To go wrong on the gospel message is to lead people's souls to a lost eternity. And so beware of those who teach, but are resistant to having their teaching checked and examined.

How do the Apostles respond? In v7 they acknowledge that he's been entrusted with the gospel. In v9 they give him the right hand of fellowship - a public acknowledgement that they're on the same side. It's clear for all to see that, despite the claims of the false teachers, Paul really is teaching the same thing as the other Apostles.

Paul wasn't going to Jerusalem so his teaching could be approved by men. Paul knows that his message has come directly from Jesus Christ. But he's coming to Jerusalem so that his teaching can be recognised by the other Apostles, so that everyone will know that the gospel that he's preaching to the Gentiles is the same as what they've been preaching to the Jews.

So when someone preaches we should always ask - how does this square with the teaching of the Bible?

Questions

1. Why does Paul go to Jerusalem?
2. What do the Apostles recognise about his teaching?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would examine everything by the Scriptures.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 53 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Friday - Galatians 2:1-9 - True Gospel: Doesn't Add To What Jesus Has Done

He in verse 3 we get one of our biggest clues so far about the false teaching that's rocking the Galatian churches. Paul says here that Titus wasn't circumcised. Circumcision was standard Jewish religious practice. In fact, it was something that God had commanded Abraham and his descendants to do. It was a sign of God's covenant with them. For Christians, it's been replaced by the sign of baptism. But the false teachers in Galatia were saying that in order to be a Christian, someone had to believe in Jesus but also be circumcised. From what we've seen so far in the letter, their message seems to have been: 'This Paul has messed up the gospel message. He heard it from the Apostles in Jerusalem, but then he changed bits of it. He's leaving out the bit that says you need to be circumcised'. But Paul is saying, 'No, the other Apostles recognised that I'd been entrusted with the same gospel as them. And as proof that we weren't teaching a different message, they didn't force Titus to be circumcised'.

Now it's not that circumcision is now wrong. It's just that it's not needed. Later on, in Acts 16v3, Paul circumcises Timothy because if he hadn't been, it would have been a stumbling block to the Jews they were trying to reach. So is Paul being inconsistent? No - they're two completely different situations. Here, Titus ISN'T circumcised, because if he had been it would have given ammunition to the 'false brothers' in v4 who were claiming to be Christians and leading other Christians astray. But with Timothy in Acts 16, he WAS circumcised, because if he wasn't then it would have been an excuse for unbelieving Jews not to listen to the message that he and Paul were bringing. Even though Paul did the exact opposite, in both situations his goal was the same - the advance of the gospel.

Verse 5 tells us how serious this is. Titus wasn't circumcised 'so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you'. If Titus had been circumcised, these false brothers would have gone back to Galatia and said - the real Apostles in Jerusalem circumcised Titus. That proves that Paul's message is wrong and ours is right! The truth of the gospel is at stake. Because when anything is added on to Jesus as something you need to do to achieve salvation, the gospel is lost.

Questions

1. What were the false teachers trying to add to the Gospel?
2. What are some things people try to add to the Gospel today?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that our salvation does not depend upon us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 54 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Saturday - Galatians 2:10 - True Gospel: Leads to Right Living

Verse 10 nearly seems like a throwaway verse. We could pass over it, almost without noticing. The only instruction that the Apostles in Jerusalem give Paul and Barnabas is that they remember the poor. This, says Paul, is the very thing he was eager to do. Most likely, this is talking about the Jewish converts in Judea who were suffering as a result of famine. So Paul and the other Apostles have a specific group of people in mind. But either way, the point is that being committed to the true gospel isn't just about agreeing intellectually with a set of ideas. It will lead to action.

It would be very easy for you to agree with everything that's been said so far. But if we really are following the same gospel that Paul and the other Apostles taught, it will show itself in practical ways. A right understanding of the gospel doesn't downplay the importance of good works. It just means that our works are done out of gratitude for what God has done for us, not out of an effort to try and win his favour.

Jesus said in Matthew 7: 'Beware of false prophets'. And how were they to beware of them? He said: 'You will recognise them by their fruits'. That includes what someone says. But it also includes what they do. If you want to know if someone's teaching matches up with the Bible, yes listen to what they're saying - but also look at their life.

If you want to know whether you have truly understood the gospel. You need to consider not just what you know, but how you're living. Is there a real, genuine concern for others that shows itself in practical ways? And is it something that's springing up inside you, rather than something that's forced or only done out of a sense of duty or obligation?

This is an area we all fall short in. Satan could say to each one of us - you're a fake! Your life doesn't match up. But if there is at least some evidence of our words being backed up by our works, then let us praise God for his grace. And may our failures drive us all the more to the only one whose actions always backed up his words - Jesus Christ. The genuine gospel will always point to him. Because he is our only hope.

Questions

1. What should a true understanding of the Gospel lead to?
2. What should our failures in obedience lead us to do?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." Galatians 1:23

Praise: Psalm 55 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced
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