

Galatians 1

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[0 : 00] I'm going to turn now for a short time to the passage that we were reading together. The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, chapter 1.

And you can read again at verse 3. Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Particularly the words of the short, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

Because most of us here are familiar with the Scriptures, we will know without being told that many of the epistles that we have in the New Testament have been written by Paul the Apostle.

And many of these epistles have a similar introduction or salutation, such as the one we have in verse 3.

[1 : 31] Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. But although we find similarities in these epistles, of all the letters written by Paul, this one here is perhaps one of the most, I'm not sure how to describe it.

But it certainly suggests to us that the Apostle is vexed by what he is hearing is going on amongst the people who have professed conversion to faith in Jesus Christ.

He is disturbed by what he hears. And the reason for that is given by himself. He says in verse 6, I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ and to another gospel, which is not another, but there will be some that trouble you and will pervert the gospel of Christ.

But though we, you are an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so now I say again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accursed. When you read these words, what do you make of it?

[3 : 23] I have to say, more recently, I suppose, than ever, I look at words and I wonder what these words mean.

I'm not talking just simply about taking a word and going to a dictionary and finding out what that word means. I'm finding out where it originates, where it is derived from, what its derivation, all of these things have, of course, interest that can govern the mind of any wordsmith.

And daily preacher is a wordsmith. It uses words to convey the truth, to convince people of the truth, to bring the truth, to bear on the hearts and minds of those who are in hearing to the most, to the best effect.

So it's important what words mean. But more and more, I'm convinced that people have chosen to make words mean what they want them to mean.

To move away from what these words should mean. To make them mean something else. And we see it more and more in our generation.

[5 : 11] We see it in society. We see it in our parliament. We see laws being written where words are used that traditionally don't mean what these words meant.

laws governing the act of marriage or the relationship of marriage, for example. We know what that means.

Marriage, as I understand it, as we used to understand it, as the Bible means us to understand it, means one thing. But now it seems it doesn't. It means something different.

Who has decided it means something different? I don't know. People say something like this when it comes to describing the kind of relationship that they have.

I love you, but my love for you is not enough. but my love for you is something different to the love that I expected to have for you.

[6 : 19] So, love means something or nothing. Now, why are we talking like this? For a simple reason that the apostle is grieved.

He is grieved because he is an apostle who has proclaimed the word of God to sinners in order that these sinners would be converted and would become believers in Christ and dependent upon Christ and most of all, I believe, in a relationship with Christ.

But having preached the gospel which is determined to bring about such an end, Paul, the apostle, finds that instead of that relationship with Christ, they have something different.

They have espoused a relationship with Christ that is not really a relationship that he would expect them to have. It is a relationship where they are tolerant of others or tolerant of other beliefs or tolerant of other appreciations of the gospel which he says himself is not a gospel.

What they're saying is they are following other teachings that are not the teachings of the Bible, that are not the teachings of the apostle, that are not the teachings that Christ has entrusted to me, the apostle.

[7 : 56] I suppose you may think that the apostle was somebody who was impregnable in the sense that because he was an apostle and because he was called by God and because he was such a giant of the faith that nothing would move him and nothing would hurt him and nothing would damage him and nothing would injure him.

the apostle as much as people turning away from the gospel or people embracing a gospel that is not a gospel or people choosing something other than the Christ that he has presented faithfully to them.

and you should believe that for all ministers of the gospel if they are truly called to proclaim Christ to the likes of yourselves that when they see members in the congregation behave as if their relationship with Christ is not what it ought to be or their love for Christ is something that waxes and wanes depending on whatever do you think that the preacher is unmoved by that or untouched by that or is it not the case that Paul is just an example to us of someone who is grieved because of the fact not that they are doing something that is showing that they have the respect for him or the love for him as a minister of the gospel but because of the love and the respect and everything that goes with it that he has for his

Lord and his saviour and anything and everything that touches him anything and everything that undermines him anything and everything that takes away from his glory is something that he is hurt by as he is that he feels grieved for and that's what we have here he sees the work that he has done in presenting Christ to sinners who have obviously claimed to have been affected by what he has said no showing signs that they have lost something of the feather of their love for Christ and gone away from him John MacArthur the American preacher writes the following he describes this epistle as written from the grieving heart of a godly man for his spiritual children whose faith and living were being undermined by false teachers the grieving heart of a godly man you have to remember that's what Paul was called he was a good man called by God to witness to the truth but he was a man and he had feelings and these feelings were often hurt by witnessing the truth that he proclaimed ignored or denied or gone away from in chapter five

Paul says to the church in Galatia stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled he says again with the yoke of bondage stand fast don't allow yourself to go back to where you once were to the life that you once led to the poverty of spirit that might develop as people who lived their life without Christ but I want us to look at the verse before us leaving all that in mind and there are three or four things that we can mention from this text first of all Paul Paul writes and Paul centers what he has to say on the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ may seem an obvious statement to make and too obvious a proof to have to state it but we must begin there

[12 : 45] Paul's concern is to witness to the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever now the second thing his focus is upon the Lord Jesus Christ because he knows the importance of the Lord Jesus Christ to himself and to every other person who has a relationship of faith with him first of all because of his sacrificial death he gave himself for our sins thirdly the reason that he gave himself for our sins to that he might deliver us from this present evil world then why because it is according to the will of

God and our Father to whom be the glory I'll try and say a few words about each of these things we start with the Lord Jesus Christ because obviously these words mean nothing if they're not focused upon him it may appear as I said to state the obvious but you remind yourself of this epistle that has been written to saints Christian theologians want to spend time debating the point where were these saints found what part of the world they lived in and there's theories and there's arguments that bring ideas to the fore and it doesn't matter where they were he could easily write these words to any church anywhere he could write it to this congregation here in

Scratchford and his words to you would be the same his words concern the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of that passion above and beyond and before any other passion any other thing that you have in your lives you remember the problem that Paul was at the exit not just were people being presented with a false gospel but the false gospel that was presented to them was altering their focus from Christ to themselves we read in chapter two verse seven when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me as the gospel of the circumcision was unto

Peter for he that brought effect and impeded it to the apostleship of the circumcision the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles the name of Cephas and John who seemed to be foolish perceived the grace that was given to me and so on Paul when he is writing these words he is identifying a problem that was highlighted when he met with these people who had given themselves over to teaching and preaching that was unwholesome and counterproductive and the reason was as I suggested was a change of focus if you read on down towards the middle of this chapter when I saw that he walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel

I said unto Peter before them all if thou being a Jew loosed after the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews their power is challenging Peter because of his behavior where he has gone away from Christian brethren and chosen to separate himself from them because they are formerly Gentiles and because of their Gentile origins in order to give place to the false teaching that abounds in this congregation he separates himself from them Paul has to challenge that and Paul sees there something very simple we who are Jews by nature are not sinners of the Gentiles knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of

[18 : 15] Jesus Christ even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in simple terms what do you say these people have lost sight of one thing Christ is what is important to the believer not what they themselves are able to do not what they themselves do not do Christ is important and faith in Christ is important focus instead of falling upon Christ and what he has accomplished by his death on the cross they are resorted with what they themselves can do and honour God by so doing it in their opinion in Luther's commentary on this epistle he links in the father and the son the importance of that in the mind of

Paul the grace from the father and the peace from the son and that the believer derives his comfort his consolation his confidence from what God has given to them what God has endowed them with what they have received by grace from God rather than what they have enhanced their own life with by their doing by their saying by their being when you lose sight of that you are at odds with the gospel so in simple terms we begin with Jesus Christ here because Jesus Christ is what's important to the believer and you are what you are because of who Christ is and what Christ has done and if you forget that and instead begin to rest on something that you are or something that you have become even or something that you hope to be then you've moved away from

Christ and moved away from what the gospel insists is essential to the believer the whole point of the apostles to attract attention to what Christ has done he gave himself for our sins give himself for our sins and if we consider the death of Christ in the light of the scripture or light of the bible teaches about his death there are many sides to it many facets to many things concerning the teaching that we find in the scripture given by Paul himself.

We think of the death of Christ as an atoning death, the death of Christ being the means by which sinners who are opposed to God and reconciled to God, sinners who are deserving of hell have their sins taken away by Christ. There is expiation, there is a cleansing from sin. All of these things we find in the teaching concerning the death of Christ. And Paul, in this very simple statement, who gave himself for our sins, he's telling us this is what the death of Christ is all about. This is why our focus is on Christ, because he died on the cross. He died on the cross not for his own sins but for mine and for yours. If he died for you and you believe that and your faith rests upon him as someone who has done that, you have a statement that you can explore to your heart's content. You have a substitutionary atonement, you have a voluntary, self-giving, sacrificial death. All of these things you can allow your mind to explore it, to examine it to your heart's content. Using the scripture to fuel your mind and your heart. But all of your time, it takes you back to this person, the Lord Jesus Christ who did this for you because you were a sinner. And you were a sinner who was held to save him, who was lost and until he saved you, you would have continued in your lostness.

He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world.

[23 : 28] Now every one of us should be convinced of the reality of our sin and the numerous facets to our sinfulness that the scripture highlights for us. But we know that we cannot get away from this truth.

As the scripture brings it to our attention that Jesus Christ died on the cross because of sin and these sins bring your sins and my sins. This epistle to Titus in chapter 2, Paul writes there, same truth.

Looking for that blessed folk, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Our Saviour Jesus Christ, he says, who gave himself for us. That he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, sellers of good works.

Now in the first instance, the centrality of Christ is there. Secondly, there is why he is central, that he is doing this work of salvation, this work of redemption, this work of expiation, this work where atonement lies at its heart. He is responsible for it. He needs to be responsible for it.

Because your sins and my sins are very much on the table before him. He has to deal with them. But then, we need to understand that what he is about in so doing is to redeem us from our sins, to take us from our sins, to create a new passion, to bring to this place where the completed, finished work of Jesus Christ will be served in somebody, in somebody different to the person that he came to save in the first instance.

[25 : 36] That he might deliver us from this present evil world. To tell us, that Jesus did not come into this world to give us a second chance.

Or to give us another opportunity to get things right. Which is what some would suggest by their behaviour.

What Jesus did on the cross was, he did something that every one of us could not do for ourselves. He died on the cross for our sins.

And he died on the cross for our sins. In order to redeem us from our sins and to settle the dead that our sins accrued. That itself is a mystery.

That itself is a mystery. But it's a mystery that has been brought to light by the gospel. So that the believer, the person that God has touched through Jesus Christ can understand.

[26 : 50] I was reading recently, or hearing recently rather, of a husband and wife who were remembering how they were before Christ opened their eyes.

And the only description they could give of themselves was this. It was as if they stood before the cross.

Obviously they weren't doing that. But to their way of thinking, it was as if they came and stood in the presence of the cross and looked at Christ dying.

And one asked the other, why did he do this? And no answer that they could supply could meet what Paul was teaching here.

They could not by nature, they could with the light of their own human understanding, explain what the cross was about. That's what the gospel does. That's what Paul does. That's what Paul does.

[28 : 03] Directs us to what Christ is doing. He died for our sins. In order to save, in order to deliver from this present age.

These words, I suppose, are offensive to many in the world tonight, I don't want to hear them. Because it presupposes a need that they don't feel that they have.

Have you ever tried to convince a person that they have a debt? When they feel that they don't have a debt?

They'll take you and they'll show you their debts and they'll show you every single bill that they received and that's paid in full. But you see, there's a greater debt than that and they will not accept it.

They'll refuse to believe it. Because until God, by his grace, convinces a person of the nature of that debt, what Christ has done on the cross, is not really all that important to them.

[29 : 18] And you see, that brings us back to this. If that is all important, and if that is something that you have been convinced by, and if that is something that you understand, because the light of your understanding has been illuminated by God to allow you to appreciate that, then why is it that the likes of Paul has to say to you, why are you reverting to what you once were before you come to this Christ?

Why are you treating your sins as if you are in some way going to be responsible for that expulsion? Why are you treating your life as if your life is in some way going to be the means by which your salvation is secure?

And that's the way some people are. They depart from the truth. Paul is saying, look, you are in a situation by nature that you need to be rescued and there is only one rescue.

There is only one person that can do that. Why then behave as if you have some other source and some other way of salvation?

You live in a world at the moment that is full of violence and full of all kinds of awful behaviour, immorality, corruption in all its forms and affects this world.

[30 : 57] And we see one of the things that we see in the world. And we see one of the books. But Paul is using a word here that describes the action that Christ needed to take.

That nothing less than that would be able to overcome the plight of this world. And when you understand that, then you understand the futility of the behaviour that Paul is condemning here.

And if we see it in our own lives in any way, if we embrace it in our lives in any way, if we see our sin as if something less than what it is, or something that we can in some way behave with regard to it, as if we can in some way overcome it ourselves, then we've lost sight of what Christ had to do.

What Christ had to do on the cross. Joseph Pippa writes that Christ had to do everything in his power.

And nothing less than all his power to save people from the clutches of Satan. From the clutches and the power of his dominion.

[32 : 08] A dominion that was real. A dominion that was so potent that nothing but nothing would break it apart from an act of his.

Jesus alone can rescue. But this isn't, you notice, something that happened by chance. He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from his present evil world according to the will of God and our Father.

But something again that we need to see and remember and glorify God for. The obedience of his sin is something remarkable.

When we enter into the experience of it. The perfections of it. The advancement of it. As he engages with his providence.

As he is someone who discovers it. Maybe you don't like the idea of the God-man discovering the providence of God.

[33 : 18] Maybe the kind of picture you have of Christ is someone who has a fully odd knowledge of every aorta of detail concerning his life from beginning to end.

But as the God-man, there were things he discovered as he lived in this world and as he journeyed into the path of obedience as God said it before.

As the truth that he knew from birth. As he learned. As he was nurtured in the truth. As he grasps that truth.

As he discovers that truth. And it was a discovery for him. So too. This is in obedience to the will of the Father. Something that is.

Nothing will break it. Nothing will turn him away from it. Nothing will deflect him from it. And that's what we'd have to be.

[34 : 17] So when we look at that. When we think of that. When we bring our own sin into this equation. And our own sinfulness. And our inclination to sin. We need to remember the power of Christ that had to be in operation.

But not. Yes, we are meant to do a whole host of things in response to Christ's finished work. Yes, we are believers. Yes, we are believers.

Yes, we are those who are entrusted with works of righteousness. But not for our salvation. But because we have saved. And that's something else.

The Apostle Paul, if you remember, in chapter 8 of the epistle to the Romans. It reminds us there of something that is true.

He that spared not his son. He says. His own son. He wants this emphasis to be placed upon. He that spared not.

[35 : 18] His own son. He says. But delivered him up for us all. Does he stop there? No, he doesn't. He goes on to say.

How shall he not with himself also freely give us all things? And why is he holding this truth up? Why is he holding Christ up at that?

Because when we resort to doing what is not left to us to do. We offend God.

We cast aspersions upon the finished work of Christ. we say something is inadequate about what Christ has done. We are required by faith to rest and receive Christ, rest upon him, receive Christ as he has freely offered to us in the gospel.

Be content with what he has done on our behalf. This is what was not true about this people. And too many Christians today behave as if this is what is true of them.

[36 : 30] To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. God our Father, Christ the Lord, I believe, ever. God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit.

They are worthy of being glorified by God's truth, but the world over. We have a summary here as it was described. A summary of the gospel, followed by a doxology suitable to the gospel that is proclaimed.

When we're thinking of where we stand before God tonight, we are sinners. Sinners who are saved by his grace. What does that mean for us?

Well, of course, we have meant to respond to his grace in the lives. And to be engaged in everything that the Christian is required to do in response to the gospel.

But none of our responses should undermine that gospel. None of our responses should be anything other than a response to the gospel.

[37 : 40] In other words, to test implicitly in the full, finished work of a saviour that is honoured by God in what he did. May God bless his word to us.

Thank you.