

Galatians 1

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Tonight we kick off our study of the incredible book of Galatians, so would you please turn in your Bibles there.

If you had a 401k in the 1990s and early 2,000, it likely contained the stock of a company called Enron. **SHOW PIC** Do you remember them? Fortune magazine named Enron "America's Most Innovative Company" for six consecutive years. At its peak Enron employed 20,000 employees and was the 7th largest company in America with reported revenues of \$111 billion during 2000. **CLOSE PIC**

But it was all a lie. The executive staff was using accounting loopholes, incredibly complex financing structures and business deals that were so bewildering that they were able to hide billions of dollars in debt from failed deals and projects. One of the more humorous ideas was the thought you could trade weather as a commodity and predict it to make money. The deception spread quickly like a spider web, entangling many.

What's interesting is Enron's CFO had his own scam going on the side that the others didn't even know of and cost the company tens of millions of dollars

I don't know if you remember the rolling blackouts in California in the late 90's early 2000's? All fabricated as part of Enron's deceptive manipulation of supply and demand.

During August 2000, Enron's stock price attained its greatest value of \$90.56 A little over a year later the stock was less than \$1.

Billions of dollars-all gone. All a lie. The deception was on a scale that had never been seen before. It affected millions of Americans.

There was an important lesson learned in corporate America as a result of Enron. Deception creeps in slowly, hides in darkness, and ultimately destroys lives

The 1st chapter of Galatians, where we will be tonight, also tackles the topic of deception. In the entire bible, there is no more passionate, comprehensive, yet concise statement of the truth of the gospel than Galatians.

Galatia is not a specific city like Corinth, rather Galatia is an area, it was located in the northern part of the Roman province in Asia Minor (modern western Turkey).

Paul founded multiple churches in this region of Galatia on his second missionary journey, after the Spirit forbade him to preach in the province of Asia **Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.** Goes to show how we have no idea what the Lord is doing as He opens and closes doors!

The letter to the Galatians is radical, and controversial. Its message blows up traditionalistic and legalistic thinking. It's really the blueprint on Christian love and liberty. And the book of Galatians can take even the most rigid of hearts and set it free.

Galatians dismisses all of our attempts to become righteous by our works, or more righteous through our deeds. Because it's all

about the gospel of grace and justification by faith. In fact, it was this epistle to the Galatians that brought on the Protestant reformation, which was a revolution from the corruptive practices of the church of that day.

SHOW PIC Martin Luther, who started the reformation, was much like Paul the apostle in that he was completely devoted to his religious practices. He was one of the most monkish of all of the monks. Luther had gone to Rome and in order to try and appease God, he was climbing the steps on his knees, one step at a time, offering the prayers at each step. And as he was going up these steps the Spirit of God spoke to his heart out of Paul's letter to the Galatians, 'Martin, the just shall live by faith.' And that burned in his heart. And that was the birth of the Protestant reformation.

CLOSE PIC

This glorious epistle has set countless people free and has brought them into a fruitful relationship with God through faith. This epistle opens the door to all mankind so that we may come freely unto God on the basis of God's love and God's grace, not on the basis of my merit, my works, or my efforts. 17 years ago I remember reading this epistle on the back deck of our house, and it not only spoke to me, it shook me!

Historians believe the original Galatians were immigrants from France. Julius Caesar once commented on the Galatians, "They are fickle. They are fond of change. They are not to be trusted."

And that's the type of people we find in Acts 13-14 when Paul first took the Gospel within their borders... It was at the gate of Lystra

that Paul healed a lame man. The superstitious Galatians assumed Paul was a Greek god. They offered him a sacrifice he refused. Later, the same fickle folks were swayed by Paul's enemies. They attempted to assassinate him by stoning him to death.

And in a sense, rocks were still being thrown at the Apostle Paul when he wrote this letter. Certain Jews were threatened by the grace Paul preached. And when they couldn't kill him, they tried to assassinate his character and throw shade on his apostleship.

I believe this epistle will change our lives if we allow the HS to speak through us, because we all have a little pharisee in our heart that's looking to get out. We love the thought and concept of grace, but the application has stumbled many. Pray that the Lord will do His work in our hearts through this study

We're gonna study all of chapter 1, and the title of tonight's message is The Gift of Grace
Let's pray

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), Paul always began his Epistles in one of two ways: To the Romans and the Philippians, to Titus and Philemon, he introduced himself as a servant, or prisoner of Christ.

To the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Colossians and the Galatians, he presented himself as an apostle. Why? Because to those who embraced and welcomed his ministry, he was a

servant; but to those who challenged his authority, he was an apostle, a “sent one” of Jesus Christ.

Even the opening verse of this letter underscores the fact that Paul’s enemies—those who taught the “three R’s of religion”: rules, regulations, and rituals—sought to undermine the ministry of grace in the region of Galatia by questioning the authority of Paul, just like we saw in Corinth. And of course, this still happens today.

I have a friend who’s a pastor down south in the Bible belt. He planted a Calvary there 40 years ago, and shortly after planting there were lots of folks who wanted to be baptized. So he went to the local Baptist church to ask if he could use their baptistry. People had come to Christ, and needed to be baptized. But when he went to pick up the key, the pastor asked him, "The deacons want to know, are you ordained?" He said, "I guess so. God is blessing our ministry." “No, have you been officially ordained?” See it wasn't enough that God was using him, they wanted to see paperwork.

The irony is that you can have a wall full of ordination certificates, and it only amounts to wallpaper unless God’s hand is on your life. God’s ordination is the only one that counts, and it’s the one Paul appeals to here.

When we ordain someone here, it’s only ratifying and acknowledging the work that God is already doing in their life!

2 and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia: Again that's the area of central Turkey today

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, What is grace? Grace is unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor. **SHOW PIC** The old acrostic still says it best: God's Riches At Christ's Expense—not because of anything you do or have done, but because of who Christ is and what He's done. **CLOSE PIC**

Which is so freeing-it means we don't need to go through rituals, or live under regulations to earn God's approval. The grace of God brings peace in a profound way.

And of course it's always grace and peace, because you can't have peace with God, unless you first understand the grace of God.

Now in most of Paul's letters, this is where he inserts the prayer that he was praying for the church, or he gives a moment of worship. But here, there's no mention of that. Why? Because Paul's heart is too heavy, his heart is overwhelmed with grief for this church because of the issue of legalism that's crept in.

Remember Lord Jesus Christ isn't just a name. It's His Title-Lord. Name-Jesus-and mission-Christ.

4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Back in Genesis we see how God the Father placed this world in the custody of Adam and Eve, our representatives in the Garden of Eden. When they sinned, they in turn transferred ownership of the world to the one to whom they chose to submit—Satan.

This is why when Satan offered Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world in return for worship, Jesus didn't dispute Satan's right to make such an offer! **Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you,[fn] Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'**

The reason the world is so messed up and perverted is because, in rejecting God, mankind gave Satan dominion of the world system.

Now we know that God has placed perimeters around Satan. As we move toward the end of the ages, things will become more and more evil. Evil will run rampant. We see this today don't we?

Luke 17:26 26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone

from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. God's judgment is coming for our nation and our world.

But until the Lord calls us home, He's called us to be on mission here hasn't He?

Christ's death transferred the believer from Satan's power to God's power. Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. There's no need for a defeatist attitude-we win!!

5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Our tendency is to skip past a verse like verse 5, but we can't miss it. The purpose of this saving work by God isn't only to benefit mankind, it's also to glorify God the Father.

The false doctrines that were spreading robbed God of the glory due to Him. Here, by emphasizing the glory of God and His plan, Paul hoped to put them on the right path.

This is the main effects and dangers of legalism. It puts the emphasis on us, rather than God. It says 'look what I've done', instead of looking at what God's done.

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, So-called "spiritual men" came on the scene in Galatia, saying, "It's great that you're born-again Christians and that you believe in the gospel. But it's

not quite that simple. If you really want to be spiritual, you must follow the law—particularly the rite of circumcision.

Paul said, “I marvel that you guys in Galatia have fallen for this.”

Verse 6 says they were "turning away" from the Gospel of grace. The phrase literally means "defecting to the other side." Their faith was vacillating because they were losing their grip on God's grace. They were being lured away by a "different gospel."

If you study world religions you'll identify hundreds, if not thousands of religions. But there's really only one difference between Christianity and every religion in the world. All religions can be summarized as man's attempts to please God. Every world religion emphasizes keeping rules, or performing rituals. It's self-reliance.

But Christianity is God's hand reaching to mankind! God is reaching down through Christ - doing for us, what we could never do for ourselves. This is the true Gospel

Notice too in verse 6 it says they were called into the grace of Christ. The grace of Christ isn't something we can earn, it is not something we deserve, it is not something we can purchase.

It's something that we can only receive as a free gift of God on the basis, not of our works, not of our efforts, not of our merit but on the basis of our simple trust in Jesus Christ. The gospel of the grace of Christ.

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. The Galatians were buying into a distorted version of the truth

It's wisely been said that Satan distorts God's truth in three ways: he twists it, subtracts from it, or he adds to it.

Satan can twist the interpretation of a verse. He makes it say what it was never intended to say. That's the wisdom of the old adage, "A text out of context becomes a pretext." Satan is good at manipulating meanings.

Satan can also subtract from the truth. He dilutes its meaning. AW Tozer once said, "Some have so watered down the Gospel that if it were a medicine it could not cure us, and if it were a poison it would not harm us." A Gospel without repentance of sin is no Gospel at all!

And at times Satan adds to the truth. This was the strategy that was threatening the Galatians. False teachers, called "Judaizers," agreed that salvation was by grace through faith, but... (and be careful of the buts) they added to the work of the cross.

Here was the Judaizers' spiel... Yes, Jesus died to forgive us, but to really please God you need to do stuff. And they had a long list of add-ons, mandatory dos and don'ts.

And when you boil legalism down it teaches that faith in Christ was not really enough - that our works have to be added to His

work. This is what Paul calls "a different gospel" - it was not a Gospel at all...

A wise, old pastor once advised a young apprentice, "Preach a full Gospel - Christ and nothing less. A plain Gospel - Christ and nothing more. And a pure Gospel - Christ and nothing else.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." This is very strong language. The Greek word "accursed" is "anathema" or "damned to hell." Paul couldn't have refuted "any other gospel" more forcefully! And he repeats it to make the message even more emphatic...

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Paul leveled his strongest rebuke against these false teachers. They apparently claimed the highest authority for their teaching since Paul warned his readers to reject it even if it came from angelic messengers sent directly from heaven.

These verses are interesting when you consider that Islam claims that Mohammed received his revelations from the angel Gabriel. Mormonism claims that Joseph Smith received his revelations from the angel Maroni.

Angels come in two varieties - faithful and fallen. And "fallen angels" or "demons" specialize in inspiring different gospels. This is why we need to be firmly grounded in the truth of God's grace.

In order to recognize a fake Gospel you have to know the true Gospel.

This is why it's vital for God's people to become educated in God's Word. This is why we do what we do at CCC!

Awhile back I heard the humorous story of the girl who bought a parrot to keep her company. But she couldn't get the bird to talk. She went back to the pet store, and complained to the owner. He said, "Does your bird have a mirror in his cage? Parrots love mirrors." So she bought a mirror, took it home, put it in his cage, but he still wouldn't talk.

She returned to the pet store, and complained again. This time the owner said, "Does your parrot have a ladder? Parrots love ladders. And a happy parrot is a talkative parrot." So she purchased a ladder, took it home, put it in the cage, but not a peep from the parrot.

She went back a third time. This time the owner told her, "Try a swing. Parrots love swings. Get'm swinging, and he'll talk up a storm." So she bought a swing... Two days later she returned to the pet store. When the owner asked her about the parrot the woman announced he was dead. The owner was shocked! He asked the woman, "Did your parrot ever say anything?"

The woman replied, "Yes, just before he died, in a very soft, faint, weak whisper, my parrot asked me, 'Don't they sell any food at that pet store?'"

So often churches think they need mirrors - pop psychology and introspection... Or ladders - step by step rules and self-help... Or swings - experiential, feelings-based religion... They try to entertain God's people with mirrors, and ladders, and swings - but what God's people really can't live without is God's Word

Last week...

The Crossroads Uptown location in Clifton, housed in the historic Old St. George Church, will no longer function as "a traditional Crossroads site with regular Sunday morning services" after August 6, according to an email sent to church members.

Crossroads has no plans to shut down its operations within the 150-year-old church, however.

Instead, the space will be re-imagined to focus on events and entertainment options like hosting concerts or stand-up shows, the email says.

The re-imagining will "look like big, immersive experiences in the auditorium, weekly ministry events at our building specifically designed for 18-24 year-olds, and a team freed up to run after them," reads the email.

We just need the word.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. Paul's return to Lystra after he was stoned was proof his goal was to obey God, not please people. If you've been following Christ for any length of time, you know that the Christian life

requires making choices that are not always popular. And if my goal is to be well liked and popular pastor, fashionable, and accepted-at-all-costs its only a matter of time before I'll compromise.

All of us need to settle this issue in our hearts before it comes up in our lives - who do we intend to please?

11-12

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ” 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul clarified the source of his gospel message in order to convince his readers that the gospel that he had preached to them was the true gospel. And now Paul reminds them of how he came to the knowledge of the gospel.

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. Paul's gospel wasn't produced by his imagination, and neither was it the result of his Jewish education. He sure wasn't taught God's grace in the Jewish Yeshivas where he attended. His former rabbis were upholders of the law, not dispensers of grace.

Acts 8 1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout

men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Paul was “exceedingly zealous.” He worked hard at climbing the ladder of legalism and Judaism. But that’s not where he found God’s amazing grace.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, Notice, God’s plan for Paul’s life started long before he came to Christ - even before he was born. From his mother’s womb, God had a purpose for Paul.

This is true of all humans! God values human life and has a plan for us even before we’re conceived. This is why we should support an unborn baby’s right to life.

Verse 15 reminds us that the wonder of Christianity is that it’s more than a set of truths to be learned, Christianity is a living Lord we experience in our hearts! Christ was revealed in Paul, and I pray that we allow Christ to be revealed in us!

16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, Pause here...Until he died Paul loved his fellow Jews, but taking the Gospel to the Gentiles was his calling from the start. And after God called him, Paul tells us what happened

...16 I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Interestingly, when Paul was first saved he didn't rush out to teach a Bible Study or join a church. He wanted to seek the Lord personally and privately. He went out into the wilderness of Arabia. He wanted to seek God before he consulted with anyone else.

It just goes to prove that God home schools His kids.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,[fn] and remained with him fifteen days. Oh, to have been a fly on the wall for that conversation! I'm sure at times Paul had hunted after Peter!!

19-22

19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

21 Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. Paul's status as unknown is certainly different from our own habit of puffing up any prominent convert as soon as they come to Jesus. Paul was happy to spend many years in obscurity before God raised him up.

23 But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God in me. God's grace radically changed Paul! It's changed me, and I bet it's changed many of you too!

Verse 24 is what it's all about isn't it? For the breath we have
have in our lungs, for as long as we have whatever time left alive
on this earth, do folks glorify God in our lives?