

Galatians 1:1-17

Gospel Mirage

Image Church // Galatians: Week 1

Intro

Good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well! Hey, listen, we had an incredible Easter last weekend!

- Across **two services** we saw **a total of 312** people on site here, which is absolutely incredible!
- Thanks to all of you who partnered with us to make that happen!

*And listen if Easter was your first time and you're back with us this weekend, welcome!

- This is a great time to jump into the life of our church!

This morning, we're kicking off a brand new series where we're going to be walking through the book of Galatians...

- *Now, I know that for some of you, this may be new for you. Maybe you've never walked through a book of the Bible like we're going to do...* That's ok, I promise if you hang with us it will be fun, and life-giving!
- My goal is to teach in such a way so that you learn the Bible and how to read and understand it on your own!

So, if you have your Bible, grab it and turn to Galatians 1

- **BTW**, if you don't have a copy of God's Word, we have one for you at the connections center, so make sure to grab one!

In our society, there are **2 kinds of Bankruptcy**—I hope that you haven't had to experience either, but there's 2 basic types of

Bankruptcy: **Chapter 7** and **Chapter 11**, and they are both very different...

- **Chapter 11 bankruptcy** is basically a reorganization—you're moving some assets around, dealing with some debts and flaws, and fixing some problems, with the goal of turning things around and moving back into the profit margins...
- **Chapter 7 bankruptcy** is much more serious. Chapter 11 is temporary, and Chapter 7 is permanent... You are broke, literally completely bankrupt. There's no money left, no backup plan, no getting your act together or reorganizing, no other options to fix things, the debt is too big, and there is no way for you to overcome it...

Here's the parallel I want you to see...

- When you come to Christ, you have to declare **Chapter 7 bankruptcy** spiritually... The debt is too big, there's nothing you can do, there is no way you can clean up my act or reorganize your life on my own, there's no other options to fix who you are, you declare total and complete bankruptcy.
- God, you have to pay the debt for me- you have to reset my life...

But here's the thing, there's the *drift* that can happen... Where we started **Chapter 7** (*the debt is too big, God has to pay it for me*), but then we began to drift toward Chapter 11 bankruptcy...

- Where you start thinking that you can make it on your own...
- You just kinda move past Jesus' work that saved you...
- And you **recognize** some things need to change, but now it's about what you can do to manufacture that change...
- If I can just reorganize my life here, and do some things there, follow these few principles, then I'll be set...

What happens is, when you first came to Christ, you understood that you had no ability, you had nothing, and Christ had everything ...

But after you've been a Christian for a while, you start to think: *You know what, if I could just get:*

- 3 points on how to improve my marriage
- 4 points on how to be a better employee
- 6 points on how to be a better parent¹
- ***Then I'll be good to go...***

This is where some of you are this morning. You've drifted...

- From what's been done to what you can do...

For some of you, you think Christianity's a set of rules that you follow... And if you're honest, you've never really known **how to interact with Christianity** because if you look too much into it, you start feeling guilty, **or** it starts to feel **cumbersome** because you feel like you have all these things that you need to do for God...

- So, for you, it's more something you've just kinda affiliated with, but you've never really understood it...

For some of you, you're lacking motivation spiritually... Or you're **looking for change**, you want a fresh start, or you want to turn over a new leaf... *I feel you!*

What we're going to see in the book of Galatians is that it speaks to all of this by holding up the **centrality** of the gospel...

- Showing us how the ***gospel's not just the start of the Christian life but it is the essence of Christian life...***

And when you understand that, it fundamentally changes everything...

- See, the gap for many is that you know about the gospel, but you don't understand the **implications** of the gospel on your life...

Which is why you're always looking for a list of things to do, or why you don't feel spiritually motivated, or why you kinda ride the fence, with one foot in, and one foot out when it comes to Christianity...

A little over 500 years ago, a guy named **Martin Luther** initiated what was called the Protestant Reformation because, for centuries, **religion** and **man-made traditions** had covered up the gospel...

And Martin Luther considered Galatians to be the most important book of the Bible...

- Because he said that Galatians explains what the gospel is not.²

And when we understand what it's not, it helps us more clearly see what it is!... *Alright, let's jump in!*

Galatians 1:1-10

1 Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead—**2** and all the brothers who are with me:

To the churches of Galatia.

Ok, so a little overview:

- **Galatians** is classified as an **Epistle**... ***Epistle means letter***...
- There's 21 *epistles (letters) in the bible, all of them are in the NT... Paul wrote 13 of them*...
- I've told you before but there's **7 major genres** when it comes to the literary makeup of the Bible...
 - *Law, History, wisdom, poetry, narrative, epistles, Prophecy/end times*...
 - Each of these genres is read and taught differently based on the context of its literary genre...
- It's vital that you know what genre you're dealing with so that you can read and understand the Word rightly...

So the book of **Galatians** was a letter written by Paul, an **Apostle**...

¹ "Bankruptcy" intro adapted from Bruce Frank, sermon. Galatians: *Jesus+nothing=everything*.

² Facts on Luther from JD Greear, sermon. *Freedom in the in-between: A freedom worth fighting for*, Gal. 1:6-10.

- Qualification for **Apostle** seeing the resurrected Jesus... **Acts 1:21-22**... There were **12 apostles**- *Matthias replaced Judas*... **Acts 1:26**
 - Paul was appointed as an apostle by Jesus, and it was affirmed by the other 12...
- This office of **Apostle** no longer exists... **Eph 2:20** shows us the office existed for a time with specific men for the purpose of establishing the church, and writing the NT...

The point is: This letter is the Word of Jesus through his authoritative representative Paul...

- **IOW:** *When we read Galatians, we are reading the Words of Christ.*

This letter from Paul is to the churches in **Galatia**...

- Galatia was a region- it's where modern-day **Turkey** is...

Paul's writing to a region of churches... Some people mistakenly refer to the book of Galatians as Paul's letter to the *church of Galatia*... But he's writing to the churches of **Galatia**...

That's important for us to understand because what we need to see is that what Paul's going to address here in **Galatians** is a major issue that's spread to an entire region...

- This isn't about *one person or even one church*... What's happening here is pervasive to the point where it's affecting an entire region...
- *We're going to see what that is here in just a little bit*...

*Let's keep reading, **verse 3:***

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave himself for our sins to **rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.** **5** To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

I want to challenge you to memorize these verses... Here's why...

This is a very odd beginning for Paul, but it's very intentional. He's holding up a preview of what's coming in the rest of the letter...

Key theme: Jesus gave Himself for our sins to rescue us!

- *Flesh out*...
- **Illustration:** Man in the middle of the ocean on a small boat sinking...

Verse 6: I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—**7** not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him!

Another element of an odd beginning for Paul, this is the only place he does what He does here... no warm welcome, no personal greetings... He just jumps right in...

- He's ticked... righteously angry... This is a rebuke... (**good model for us btw**)
- He just jumps straight in...
- We get to see the problem here... That there's been a drift away from the gospel to a distorted version of it...

Verse 9: As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him! *And then he gives a little caveat*... **Verse 10:** For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Ok, so here's what's going on... There was a group of people who had infiltrated the region of Galatia called the **Judaizers** who would consider themselves to be **Jewish Christians**...

Here was the problem: they were teaching that in **addition** to Christ, there were certain laws that you needed to observe in order to be accepted by God...

And if you do that— *if you obey these laws*— then you could transform yourself into the person that God wants you to be, and you can truly be in right standing before Him.

Basically, the idea was **Jesus + works of the law = salvation**

And this was ***not at all*** the message that founded the churches in **Galatia**- the churches in Galatia were founded on ***grace alone, by faith alone in Christ alone***.

*And so, Paul's confronting them saying *I'm shocked how fast you have turned away...*

- **In the original language**- Paul's making a **hard contrast**... They are doing the opposite of living in the grace of Christ...

Paul's point is that they are embracing a ***false gospel...*** **Gospel** means *good news*- they were embracing something that's not good news. It goes against the good news of Jesus...

- It actually distorted the work of Jesus...

Paul's like, why are you listening to this, why are you embracing it?!?

- You know the truth. Why are you turning away from it...

It doesn't matter who is teaching it... even if it's an **angel** from heaven, YOU DON'T LISTEN!

- That's a pretty bold statement... *But an important one...*

What Paul says right there directly goes against the very foundation of Islam and Mormonism...

- **Muslims** believe that Mohamad heard from an angel...
- **Mormons** believe Joseph Smith had a revelation from an angel...

And what each of the ***"heard"*** directly opposes the message that Paul is holding up here in Galatians and the rest of the Bible for that matter...

So, if you're talking with a Muslim or a Mormon and they tell you that you *should* listen because of the *revelation of an angel*... Just take them to **Galatians 1:8**! It will lead to a good conversation!

So here's the question we need to ask ourselves: Are you believing a false gospel?

Now, for most of you, at first glance, you're like, *No shot- not me...*

Here's the problem- it's so easy for us to become blinded to our belief structure to where we don't even realize what we're actually believing...

- We may say one thing based on the way that we think and live, revealing that functionally believe something else... a ***false gospel***.

Let me give you a **general** definition of what it means to believe a false gospel to help you understand what I mean, and then I am going to flesh it out...

You're believing a false gospel when you view your standing before God based on anything other than **faith** in the **finished work of Jesus**.

One of the ways the false gospel plays out is through **Legalism**, the idea that your salvation rests on your ability to follow the rules...

- Where it's all about your ability to be religious...

Illustration: When I ask someone where they are spiritually- 9/10 times they point out what they've done...

- This is where some of you are this morning...

Some of you are like, that's not me I know that's not how it works...

- Do you?!?

Then ***why do you so often feel like God views you based off your week and not off His work?!?!?***

This is why a lot of you don't really come in here and worship...

- You feel good this week, God's happy!
- Bad week God's mad...
- And it impacts your worship... Sometimes you don't even show up!

Listen, I don't know about you, but ***the fight against legalism is a grind!***

It's so easy to fall into the lie of believing that God is sitting up in Heaven with a grade book checking off what I did to decide whether or not He is going to be mad or not.

Let me tell you what else is tied to legalism... **Guilt**...

Guilt is when you feel disqualified, and God's grace isn't good enough or sufficient for you... You wanna talk about a ploy from the enemy- this is one of the top ones...

- This is something that ***subdues*** you. It ***paralyzes*** you...
- There is a difference between conviction and guilt... Conviction is designed to bring you back the gospel. Guilt keeps you away from it...

*Now, let me be clear on this before I move on because I don't want to pendulum to swing the complete opposite direction in this...

- Paul's **not** against the law. It has its place... What he's against is elevating the law to a place where you assume it's what makes you right with God, or that it's the secret to experiencing power or change in the Christian life.³

So, don't hear me say do whatever you want, then chalk it up to grace... That's not what I am saying- and if that's you, then you don't understand the magnitude of the grace that you're being flippant with... The grace that Jesus offers compels us to respond...

The gospel isn't freedom to sin, it's empowerment to run from it!

A false gospel says do. The true gospel says done!

The reality for us is that we are dead in our sins, not drowning, not being swept away. WE **ARE DEAD**...

We lived according to the ways of this world. We lived out our fleshly desires in our actions and thoughts. Because of that, we are under the **wrath of God** for our rebellion against Him...

GOSPEL: God came down... Jesus was perfect in our place, went to the cross as payment in our place... Rose from the dead- proving He's God and extending to us new life in and through His finished work!

- There's nothing that you can contribute to that! TO contribute is to minimize what Jesus did!

There is **no other gospel** apart from ***grace alone, by faith alone in Christ alone!***

So, listen, when you believe anything other than ***grace alone, by faith alone in Christ alone***, you are ***distorting*** the gospel, ***minimizing*** and ***degrading*** the finished work of Jesus...

One of the things that God is teaching me is that I have to start going back to the gospel quicker and believing it sooner...

- ***Explain***...
-

You want to really experience worship- can't understand why you're not motivated...

- Learn to understand that God's love for you isn't contingent on you!
- Good week= Love
- Bad week= Love
- Understanding THAT leads to worship!

³ JD Greear, sermon. *Freedom in the in-between: A freedom worth fighting for*, Gal. 1:6-10.

Let's look at how Paul walks through this...**Verse 11:**

11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. **12** For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul's picking back up on what he said at the very beginning of **Galatians 1**, where he claimed that he was *an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead...*

Why is he going back to this?

Well, the people teaching this false gospel, the **Judaizers**, were trying to **discredit** Paul because it was the gospel he had preached that founded these churches in the first place...

- Discredit Paul, discredit the gospel he's preaching...

And so, these **Judaizers** were going around saying that Paul wasn't really an apostle, that what he was teaching was flawed second-hand information from the **real apostles**...

And so, Paul's arguing for the truth of the gospel that he's preaching...

- That it's not some **second-hand** thing that he picked up, he's not twisting things around, he's not being disobedient... Just the opposite, he's being obedient to what God has called him to do, which we'll see in just a little bit...⁴

Paul wants to establish his **independent authority** as an apostle, to **validate** the truth and authority of the gospel he's preached...

But instead of just saying, *hey guys, remember, I'm in charge, I have authority, you need to listen to me...*

- He's gonna prove to them that the gospel that he taught them and the gospel that he is claiming is legit, and the evidence is in his story...

Verse 13...

13 For you have heard about my **former** way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. **14** I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. **15** But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased **16** to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. **17** I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.

Paul goes to his own testimony...

Illustration: I don't know if this is true for you, but I'm all about **Amazon**, specifically **Amazon Prime**... It's crazy what all you can get delivered to your house in 2 days!

- **Hunting gear to the house ASAP!**

But what's even better is the **customer review process**... You know you have the little stars and how many reviews have been given for whatever you're looking at...

- I only search by rating...
- **I am guilty of always looking at the review but never giving a review... anyone else like that?**

Not only is there a star rating, but what I love is that at the bottom, there's a personal testimonies section where people write out a review, they can post pictures and videos about the product...

And here's what that does, and here's why I like it... You have no idea who the vendor is that you're buying from, and the product isn't physically in front of you...

- But the way that you can know what you're buying and trust what you're buying is through the testimonies that are given on the page...

⁴ Adapted from John Piper, sermon. *This is not man's gospel*. Feb. 13, 1983.

See, at the end of the day, the personal testimonies prove what you're looking at to be **real** and **reliable**...

What we're going to see is that Paul is going to defend the **validity** and **truth** of the gospel that he is preaching by holding up his personal story, his testimony...

Oftentimes the most **persuasive evidence** of Jesus' existence comes through what He has done in your life... And that's what Paul's does...

*****What validates Christ's work is Christ in you!*****

Appeal for the power of testimonies... Do you have one?

It's impossible to have always been a Christian...

Every spiritual story starts with the same thing...

- **Chapter 7 bankruptcy:** The debt is too big, there's nothing you can do, there is no way you can clean up my act or reorganize your life on my own, there's no other options to fix who you are, you declare total and complete bankruptcy.
- God, you have to pay the debt for me- you have to reset my life...

Appeal for baptism as a miss for many when it comes to their story...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Start your story today!

Christian, stop turning away from the true gospel... Walk in freedom!!!

Pray