

No Other Gospel

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[0 : 00] Cool. Thank you, Bear. How's everyone doing this morning? Good to see all your faces. I'm just so pumped. This is a really cool season to be in as far as our church goes. And if you don't know me, my name is Jesse. I have the privilege to be one of the pastors here. And as Bear pointed to the fact that we are kicking off a new series going through the book of Galatians, short little letter in the New Testament towards the back of your Bible. If you are just here checking out Christianity, exploring what it looks, who this person Jesus is and what it looks like to follow him, man, we are so glad you're here. And it's a great time to come. Even though this book was written originally to believers, it is all about what it means to believe in Jesus and what that looks like.

So I think it's going to be super helpful for you in learning all of that and pointing you to Jesus and who he is. So let's jump into it. If you have your Bible, Galatians chapter one, verses one through nine is what we're going to be working from today. All right. So Galatians, let's just, I want to kind of provide some context and background to this book. It was written by this guy named Paul. Paul was this apostle, one of the first of the original apostles in the New Testament. And so he wrote this letter to churches in Galatia. Now, Galatia, if you're wondering where that's at, it's a region in modern day Turkey, probably the Southern area of Turkey. And so he is writing this letter, but he's not writing as a stranger, right? He's not like, he's not like this letter doesn't show up and these people are like, well, who the heck is this guy, Paul? And why is he writing to us? No, actually what we see in Acts, the book of Acts verses or chapters 13 and 14 is this historical account of him going through that region of Galatia and to those cities and preaching this gospel message. And then what comes out of that. And, and here's this gospel message that he preached, Acts 13, 38 to 39. He's saying this to people that don't know Jesus at all. Let it be known to you, therefore brothers, that through this man, Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. And by him, everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

And that was like a short little synopsis of the gospel message that these Galatian Christians first received from Paul. And then it says that many heard that message and they believed and they became disciples of Jesus. And then out of that, these churches were planted in Galatia. And that's why, man, these, these aren't strangers. Paul isn't a stranger to them. They aren't strangers to Paul, man. He loves them.

These people, these churches are so precious to him. He put in blood, sweat, and tears, like literally blood. He had to escape for, for his life a few times from some of these cities because people were, didn't want him preaching that gospel. They were getting jealous. They were getting angry. And so they had to run for their lives on a few occasions. And in one of these cities, Lystra, he was taken out of the city by an angry mob stoned. Okay. Not like stoned, but like stone. Okay. So, and I'll ask you, it wasn't like they were throwing like pebbles at him, like chasing him off, like running away. No, they intended to kill him. We're talking like big, huge rocks that grown men were chucking at him in hopes that he would die. And so he was stoned, left for dead because of the gospel message.

[3 : 29] Then Paul, man, I love this dude. He is like OG. All right. He, he gets up and goes back into the city, like after that. Right. Acts 14 verses 20 says, but when the disciples gathered about him, this is after he'd been stoned, they're like hovering over his body. He rose up and entered the city. And then on the next day, he went on with Barnabas to Derb. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, all major cities in the region of Galatia. What were they doing? They were strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in

every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. How many of us would, would do that? How many of us after being treated like that, after being run out and accosted by people and, and almost killed would go back to those places to encourage disciples of Jesus? And man, we look at Paul, man, he was all in for these churches. He loved them. He was just pouring himself out. He was willing to even do this to the point of death at the cost of his own life.

Such was his love for these churches in Galatia. He loves these guys. He was, he was willing to do that. And that is why he writes this letter. He writes to them because of his love for them. And what had happened is after Paul left, what we just read about after he left, some very well-meaning, but misguided Christians came in with a different gospel. And most likely these men came from the church in Jerusalem. Like that first church in Jerusalem that started out, some guys came in and they are sometimes referred to as Judaizers or the circumcision party. Like that's not a great way to recruit people, right? Hey, you want to join the circumcision party? Probably don't have a lot of dudes in that, right? Because, because this, this party, this group of people, they were insisting that Christians, even Gentile Christians must follow Jewish customs. As Philip Ryken in his commentary points out, they taught that a Gentile had to become a Jew before he could become a Christian. In short, their gospel was Jesus plus the law of Moses. But that is in sharp contrast to the gospel that Paul was preaching that we read about in that, that, in Acts, right? He, he said that it's, that freedom is only found in Christ. Freedom from sin and death is in Christ alone, not the law of Moses. It can't come through the law of Moses. And so this letter called Galatians is Paul writing to expose the false gospel of the Judaizers and prove that there is only one gospel. So let's pick up in verse one. It says this,

Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through man, but through who? Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead and all the brothers who are with me to the churches of Galatia. Grace to you and peace from who? God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. So Paul starts this letter off, not by running at these false teachers and condemning them or anything. He's not doing that. He gives a simple yet powerful reminder of what the gospel is. And it's this, everything that matters comes from God alone, by his grace alone. Paul kicks us off by pointing us to God, by pointing us to God's grace, by pointing us to the fact that everything good that we have comes from him and through him. Paul even says that of himself. Like he was a

[7 : 39] Christian, he was a disciple, he was an apostle, but it wasn't mad made. It wasn't because of his great efforts. It wasn't because of some religious pedigree that he had. It was by God's grace alone.

And let me tell you guys, that's good news for all of us in this room. If you're here and you aren't a Christian, you're not saved, it means that you don't have to have it, you don't have to get it all together before you can be a Christian. Paul was the most unlikely candidate, not only to be a disciple of Jesus, but to become an apostle, to be sent by Jesus to proclaim the good news. And he was in the business of jailing and killing Christians before Jesus stepped in and interrupted his life. On the road to Damascus, he's going to persecute some more Christians. Jesus comes in and says, hold on, stop. Jesus reveals himself. The resurrected, ascended Jesus knocks him off his donkey and speaks to him from heaven and says, Paul, stop persecuting me. He reveals himself to Paul. And that's the amazing part of Paul's conversion. So again, it reminds us, man, Christians, we don't get our confidence from what we've done. We don't get our confidence in our relationship to God and who we are from anything that we've done. It's all in what Jesus did for us.

And so Paul could say confidently that who he was didn't come from man nor through man, but it was through Jesus and God the Father. Man, from God alone, by grace alone. And this setting apart as an apostle happened within the church too. God used the church to set him apart for a particular mission and a particular role in the kingdom of God. In the city of Antioch, that's where Paul kind of landed after his conversion. He spent some time there. So he's in a church meeting and look at what happens. Acts 13. Now there were in the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers. It goes on to name some, Paul being one of them. And while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, he said through a man or a woman during the service, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying, what does the church do? They laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So Paul, he has all the best credentials you could ask for, right? The best character witnesses anybody could have if you were on trial. He has God the Father backing him up. He has God the Son backing him up. He has God the Holy Spirit backing him up saying, he spoke through a person at a church meeting, say, hey, I've got a specific role for Paul. We're sending him out. And the church is like, yes, agree, got your back. So we have all these witnesses knowing who Paul is and what his message is and saying, man, we want you to go with that message. They send him out knowing who he is and what he believes. And guys, this is a great gift. This is one of the powerful things about being a part of the church. Man, God's mission is raising up disciples in a local church and then sending them out.

I pray one day, man, I believe us as a church, we're going to do that. We're going to see that happen. We raise up disciples. And let me be honest, like some of you that are in the military, Marines or Coast Guard or Navy, you're here for a short period of time and then you go off somewhere else. And man, we are so stoked to have you with us for that short period of time. But man, you know what? We see this as an amazing opportunity. We would love for you to stay with us all the time, forever and ever and ever. But the reality is God has a different plan. And so while you're here, boom, we're going to like invest in you. We want to help you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 13] Because we know as you go out and man, as a disciple, you're going to new places and you can make a difference. The gospel gets to infiltrate and go in so many different directions because of that. We get to be this amazing hub sending out and sending out. But then there's also the fact that, man, God is going to raise up guys homegrown here that are going to launch out and plant churches and do different things. And that is the huge gift of the church is that we get to raise up disciples, send them out so they can make disciples and push back darkness in new areas. That's what we want to do. So Paul is in this church. He's known and is mentioned as one of the teachers in verse one. And so this church knows the gospel he is teaching. They affirm it. They send him out, go tell it to the world. And it just reminds us, man, while we're saved by grace alone, while we're saved by God alone, it doesn't mean that we follow Jesus alone. That's not what happens. See, Paul is an alone ranger. He writes this letter as an apostle called by God, but he talks about all the brothers who are with me. Paul is saying here, this isn't just my gospel.

This just isn't my version of things. It's our gospel, right? And the gospel is what brings us together and keeps us together. Now it's easy to miss how revolutionary the Christian faith was at the time this letter was written. And in the context, it was written, right? Actually, it was so counter-cultural to the rest of society. In those days, society divided up over race, over ethnicity, over class. Here's an example. If you were a Gentile, you couldn't go full Jew, okay? You could eat kosher. You could even get circumcised, but you couldn't get into the VIP places of the temple of Jerusalem. In the temple, there was this dividing wall that Gentile worshipers, they could go into a certain place. And then this dividing wall that says, sorry, you can't go any further. That's only for real Jews, ethnic Jews. In the Ephesians, Paul refers to this as the dividing wall of hostility. But this exclusivity wasn't unique just to Judaism. Most religions in that day were divided around race, ethnicity, and geography. And in society itself, there was also a bunch of segregation points based upon race or wealth or class. That's how it worked back in the day. But

Christianity, while claiming an exclusive way to salvation, was radically inclusive, okay? Christianity was this new society, this new people that God was forming within the existing society.

It brought people together across various races and ethnicities and classes and wealth. It crossed all the dividing lines. And that's because the central message of Christianity is that in Christ, you have this new identity, this new primary identity, you are first and foremost, a child of God adopted into the family of God, which is why you see the New Testament writers call their fellow Christian brothers and... Let me try that again. That's why you see in the New Testament, the writers often called their fellow Christians brothers and sisters. It was a very common way that they referred to each other. See, faith in Jesus, what it does, it brings you into this new mystical family. I mean, not in a sense that you can't see one another, but in a sense that, man, you look around and you see, hey, God's forming something here that we don't all have to look alike, you know? We don't all have to be the same race. We don't all have to be of the same class of wealth or have a certain hobby that we're into. No, he's bringing us all together, making this new society where everyone has equal value and dignity before him. Galatians 3, 26 to 28 talks about this. It says, for in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into

Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. So we see this, like, this unity, right? This equality that we have together. But here's the thing about Christianity.

[15 : 41] Although there's unity and it brings us together, it doesn't deny our uniqueness. Man, if God made you black or brown or white or whatever, he loves that about you. If God made you to be a man or a woman, he loves that about you. And while the church is this champion of unity, it is also the celebrator of diversity. Tim Keller says this, Christianity radically asserted that your faith in Christ became your new deepest identity. While at the same time, not effacing or wiping out your race, class, and gender, instead, your relationship to Christ demoted them to second place. Christianity exalts your identity in Christ as the highest value. That's the primary thing that you are, but it doesn't force you to have to look and act like everyone else. We don't become cookie-cutter people. Everyone looks the same and acts the same. Man, if you, this is what I love about Christianity, and this is what is unique to our religion. You could go to a church service in the Congo, or you could go to a church service in

Brazil, and you are going to experience a culturally appropriate expression of Christianity and worship in that place. And it looks a lot different to what we do here. There's a lot more moving and shaking that happens. I mean, they're just like, they're a little more, there's a lot more freedom there, right?

Heck, let me point this out. We have a very different style of service to our friends here at Cherry Point Baptist Church, right? But that is the beauty of the Christian faith. It doesn't matter whether or not you wear suits or jeans, have tattoos or not. If you wear hats or shoes or sandals, short hair, long hair.

But if you have a mullet, we got to draw the line somewhere, guys. Here's the thing. Christians don't have a uniform, right? Unless you count the principle modest as hottest. But everything else is like, there's a lot of freedom. You can worship any time during the day in any type of building, in any type of language and music style. There is a ton of freedom. I remember as a kid, we had a pastor from Ghana stay with us. He was this dude. He was so cool. Pastor Bonnie.

He had this big, booming voice. And he would sing worship songs. He just walked around our house or chilled, and he was just always singing worship songs in his native language. And with the rhythm and the style that was unique to the Ghanaian Christians. And it was beautiful. And it was so different to the songs that I grew up singing in my dad's church. But I love that. I love that about the church of God around the world. It represents this beautiful picture of heaven, right? Where we talked about every nation and tribe and tongue together, one voice, every language worshipping God. It's an amazing thing.

[18 : 37] But while Christianity is very inclusive, we can't take that too far. While Jesus tore down the dividing walls of hostility that separated us, Jesus is still the only way in, okay? The rest of this book is Paul fighting tooth and nail to defend the purity of that gospel. And where he is drawing the line is where we have to draw the line. The gospel is where we make our stand. And this is what he is so upset about.

In verse 6, he gets right into it. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort, adjust, shift, add to, take away, reduce the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, just in case you thought, no, Paul, you couldn't have meant accursed. He's like, let me repeat myself. I'm going to double down on this. If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. I hope you are hearing Paul's urgency here. Because we need to pick that up. He is drawing a clear line in the sand. He is saying that there is one authentic gospel. And then there's a bunch of counterfeits. A counterfeit gospel is just like fake money or fool's gold or cubic zirconium. They have all the appearance of the real deal, but when put up to scrutiny, they're found to be worthless. When you really start digging into them and you really start looking at them, they're actually completely worthless. So Paul is telling them, guys, wake up, watch out. Something bad has happened. People are pushing counterfeit gospels on you guys.

And even well-meaning people. Well-meaning people do that. You know that the greatest heretics in the church, in church history, were some of the most sincere people. They were just sincerely wrong is the problem. Okay? Being sincere about what you believe isn't enough. So how do you

and I keep from believing, keep from falling into counterfeit gospels? Well, think about this. The FBI trains people to detect counterfeit money. And the training doesn't involve looking at counterfeit bills. All their time is spent inspecting and handling the authentic money. That's what they do. They put them in a room and for hours upon hours upon hours upon hours, they are looking at, they are inspecting, they are getting to know intimately the details of what the money looks like and tastes like and feels like. Tastes like. I guess, I guess some may do that. I have no idea.

[22 : 12] But here's the thing. You can't, you can't detect what is counterfeit without spending time in the authentic. Okay? You can't. And the book of Galatians is Paul putting the authentic gospel in front of us over and over and over again. So what is this authentic gospel message?

Well, he drills down to its simplest essence. I think I had a verse three or chapter three, verse 16, but I actually think it's two verse 16. So my bad. It's two verse 16. Don't show the slide on the screen. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law.

We know that a person is not justified. You can't be made righteous by works of the law, or to say it another way, by your own effort, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus. This is what we believed in order to be justified by faith in Christ. That's why we believed in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law, by your own effort, no one will be justified. The authentic gospel that Paul is going to hit on time and time again is that justification, becoming righteous, is only by faith in Jesus Christ.

That's it. Only by faith in Jesus Christ. How many of us here in this room think we've achieved perfection as a person? How many of us here have said like, you know what? I finally made it. I've arrived.

Thank you for not raising your hand. All right. I think, but I think we all agree. None of us are there. We haven't really arrived. None of us think that. There's inside of us this drive to become a better person. All of us have this sense of like, man, I know I'm not what I should be.

[24 : 29] And you know what? Science can't pin that down. You don't have to be a Christian to think that way. Everyone thinks that way. Why does every single human being have this primal push to become better, to better themselves? Have you ever thought of that? Have you ever considered and searched out the answer to that question and why that is? Well, the Bible teaches us that this drive isn't biological.

It's actually spiritual. Our impulse, your impulse to improve, my impulse to improve is because at a soul level, we know that we aren't what we should be. That there is some kind of benchmark that we are falling short of. So the question then becomes, what is that benchmark? What is that benchmark that is causing this consistent, uninterrupted, nagging feeling that I need to be more than I am? Well, the Bible calls this benchmark righteousness. And not just righteousness, God's righteousness. And achieving that is behind that driving force at the core of our existence. And here's the problem, guys. The authentic gospel says that you and I can't get there. You and I can't get there. We will never achieve justification or complete righteousness by our own efforts. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, a fair question might be, well, how does that help? How does that happen? How does that work? Because through faith in Jesus, your sins, your unrighteousness is taken away. It's forgiven in him.

But also, Jesus's righteousness is given to us. It's reckoned to us, right? Martin Luther called that the great exchange, that our sins were taken off of us and put on Jesus, so they're not counted to us anymore. And then Jesus's perfect record of righteousness is considered and counted towards us.

This amazing exchange that happened. It's by faith alone. It's by grace alone. And it's from God alone. Jesus alone achieved the righteousness we seek. He never sinned. He only did what pleased God.

[26 : 50] And he fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law. See, Paul's saying, to become righteous, you would have to fulfill the law perfectly. And Jesus did that for us.

Think about this, guys. Think about this. Every law demands obedience to it. That's even in our world, all right? That's like not talking spiritual stuff, just like, think about this. There's laws that govern how fast we can go on any given road, right? Now, if you don't obey that law, you break that law, you are guilty of breaking that law, right? Kevin Bryce doesn't have to pull you over and give you a ticket to know that you broke that law. According to that law, you are a lawbreaker. You are guilty of breaking that law. And that never changes. You can keep the speed limit for the rest of your

life, but you can't say that you are perfectly righteous according to that specific law because of that one incident. Now, think about this. Let's move it over to God's law, God's demand for righteousness.

The first and greatest commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. So to be righteous or justified according to the law means that you and I can never break that at any point in our life. Not for one second. You and I are screwed.

We're in trouble. Because we all fall short of that. We all fall short of that. There's no way we can keep that. And once you break that law, it's broken. You ain't going back. You are no longer justified. You are no longer justified by the law. You will never be justified by the law. You are constantly being condemned by it. The law can't deliver you from sin. All it can do is diagnose sin. That's it. And so the law stands back at us and it points out where we fall short. That's where you fell short. That's where you fell short. That's where you fell short. There is no hope in being justified by your own effort. None. Zero hope. Justification is only through faith in Jesus Christ.

That is the authentic gospel. And unless we hold fast to that, unless we remind ourselves of it all the time, man, guys, we are going to latch on to counterfeit gospels without even knowing it.

[29 : 18] And here's the reality, guys. Counterfeit gospels, they're not coming to us outside of the church. They're coming at us from inside the church today. Are you able to distinguish the true from the counterfeit? There's the prosperity gospel, that Jesus is the way to financial gain.

There's the gospel of self, that Jesus is the way to achieving personal fulfillment. There's the gospel of religious tradition, that Jesus is the way to respectability.

Or the gospel of morality, that Jesus is the way to be a good person. Now, don't get me wrong. No, it's not bad to be wealthy or happy or well-behaved. It's just that those things aren't the good news. And these counterfeit gospels, what they do is they often agree with this idea that, man, we are justified in Jesus. The problem is, is they add on, but there's just a little bit more.

But here's the thing, and this is what Paul's getting at. To add on just a little bit more is to do what the Galatians were doing, which he says this about them, man, you are deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to another gospel. When we start to accept and believe and live out these counterfeit gospels, we're not just missing it a little bit.

According to Paul, it says we're deserting our Savior. We're turning from him and we're walking away. That's brutal stuff. It's like, man, Paul, can you just like chill a little bit?

[30 : 53] Is it really that drastic? Yes, it is. John, in his book, Revelation, is writing to churches and he's pointing out some things they're doing well and he's pointing out some things they're not doing well. And one of the churches, he's saying, while you're having your church meetings, Jesus is standing outside knocking on the door saying, hey guys, you forgot about me.

You've left me out of this equation. And that can happen. It's easy to do church and not have the gospel or Jesus in it. Ray Ortlund Jr. imagined what our churches and personal lives might look like if we took away the centrality of the gospel. And it might look like this, a passionate devotion to the pro-life cause. A confident manipulation of modern managerial techniques. A drive toward church growth.

A deep concern for the institution of family. A clever appeal to consumerism by offering a sort of cost-free Christianity light. A cultivation of sympathetic and empathetic community.

A determination to take America back to its Christian roots through political power. And a warm affirmation of self-esteem. He goes on to say, in other words, the church without the gospel would look very much the way it does at this very moment. The greatest danger, guys, the greatest changer to the church aren't those outside who oppose and ridicule and persecute. It's actually those inside the church who try to change the gospel. I want to ask us today, what is the gospel you are believing? What is the gospel you are holding on to? Is it justification by faith in Jesus plus fill in the blank?

There is only one authentic gospel. There's no other gospel except for the one God gave us. Justification by faith in Jesus alone. If I could have the band come up.

[33 : 12] If you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, man, again, we are so happy that you are here. I trust that this has been helpful in understanding some of what we believe. Some of what it looks like to follow Jesus. Some of what our faith is about.

And I hope even more than that, you got to see exactly what Jesus accomplished when he died on the cross. He died for your sin. He died for your unrighteousness. He died so that by faith in him, and he's calling you to put your faith in him, that you don't have to stay in that place of having this

nagging feeling of, I never measure up.

I somehow need to make myself better. He says, man, come to me. Trade that for my righteousness. You don't have to earn it anymore.

And that's the beautiful thing that I'm offering to you today if you're not a Christian, and that Jesus is offering you today if you're not a Christian. You don't first have to get it all together and then come. He says, come as you are.

I want to invite you today, man, put your faith in. If that's you, put your faith in Jesus. For those of us in the room that are Christians, I want to ask is this. Why are you trying to be better?

[34 : 34] Why are you trying to earn something that Jesus paid for? Are you trying to add on to what he did? Are you trying to earn a better seat at his table? Move up in the ranks.

Here's the thing. We're going to take communion, and it reminds us this. We all come to one table. One table. There's not an extra special table somewhere. There's not the VIP table off in some room to the side. There is one table. One body broken for us. One person whose blood was shed. And we come in communion, and we're reminded of that. We take of that one body. We take of that cup, and we do it together. And it brings us together. We are justified, set free from sin, declared righteous through his death and resurrection alone. So when we come today, let's celebrate that. Let's come with faith, thankfulness for what he's done. Pray with me. Lord, we thank you. We thank you that you, there is no way this is man-made. This is too amazing. But Lord God, we thank you that you sent your son, Jesus, that you came. You willingly died on the cross for our sins. You rose again.

That you took our sins away, and you gave us your righteousness. And there is no other gospel but that gospel. And in you, we are set free. Set free from slavery to sin. And the Father looks at us from heaven, and he sees the righteousness of his son covering us and overshadowing us. Man, I pray that we would live in that freedom. We wouldn't adjust or add to this good news. Amen.