

People Pleasing

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[0 : 00] Okay, our reading is Galatians chapter 1. Let me just get there. Sorry.

Okay, Galatians chapter 1, verses 1 to 10.

It's in the Bibles on page 1168. 1168. Let's read God's Word. Paul, an apostle, sent not from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers and sisters with me.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all.

[1 : 30] evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse, as we have already said.

So now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse.

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I'm going to do what you do.

Okay, I'm going to do that. So once you're worried and nice that I forgot, to live my life, such a people pleasing, now I see I wasted so much time.

[3 : 20] Yes, they like me, they expect me to be there. All right, great. All right, good evening. Welcome to St. Silas. Sorry, that didn't work exactly. There was a music video there. And the name of the song was People Pleasing by a really unknown artist.

You probably haven't seen them before, but it's someone who's struggling with people pleasing. I'm going to pray for us. And if you keep your Bibles open, that would be a big help. And if you'd like to follow along on that little yellow sheet, that will give you a guide and a stare for our time together this evening.

So Father, we thank you that you have given us the gospel. We thank you that we don't have to do anything to get it. We thank you that you have spoken clearly in your apostles and in the apostle Paul.

Please help us not to turn from this gospel, not to turn from Christ's gospel, but to think about it, meditate on it, to love it, grow in it every day of our lives.

Amen. Well, people pleasing, how does that make you feel? Perhaps you might be someone here who's got complicated feelings about people pleasing.

[4 : 34] Sometimes being a people pleaser is good. It's good for getting along in life, getting along at the workplace. It's good for just making things run smoothly, not being the person that's always out to not please people, who's always slightly prickly.

That can be quite hard work. Sometimes we think about people pleasing and it's quite funny, isn't it? So we think of Paddington 2, the movie, and J-Dog and how Jonathan Brown, who calls himself J-Dog, to fit in with his friends, he wants to be a people, a pleaser.

But sometimes people pleasing is a really bad thing. It causes divisions because by trying to please some people, we end up not pleasing others.

Sometimes it can give us the reputation of being untrustworthy, someone not to be trusted. We'll do whatever it takes and please whoever it takes to get what we want. We'll simply change sides when it's convenient.

Sometimes it can get us into really big trouble in life. You think of that court case that's been in the news this week, Elizabeth Holmes, who is someone who wanted to be a people pleaser.

[5 : 50] She was like the Mark Zuckerberg generation at Harvard and she wanted to be known and she made these great, fabulous claims about this invention that she had made. And everyone wanted to be associated with her and so they threw their money at her because they wanted to please her and be known as someone important who supported this great new adventure.

But she ended up getting revealed as a fraud and sent to jail. the desire to people please caused something really bad in her life.

And people pleasing can be deadly serious and it can be deadly serious for our Christian life. So just by way of context, we're looking at the letter of the Galatians on Sunday evenings at St. Silas.

and the Apostle Paul, he's taken the good news of the gospel out to an area called Galatia, what is today modern day southern Turkey and no sooner have the Galatians heard it and received it and believed in Paul and when Paul has moved on and they've trusted in Jesus, that Jesus gave his life for their sins and they've started living in spirit-filled lives as God's new creation, then what happens?

Some people, verse 7 in our reading, literally troublemakers, have come and they have started disrupting the Galatians. What they've done is they've undermined Paul and they've undermined his gospel and the charge they've brought against them is that he is a people pleaser.

[7 : 31] He'll say anything to anyone to win them over to his gospel but don't trust him. He's a people pleaser. His authority is made up.

Who is this Paul? Where does he get his authority from? And his gospel is people pleasing. You don't have to do anything. All you have to do is simply trust Jesus and God's kindness and then you'll be right with God.

You don't have to do anything. It's a people pleasing gospel. It's for everyone. It's a gospel of grace and so you can't trust him. And these troublemakers, by implication, what they're saying is instead you can trust us and you can trust our gospel.

We've got good credentials and we've got the right gospel. And so what we see in these opening verses of the letter to the Galatians is that Paul sees the danger of this two-fold attack and he opens up with stating where his authority is from and states what his gospel is.

And so verse, point one on our sheet, we're considering Paul's authority looking at verses one and two. So Paul the Apostle, verse one.

[8 : 50] And Paul here, he claims the very title that the troublemakers, those certain people, were denying him that he is an apostle. And we remember that Jesus called his 12 closest disciples together and he named them apostles, Luke 6, 12 to 16.

And he authorized them to teach in his name. And so verse one, Paul says he's the apostle, not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

And look where Paul says his authority comes from. Not from people, it's not a people gospel, but from God, from Jesus Christ and God the Father.

He speaks on God's behalf. And what Paul is saying there is he's referencing something that he's going to talk about in Galatians 2 is that he met the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road supernaturally.

And Jesus appointed him an apostle to go and speak in his name. Jesus had given him a commission. And by apostle, we mean someone who has met the risen Lord Jesus.

[10 : 08] He has an experience of Jesus. Someone who has been commissioned by Jesus to speak God's words, to speak on his behalf, as if Jesus were standing in the room.

And it's a unique, never to be repeated, category. The apostles were those people that lived then, but not today. So why does Paul defend himself and defend his apostleship here?

Is he begging himself up? Is he bragging? Has he taken some offense and some slight and he wants to thumb at them? No.

It's because he wants to defend his message. He wants to defend his gospel, the most valuable thing that the world can afford.

And if people rejected him, then they'd reject the gospel. They'd reject Paul who spoke Christ's message with Christ's authority.

[11 : 12] So if you imagine, if I said to you, I met the queen and I told her what it was like and you know I hadn't, you'd know that that's not a very reliable witness.

But if Prince William came in here and he told you that he had met the queen and he came as a messenger from the queen, that message would hold a lot more value.

You'd listen up, you'd pay attention to what he's saying. And very often today we subtly undermine Paul. We say, well, Paul is a man of his time.

He's a person who lived then. He's not familiar with the issues that we have today. He's not aware of our struggles that we have at school, at university.

What does he know? He's a man of his times. He's not relevant. But Paul says he is an apostle who speaks with God's authority, who has been commissioned by Jesus.

[12 : 15] And so he defends his apostleship to defend the gospel, the grace, the message of grace that he's given. Well, we've considered Paul's authority.

Let's go on to look at his message that he gives, the gospel of grace that he gives. And this is our second point on the sheet there. And we have a summary of it in verses 3 to 5.

So Paul's gospel. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age according to the will of God the Father to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. And the point of the letter of the Galatians is to get the Galatians and to get us to join with Paul in saying amen to this statement.

To say amen where he says amen. That's the point of the letter. And the whole gospel, the whole letter gospel can be summarized by that one word, grace.

[13 : 18] It's a gospel of grace, of unmerited kindness. Well, what is it? And he spells out what it is that his message is and what it is that he's preaching. And the first thing that we read and this is point A under Paul's gospel is that Jesus gave himself for our sins.

And the gospel is a gift. It's a wonderful gift. At Christmas we got lots of gifts but this is the greatest gift that we'll ever receive. That God has given us a gift in his son and Jesus gives us a gift by giving himself for our sins.

He pays the price for the things that we have done to offend God. And the word for there means on behalf of or in place of.

You see, at the heart of the gospel is an exchange or a payment for sins that Christ gives. see, we can tell a lot about what people think about Christianity about what they think happened at the cross.

And so, at the cross, at the death of Jesus, it wasn't so much a display of love although that was there and it wasn't so much an example of heroism but what it was was a sacrifice for sins an exchange for sins.

[14 : 46] Well, what does this exchange accomplish? And we're moving on to point B there, to rescue us from the present evil age. And as I prepared this week, I think this was something that really struck home for me and I was just reminded of again is that when we come to church and church is wonderful and the people here are wonderful and it's wonderful because we think that we are going to go to heaven and that's brilliant and that's good news and Jesus has died for us to go to heaven and that's a good feeling to know.

But the Bible, when it speaks of Jesus' death, it speaks more accurately that Jesus died to rescue us from the present evil age.

See, you're drowning, you're drowning in this age, this evil age in a world without Jesus and he sticks out of his hand and he grabs your arm and he pulls you up and he rescues you out of that present evil age.

And the word rescue there is the word that Stephen uses in Acts 7 of where he's speaking of the Israelites and how they have been rescued out of Egypt and of how the same words used of all the miraculous jail escapes that we see in Acts.

That people have been rescued out of prison and out of slavery. And what did Christ rescue us? Well, not out of the world. We still have to live day by day.

[16 : 16] We've got to do our jobs. We've got to be in the world but not of the world. But out of the evil age, the present age of the evil one. See, the Bible divides human history into two ages.

The present evil age and the age to come. And the age to come has come in the coming of the Lord Jesus. But the old age, the evil age, has not passed away just yet.

The two ages are running their course in parallel, side by side. And the Christian has been rescued out of the old age and has been transferred into the new age, the age to come.

And it's thrilling. The Christian life is living a life of the age to come, filled with God's Holy Spirit, living as a new creation with perfect freedom among those who still belong to this age, this present evil age.

And what happened at the cross was not simply that our sins are forgiven, but that having been forgiven, we are living a new life, the life of the age to come.

[17 : 30] Well, Christ gave himself for our sins and to rescue us out of this evil age and then see by the will of God the Father. And the gospel has come according to God's will, not our will.

and the Son gives himself, the Son by giving himself there, he doesn't bully his father and get his father to come along with what he's doing.

And oppositely, it's not that the Father bullies the Son and says, you must go to the cross and die, but that the Son willingly lays down his life and the Father willingly says that this is his will.

That you cannot get a cigarette paper between the two of them. They are acting in complete tandem here. And so, verse 4 begins with the Son who gave himself as a sacrifice, but it ends that this has been according to the Father's will.

And so, given these facts, what we see in verse 1 to 5 is that Paul defends that he is an apostle, one who speaks with Jesus' authority, and that the gospel he preaches is the gospel of grace, of God's kindness to us, of the Son who gives himself for our sins as an exchange and rescues us out of an evil age and into a glorious, spirit-filled future of perfect freedom as new creations.

[19 : 01] And when Paul hears that the Galatians have moved on from this gospel, this gospel of grace, he is very, very concerned.

And we get a taste of this in that unlike the normal letters that Paul writes, this letter is incredibly urgent. He doesn't give a prayer or a thanksgiving here, but straight away he moves on to his main issue that he wants to address.

And this is Paul's concern at point 3 on our sheet, verses 6 and 7. So picking up in verse 6 there, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all.

Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. Paul, he's astonished, he's absolutely flabbergasted.

How did this happen? And so quickly, it's not that they've thought about it and thought, ah, maybe I'll move on. They've just thrown themselves into moving on straight away.

[20 : 13] And the issue that's caused Paul such angst is that the Galatians have deserted. They've turncoated. They've turned to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all.

And so some people or troublers have come, verse 7, and the Galatians have been eager to please these new teachers and eager to follow their gospel. And at once they've abandoned Paul and the gospel that he has preached to them and they have turned to a different gospel which is no gospel at all.

And note that false teachers, they're trying to pervert the gospel. They literally, they flip it on its head. They turn it 180. All the goodness of it, all the grace of it, they turn away from it.

They turn it completely the opposite way. And Paul thinks, what are you doing? What were you thinking? How have you given up so quickly? I had this friend at school called Froggy and I remember how Froggy, he came to me and he told me, I've become a Christian and it's brilliant!

And he would quote the Psalms to me. And within a few months, he had turned from the gospel and given up entirely. And it was tragic. It was absolutely heartbreaking.

[21 : 29] And it's not simply that they were changing what they believed, but they were changing their allegiance. They were turning to a different gospel and they were deserting Jesus. Just note there, deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ.

And I think the thing that struck me as I was preparing this passage, one of the other things was, is that the Galatians, they weren't a particularly wild bunch. Some of Paul's letters, he's writing to people and you read it and you think, wow, these guys are really wild.

They've got some big issues going on. But you can't say that for the Galatians. They are very respectable. They seem to be doing very well.

Later, Paul says, you are doing so well in your race. What's happened? They might have looked very similar to us in the West End. They looked very respectable, very educated, very successful.

But they had given up on the one true gospel for something more palatable and respectable. They had simply tweaked it to make it more convenient for their dinner parties.

[22 : 39] They just quieted the awkward bits. They just turned it slightly to people please the friends that they were surrounded by.

And we do the same thing, don't we? We are tempted to do the same thing in lots of ways. When we're at school, when we're at university, how we speak about Jesus, how we explain the gospel to our friends.

We might be tempted to step back from Paul. He's a bit too angry. He's very angry in Galatians. We might be tempted to tamper with the gospel and to make it more, well, relevant for us today.

Something that's more fashionable to make it more palatable. And when we do that, we fall into the trap of people pleasing. And so, finally, we come to Paul's warning in verse 8 and 9.

And it really is a strong warning. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let them be under God's curse.

[23 : 43] As we have already said, so now we say again, if anyone, anybody, is preaching you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse.

And you might be listening tonight and you hear Paul's outspokenness and you might think, well, that's a bit offensive. Tone it down, Paul. Turn the notch down.

Be a bit more tolerant. Be a bit more people pleasing. Get on with people a bit better. Don't be so angular, Paul. Don't speak like that. You sound like a fanatic, Paul.

What's going on? But look at what the apostle Paul says. He says, let them be under God's curse. Verse 8.

And then again, let them be under God's curse if you change this gospel. Literally, let them be damned. Let them be devoted to destruction.

[24 : 39] What he's saying is that the gospel, it comes with a anti-tamper seal. It's not that there are different gospels for different styles of church.

It's not that, well, one church, well, that's the loving church. And it's not that this is the church where everyone gets in. All paths go to heaven church. And it's not that this is the church where you just try your best and God will do the rest.

But that there is one true gospel, the gospel of grace, of kindness, of where you'll be in the new creation, of freedom, filled with God's spirit.

And that Paul preaches. And that Paul as an apostle of Christ preaches. And that all people are to come under the sound of. And if anyone thinks they can soften the gospel or make it more palatable or more relevant or more up-to-date, well, you can't.

All you do is give up on the gospel and make a different gospel, which is no gospel. And you might think that he's being too, his emotions are running too wild here.

[25 : 48] He's out of control. But just notice, he's completely cool and calm and collected here. We see that he repeats himself. He says, let them be under God's curse. Sorry if you missed that.

Let me say it again. Let them be under God's curse. And he's simply applying what he says later about Jesus' death, dying for us, in Galatians 3.13.

That when Jesus died, he became a curse for us. He was under God's curse. And so when we give up on that gospel, then we come under that curse.

And there's nowhere else to God. You cannot hide. Well, in these opening verses, Paul reacts very strongly. And you might think he has gone too far. But let's consider the reasons that he gives for speaking as he does.

And so firstly, God's glory is at stake. To whom be glory. God, to whom be glory forever and ever.

[26 : 47] Amen. Why did God die? Why did the happiest and most powerful person outside of creation step into creation and die on a cross?

Surely you wouldn't have done so if there was any hope that we could have been able to rescue ourselves out of this present evil age. But God died because there was no hope that we'd be able to rescue ourselves unless he came and died and gave himself for our sins.

And therefore, we have been rescued out of God's great kindness and love. And so all glory should go to him.

There was no hope other than if God did not come. And then secondly, people's souls are at stake. And this is something fundamental to the gospel.

Paul cares deeply about people. He is passionately in love with people. At the beginning of Romans chapter 9, he says that he is willing to be damned.

[27 : 55] He's willing to be died that others might be saved. He loves them. He wants to see them saved. And Paul knew that the gospel of Christ is the power of God for salvation.

And therefore, to change the gospel, to make it wrong, to turn it into a different gospel that is no gospel, is to destroy the way to salvation.

and to destroy souls that might be saved by it. It's the most dangerous thing one can do. And if we cared more about God, and if we cared more for the souls of our friends and people around us, and for the good of their souls, and if we loved them more, then we would not bear having that gospel of grace being tampered with.

Well, what are we to learn from all of this? Well, firstly, we learn that there's only one true gospel. The popular view is that the gospel changes.

You kind of adjust it according to the passing of the years. You make it more palatable, whatever. But there's only one gospel. And any teaching that claims to be the teaching of another gospel is not a gospel.

[29 : 11] It's no gospel at all. And how can we recognize the gospel? What are the marks of it? Well, we are given the marks of it here. Namely, its substance and its source.

Its substance. It's a gospel of grace. It's free. It's unmerited. It's good news. And its source. It is the gospel of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Those who give it to us, who have spoken on Jesus' behalf. And so, the accusation that the false teachers bring is that Paul is a people pleaser.

And having stated his case so forcefully and so emphatically in these opening verses, and so, let's put it frankly, so angularly, look what he says in verse 10.

He says, Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God? I'm an apostle of God, he said, verse 1. Or am I trying to please people?

[30 : 10] If I was still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. Paul says he's being deadly serious. He's deadly serious here.

I am deadly serious as an apostle of God. I'm not a people pleaser. I am deadly serious as a preacher of the gospel of Jesus, of the gospel of grace.

I'm deadly serious in my concern for you, out of love for you. Don't turn from this gospel. I'm deadly serious in warning those who would change the gospel and make it no gospel.

Even if I, or an angel, or someone very educated, or someone very impressive, or they might look very powerful, or they might have a big following, and they might be very successful. Even if they preach a different gospel, other than the one that I've preached to you, don't believe them.

Don't follow them. And so, the trouble is, they accuse Paul of being a people pleaser. But what we are going to see in Galatians is that Paul is going to reverse the table.

[31 : 18] And right at the end of the letter, we see that Paul accuses them and paints for us that they are really the people pleasers. In chapter 6, verse 12, they try to impress people to win them over for their own benefits.

And in doing so, they give up on the gospel of grace. That great gift of freedom that we've been given in Christ Jesus that should fill our hearts and fire them as we go out in the next week to live for his praise and glory and for everything that we do.

Something to really rejoice in in the year to come. That we're a new creation in Jesus. That we've been filled with the Spirit. and that we have something, a gospel, worth keeping and worth living for.

Let me pray for us as we close. So Father, we thank you for this gospel. We thank you for the Apostle Paul who stuck with it even though it was hard.

Please help us when we struggle and are tempted to turn aside from this gospel. Please push us back to the gospel, the gospel of grace. Please push us back to the scriptures to read them more and seek out the face of Jesus in them.

[32 : 42] Please help us to cling on to the gospel with all that we have within us and to not give up on it. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.