

Galatians

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[0 : 0 0] You've got a new sheet this morning, and we are starting with Paul's letter to the Galatians. This is a critical, a critical epistle, the theme of which is the charter of Christian liberty.

That is the way it is often expressed. And I do not think you will find any place in Scripture, with the possible exception of something else that Paul wrote in Romans, perhaps in Romans chapters 3, 4, and 5, where you will find the principles of grace, justification by faith, spelled out more clearly than what you will in those few chapters of Romans and in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

There is a really heavy emphasis upon justification by faith, because man in his fallenness wants to pursue justification with God on the basis of his works, his good deeds, and his jumping through religious hoops.

And the Apostle Paul gives the lie to that perhaps more effectively than anyone else. And we will see how that surfaces time and again in the letter to the Galatians. As we prepare to engage this letter, let me remind you that the churches of Galatia were those located in Asia Minor that the Apostle Paul visited on his first and second missionary journey.

He didn't get there on the third, but on the first and the second, he visited and established churches in Iconium and Lystra and Derbe, and Antioch of Phasidia, and it was one of those places, Lystra, where Paul was stoned on that second journey.

[1 : 5 0] And he is now writing back to those churches, giving them an update and doctrinal information that they sorely need. And at the outset, it will become apparent that Paul is also writing out of great disappointment and concern.

Because no sooner had he left the area and moved on to other regions than those who are described as the Judaizers surfaced behind him.

And these are legalistic Jews who deny justification by faith and insist on things like physical circumcision, etc.

And they are coming into these Gentile areas where Paul had been and preached the gospel of the grace of God and try to impose the Mosaic law and different aspects of it upon those people.

And it is against those that Paul is writing this epistle and again, shoring up the concept of justification by faith. And he really takes them to task.

[3 : 0 4] He minces no words. And we'll see that when we get into it. Although I don't know whether we'll get that far. But let's begin with verse 1 of Galatians chapter 1. And be reminded that the bold print represents the King James Version.

And we'll be working off of that. But we also see the value in other translations. And some of them shed light and give us understanding that the King James Version doesn't always provide.

So we read, Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

And you might think, as a modern, that it is a little unusual for someone to write a letter and have their first name be the very first thing in the letter.

Because that's completely the opposite of the way we do. We write a letter, Dear John or Dear Jane or whatever, and then the body of the letter, and then we sign our name at the bottom.

[4 : 08] Why didn't they do that that way? Well, because they wrote in a scroll. And the scroll would be rolled up. They didn't write in pages like we do.

Page 1, and you turn it over and write on the back side. Page 2, and then page 3 with another sheet and so on. They wrote with one single scroll. And it was rolled up. So if you receive a scroll that is all rolled up and you open it to the beginning, you don't know who wrote it.

If you use the way we do, so you'd have to unwind the whole scroll and see whose signature is at the bottom before you knew who was sending it to you. So their remedy for that was, when you open the scroll, the name of the person who wrote it and sent it is right there.

So you know exactly who wrote all the content it is going to follow. So it's just the opposite of the way we do. But you've got to remember, we ought not to be critical of them because they were here first.

And they did it that way first, then they wrote on the scroll. So he begins, as virtually all of the letter writers do, with their name at the beginning.

[5 : 20] So when you open the scroll, you know immediately who it's from. And then that helps to prepare your mindset for the content that is going to come.

And he identifies himself as an apostle. And fellas, this may sound like a rather ordinary kind of thing, but I need to park here for a little bit and explain the tremendous emphasis of this.

An apostle, an apostle in the Greek language, simply means one who is sent, or one who has been sent, with the authority of the sending one.

An apostle means one who has been sent, with the authority of the one who sent him. We might term an equivalent of that today like an ambassador.

When we send an ambassador to a foreign nation, that ambassador is representing the president of the United States and the entire country.

[6 : 32] And they establish an embassy in a foreign country. And that ambassador there, as far as that foreign country is concerned, that ambassador and the embassy is the United States because he speaks on behalf of the president and the USA.

We don't call them apostles. We call them ambassadors. But essentially it's the same. And in the Greek, years before any of these New Testament letters were even written, the fleet admiral in the Navy would be considered an apostle.

Now, we tend to think of an apostle being somebody like Paul, or Peter, or James, or John. But these were referred to as apostles too. And I say that simply to make this point. The term apostle was not coined or originated by the apostle Paul or by the twelve apostles in the New Testament.

It was a word and a term that people were well familiar with before Christ ever came on the scene and selected twelve apostles. So it was a term and an understanding, a definition of which was in place long before Christ ever came.

There were apostles before. And the important thing is that the sending one is the one who has the authority. And Paul identifies his apostleship as an apostle not of men.

[8 : 06] In other words, he wasn't sent by some king, president, emperor, or whoever. It was no human being that gave him and commissioned him as an apostle.

Neither not of men nor by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

And this authority is absolutely critical. Because if Paul is not an apostle, not writing under the auspices and inspiration of the Spirit of God, then why listen to him?

Why pay any attention? If all he is doing is giving his human opinion and his take on things, then he really comes with no more authority than what you have or what I have.

And authority is everything. So, authorship is everything. And the authority and the authorship and the words sound alike and it's because they are connected.

[9 : 15] And he needs to make certain at the very outset that that which he is going to convey in this letter is not simply his own personal viewpoint or human expression.

And, fellas, I cannot tell you how tragic it is that this is where so many, even in Christendom, misunderstand this truth.

And it is, tragic is the only word I can give to it. Because if you do not have an essential understanding of what the inspiration of Scripture means, then you will find yourself like so many in Christendom who say, well, that's Paul.

And, that's Paul is just giving us his opinion. You know, he could get a little cantankerous at times and he was sometimes very opinionated and you have to take what Paul said with a grain of salt.

You'd be surprised how pervasive that attitude is in churches that call themselves Christian. So, right at the outset, let us reaffirm the absolute necessity for understanding the inspiration of Scripture.

[10 : 31] And that simply means that which is inspired of God using human penman is absolutely, essentially coming with the authority of God Himself.

All Scripture is God-breathed. All Scripture is the breath of God and is profitable. Maybe profitable in different ways, but it is all profitable for reproof, for correction, instruction in righteousness, etc.

In order that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly finished, and do every good work. So, this means that no part of Scripture is somehow more the Word of God than another.

It is all equally inspired. If it comes with the authority of God, it comes with the authority of God. And it doesn't make any difference who the human penman is.

And Christians, a lot of Christians really have a problem getting this under their belt, because we tend to want to give more authority to one person's writing.

[11 : 38] And by the way, this is where the Red Letter Bible really does us a huge disservice. And it is amazing how many people are led astray by those red letters.

They think that the original was written in red ink. And they think that, well, if it's in red, those are the words of Jesus, those are the words you really pay attention to.

Well, listen, you really pay attention to all of it, because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. And what this means is, what Paul wrote, what Peter wrote, what John wrote, they are all under the authority of God, and they all represent the words of Christ, even though they're not in red.

And we really need to understand that. The same is true with what is in Genesis and the Psalms and the book of Esther. It is all God's word, and it all comes with equal authority.

Now, no question about it, some passages in the Bible are more interesting than others. If you want to find something that is really super boring, get into the book of Leviticus and start reading.

[12 : 54] And it's boring. Frankly, it's boring. But it's inspired. It is still the word of God, and it comes with the authority of God. So while some portions of Scripture are more inspiring to read, they are not more inspired.

No section of the Scripture is more the word of God than another. It all comes with equal authority, and it is all under the direct provision of God.

Yes? Each writer has their own style. Oh, yeah. Each writer has their own style. And, you know, we might ask the question, well, why do we have this human instrumentality?

And as Dick has said, each writer does have his own style. Luke, Luke writes in his gospel, and in the book of Acts, probably what we would refer to as the purest and most elevated expression of the Greek language in the New Testament.

And stop and think about it. Luke was a physician. Wouldn't you expect that? And some of the writings that is some of the roughest in the New Testament, grammatically and linguistically speaking, is what Peter wrote.

[14 : 18] But, don't hold that against Peter. The guy was a fisherman. You know, he fished for a living. That was his livelihood. And it's kind of reflected in what he writes and the way he writes it.

You get into the Old Testament and you find Isaiah writing in Hebrew with a very polished kind of Hebrew. And Isaiah was a scholar. He was a learned man.

So, when you come over to the book of Amos and read the minor prophet Amos, the guy was a fruit picker. You know, a gatherer of sycamores.

And you wouldn't expect his writing to be very polished. And it isn't. But he gets his point across. And what we find in all of these writings is the Spirit of God, inspiring the individual to write the message that God wants written, but utilizing the vocabulary and the stylistic differences of the individual.

So, what do we end up with? We end up with a writing that carries the authority of deity, but it has a flavor and an expression of humanity.

[15 : 34] Why is that important? It's important because humans can identify with the writings of humans. But we need something that is more than just human, and that's where deity comes in and inspires the writing.

So he utilizes the vocabulary, stylistic differences of individuals, but it still comes with the authority of God. And you know, God has ever committed to doing this.

It's a really important principle to keep in mind when we sometimes ask ourselves whether God has anything special for us. Yes, he does. He's got something special for each and every one of us.

And that's because God is pleased to use human instrumentality in his plan and program.

That's the whole basis of an apostle. people. When Christ chose those twelve originally, reflected back in Matthew 10, and we are told that he gave them authority over unclean spirits to heal the sick and open the eyes of the blind and all the rest, Christ gave them the authority to do that.

[16 : 54] And in so doing, he is utilizing humanity to carry out his plan of reaching humanity. And God has always been committed to doing that.

Not out of necessity, but out of desire. And you can go all the way back, and I don't want to get too far afield here, maybe I already am, but some are of the opinion, and I'm not prepared to dispute it, that God created the human race beginning with Adam and Eve, primarily for the purpose of resolving the angelic conflict.

And the angelic conflict is something that began before man was ever created. This deals with the rebellion and the fall of Lucifer and his enlistment of a third of the other angels, and that according to what Ephesians states in chapters 1 and 2, God is going to reveal his manifold wisdom to these principalities and powers as to what he has been able to accomplish with beings who are inferior to themselves.

And we are, of course, in some respects inferior to angels when it comes to strength, power, wisdom, etc. But angels are not redeemable, and we are made in the image and likeness of God.

So we are a lesser note, if you will, than angelic beings, and God is going to use us to resolve that angelic conflict. So he is using people to do this.

[18 : 33] And this is the whole story of Scripture. It started with man, Adam, and Eve. And what about Noah? God is going to utilize the human instrumentality of Noah and his family to be the basis for saving that generation of humanity.

humanity. And you look at Abraham. God is utilizing Abraham. Does God need Abraham? No! He doesn't need Abraham. But he chooses to use Abraham. You could say the same with Job.

You could say the same with the twelve apostles. You could say the same with the apostle Paul. And the point is simply this. God is pleased to use human instrumentality out of a desire on his part, not out of necessity.

humanity. So we ought to be honored that God is willing to use us because we're all flawed vessels. And yet he still condescends.

It's a great condescension. God condescends to use human instrumentality to bring about his will. And we ought to be very grateful and very thankful that he is willing to use us.

[19 : 40] And the apostle Paul is when he says things like, I am what I am by the grace of God. And he knew that he was using, that God was using him and that he served at God's pleasure.

So the importance of apostleship and being used of God is really, really important. Do you have a comment, a question, Rog? The parentheses, were they in the original man's script or was that something that was that in the name?

And that word, not of man, parentheses, that might be very... No, well, I don't have the Greek here with me, but I'm satisfied that this is...

Yeah, I'm sure that it would be supported by that. It's rendered that way in the New English Bible and the 20th century New Testament as well. Not of men, neither by man.

And that's the crux of this whole thing. And that is why that is why so many people, especially unbelievers, so many people give such little credence to the Bible.

[20 : 48] They think it's just a collection of religious writings of ordinary men writing about life as they saw it and understood it.

And that's all it is. That's what a lot of people believe. And they do not understand that the Bible, is the very breath of God.

And that's the meaning of inspiration. It is theonoustos in the Greek. And it means that which is breathed out. When you talk and I talk, we are breathing all the while.

We are inhaling and exhaling our breath without even thinking about it. Well, it is as if this is God breathing in and out.

And this word is the product. It is funneled through human instrumentality and it comes out with a human flavor but divine authority.

[21 : 51] And that is so critical. Yes? What bothers me a lot is the epistle of Galatians. He's trying to challenge the Jews who want to do it their way.

We got that today. Oh, yeah. Yeah. You're right. Absolutely right. You know, every generation of humans born is born with the same kind of moral spiritual fallenness as the generation before them.

We have not improved that one whit. Someone has said that man has made great strides in improvement in technology in standard of living in modernization and we have made so many things better but we have not succeeded in making better people.

We haven't because we come from that same bolt of cloth and we are all flawed. Dan? So you're just saying that some people just see the Bible as a history book.

Well, yeah. Without the divine inspiration of God. That's the way a lot of people see it. Yeah. And some of the secular colleges and universities teaching biblical studies from this perspective.

[23 : 05] Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I would venture to say, and I can't prove this, but I would not be a bit surprised if it were not this way, that in the leading institutions that we refer to as the Ivy League schools where it costs you an arm and a leg to send your kid for a year, I'm talking about Harvard and Yale.

I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but Harvard University was founded 15 years after the Pilgrim's Land. 1635.

That's pretty old. And it was founded for the exclusive purpose of training ministers to teach and preach the Word of God. And I would be very, very surprised if you would find anyone in the Harvard Divinity School today who accepts the full authority of the Word of God.

Same with Yale. Yale. Same with many of the other institutions. And they consider themselves as having progressed beyond that.

They see themselves as more sophisticated, more learned, more developed, more intellectual, and they just don't see the Bible the way us country bumpkins see it.

[24 : 31] And they have a smugness and an arrogance about them that is unbelievable. And it is, well, the Bible, you know, you have to know how to approach.

You can't take it really seriously. Oh, there are inspiring things in the Bible and great literature, but surely you don't seek to arrange your life by it.

I mean, we've come so far beyond that. Oh, yeah, we have. And you see what we've produced today? You see what society is? You see what law and order is?

this is largely a result of abandoning that overarching authority which comes with Scripture. And we are back to where they were in the Old Testament where it is recorded that and there was no king in those days and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

That's where we are today and only big time. Yeah, Rog. I'm sorry, I'm not here.

[25 : 54] Repeat that. The guy up there in New York killed the cops and he kills himself. They didn't used to kill themselves when they went on a rampage. They didn't used to do rampage. They'd kill somebody but they'd stay in trial.

Yeah. Why has that been now? Do you explain that to everyone and I? Well, a lot of people, a lot of people today buy into the idea and the philosophy that this life is all there is.

And when it's over, everything's over. There is no heaven. There is no hell. There is no future judgment. There is no future reward. There is no future period.

So, the concept is, whatever you may be experiencing by way of disappointment or pain today, and this is the basis for a lot of suicide, by the way, whether it is a teenage kid who's lost his girlfriend, he's going through this tremendous emotional pain and deprivation, and he doesn't even think in terms of what might be his portion after he does away with himself, all he knows is whatever there is, even if there is nothing, it can't possibly be any worse than the pain I'm experiencing now, so just end it all.

And this is precisely the way a lot of people operate, unless, of course, you're into the Islamic mindset, which connects martyrdom with the 40 virgins, dark-eyed virgins, waiting for you with all of the accoutrements and everything, you know, this becomes the rationale for some people taking their own life, and it is a completely unjustifiable thing, biblically, but this is the way some people choose to end their life, and it's sad.

[27 : 54] The man that killed the policeman and then turned the gun on himself, I cannot say, of course, that he was an atheist and that he did not believe there was an afterlife, but I wouldn't be a bit surprised, because even if you see an afterlife and a judgment on the basis of good works and bad works, if you believe that, you're not exactly setting yourself up for any kind of a reward if you take the lives of two police officers and then end your own, so that may have involved some irrationality, even some kind of imbalance, who knows, but this is the way a lot of people are thinking today, and so much of it goes back to a general rejection of the overarching authority that is represented by God and by God and his word, so this is where we are, and we're living in a society today that maximizes this.

Well, anything else before, we didn't get through verse 1, but we made a dent in it. Okay, we'll take up here next week. We'll take up here next week.