

BIG IDEA
**The False Gospel Results In Brokenness,
The True Gospel Transforms a Broken Life**

Title Card

This morning, we'll be diving into our second message from our series, **Witness for the Defense: Defending the True Gospel of Faith**. In this series, we're going verse by verse through the book of Galatians, a letter written by the Apostle Paul to his friends in the church he founded in Galatia about a year earlier.

In this letter, Paul addresses an issue that he constantly faced during his ministry: Legalism. In this particular instance, false teachers had come into Galatia after Paul had left and had somehow led the Galatian believers astray, teaching them that faith by itself wasn't enough, that it was necessary to add works to faith in order to truly be saved, that it was necessary to add the Old Testament Law to the Grace of God.

And so Paul pens this letter, his first letter, to remind the Galatians that they were saved by Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Alone. Paul reminds them, in some gentle and some not so gentle ways, that it is the grace of God which forgave them of their sins, their works had nothing to do with their salvation.

Now in our first message, we discussed the make up of the letter. When I read it, I'm struck by how much it resembles an attorney making his case in court. The attorney introduces themselves to the court, presents an opening statement, explains the charges and the penalty if found guilty, then calls their witnesses to the stand to prove their point.

And this is how Paul's letter to the Galatians reads.

In our first message from last month, Paul introduced himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. By the way, he'll return to this issue of his apostleship in this morning's message and we'll take a closer look at his claim of apostleship and what this means for him, the false teachers and the Galatians.

After introducing himself to the court, Paul then begins his opening statement.

In very clear terms, he lays out the issue before the court: The false gospel of faith plus works vs the True Gospel of Faith, which led us to our Big Idea:

BIG IDEA
There Is No Other Gospel

In verse 4, he lays the foundation for the finished work of salvation that Jesus offers to all who will simply believe Him for it.

Galatians 1:4a – 4 Who gave Himself for our sins... ESV

He tells the Galatians that Jesus, “gave Himself for our sins,” and we found that the Greek word for gave is a very expansive word, one with many shades of meanings, all centered on the idea of giving something to someone for a reason.

Specifically, we saw that Jesus gave Himself as proof of His loving care, as proof that we should follow Him as our Leader and Master rather than the false teachers and as proof that He cares for our interests.

In his opening statement, Paul reminds the Galatians that Jesus **gave** them their salvation according to His grace and their faith, they didn’t earn it by works.

Then, he lays out the charge: preaching against the True Gospel of Faith by preaching the false gospel of faith plus works.

In doing so, Paul admitted that he was shocked that the Galatians had abandoned the True Gospel of Faith for the false gospel of faith plus works. And he used a very strong term which implied that they had betrayed Jesus. The word he used can be translated as turncoat.

And his shock at their betrayal and abandonment was intensified because they had believed the false teachers so soon after they had received and believed the True Gospel of Faith...a mere year after Paul delivered it to them!

If you’ll remember, shortly after Paul left Galatia, these false teachers came in and began teaching that Paul was wrong, that faith alone was not enough to guarantee salvation, that following the Old Testament Law was required in addition to their faith. They taught that the Grace of God could only be realized by obedience to the Law.

In order to convince the Galatians that Paul was wrong, they first had to convince them that Paul was not a true Apostle and, therefore, couldn’t be trusted. But they claimed they were true Apostles, probably claiming to be appointed to their apostleship by other, prominent believers, so they could be trusted.

And for some reason, the Galatians bought their lies!

But Paul made a point of reminding the Galatians that he was appointed to his office as an apostle by Jesus Christ Himself and then made the point that you cannot mix grace & faith with works & the law, because they cancel each other out.

If you add works to faith in order to be saved, then it’s not your faith that saves you, it’s your works.

And if you add works to faith, what you really end up with is a gospel of works. And a gospel of works is the opposite of the True Gospel of Faith that Paul preaches.

We explored this idea of works saving us and we saw how foolish it is to believe in such a thing.

If works save us, then how can we know when we've done enough good works to earn our salvation?

When do we reach the point that salvation is ours?

Relying on works results in a life of uncertainty, fear, agitation, a life of quiet desperation.

How many good works do I have to perform? What's the magic number?

How long do I have to perform good works? What's the magic length of time?

But no one has the answers to those questions. No one knows how many good works we have to perform, no one knows how long we have to perform them. The most common answer is that we have to perform good works our entire lives, that we can't stop because we'll never know if or when we've reached either of those magic numbers.

And since we don't know if there's a minimum number of good works or a minimum amount of time, then we have to keep performing good works our entire lives, always fearful that we're just under the number we need to get to heaven. We have to keep working so we don't lose out on heaven.

What a cruel, heartless life of despair the false teachers have condemned the Galatians to live and us, if we believe in a false gospel of faith plus works!

In contrast, the True Gospel of Faith results in peace and wholeness. We no longer fear that we haven't measured up to God's exacting standards. We don't have to perform good works in the hopes that God will somehow be obligated to overlook our sins and grant us the salvation we so desperately seek.

And finally, Paul informs the court of the penalty for preaching the false gospel of faith plus works instead of the True Gospel of Faith.

Paul says that if anyone – another evangelist, an angel or even Paul himself – if anyone preaches a different gospel than the True Gospel of Faith, then they will be cursed by God Himself and we are to excommunicate them, we are to have no fellowship with them, at least as long as they preach a false gospel.

Well, this morning, Paul continues his opening statement before calling his first witness. This morning, he sets up the foundation for his witnesses by recounting his own faith journey.

Paul's story is his journey – his transformation – from the brokenness of the law & works to the healing of grace & faith.

Paul's story, his transformation, is our Big Idea for this morning, the point of this morning's message:

BIG IDEA
**The False Gospel Results In Brokenness,
The True Gospel Transforms a Broken Life**

What do I mean by this Big Idea? Well, as we work our way through the next few verses of Galatians, we'll see how the True Gospel of Faith transformed the broken life Paul was living trying to please God with his works that brought him no love, joy or peace to a life of faith that resulted in the love, joy and peace he so desperately needed.

So let's open our Bibles to Galatians chapter 1 and review Paul's transformation.

I First Point – Paul's Revelation

In verses 10-12, Paul recounts the revelation he received from Jesus:

Galatians 1:10 – For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. ESV

Galatians 1:11 – For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ESV

Galatians 1:12 – For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ESV

A common objection to salvation by faith alone is that it's a form of "easy believe-ism." That is, you don't have to do anything for your salvation. It's cheap and easy. And you've all heard the old cliché, "you get what you pay for," right? That's sort of the idea behind this criticism of what today we call Free Grace.

The false teachers accused Paul of preaching a cheap form of admission to God's Kingdom in order to make it more pleasing to men, but Paul refutes this by reminding his readers that he is a slave to Jesus.

And by associating Jesus with salvation, Paul calls to mind the terrible price paid for our salvation.

Contrary to the accusation that faith alone is a cheap form of admission to God's Kingdom, the cost was high. Far higher than you or I could pay with our pathetic attempts to impress a holy, righteous God with our works.

The price of admission? The very life of Jesus Himself, the Son of God.

The True Gospel of Faith is not a form of Easy Believe-ism, nor is it a cheap form of admission to heaven. Rather, the True Gospel of Faith is a result of the most expensive entry fee ever devised, the death of God's own Son. The only difference is that we didn't pay the cost of our salvation, Jesus paid for it on our behalf.

Our puny efforts to earn that salvation by adding works to our faith pale in comparison to the payment Jesus made on the Cross. We could never hope to equal His sacrifice, His payment on our behalf.

Paul was accused of being someone who tried to please men to gain followers. Paul refutes this in these 3 little verses.

Paul's answer to the accusation reveals that quite the opposite is true. Since Paul neither sought nor received the True Gospel of Faith from other men, nor did he seek the approval of other men, the accusation that his preaching seeks to please men is absurd. They are neither his motivation nor the source of his authority. Quite simply, he did not base his preaching on the opinions of others but rather from the truth he received directly from Jesus Himself.

The false teachers accused Paul of peddling a gospel he received from man, not from God, so they convinced the Galatians that they could reject what Paul was saying.

But here in verses 10-12, Paul reassured the Galatians that they had received the true gospel from him because his gospel came directly from a revelation from Jesus Christ, while the false teachers were selling a false gospel they came up with on their own.

Warren Wiersbe posed this question about the accusation that Paul's gospel was crafted to please men:

His *ministry* did not come from man, nor did his *message* come from man. Why, then, should he be afraid of men? Why should he seek to please men?

His heart's desire was to please Christ. Warren Wiersbe

Wiersbe continues:

Paul was not a politician; he was an ambassador. His task was not to “play politics” but to proclaim a message. These Judaizers, on the other hand, were cowardly compromisers who mixed Law and Grace, hoping to please both Jews and Gentiles, but never asking whether or not they were pleasing God. Warren Wiersbe

The point Wiersbe was making is that it wasn't Paul who was trying to please man, it was the false teachers! By combining faith with works, they thought they could appeal to the Gentiles with the faith side and to the Jews with the works side.

In contrast, Paul taught faith alone, not caring if he “pleased” either Jews or Gentiles. His goal was to please his Savior and reach a lost and dying world with the True Gospel of Faith in order to lead as many as he possibly could to the salvation that is only found in Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

The false gospel of faith plus works – which came from men – cannot heal a life wrecked by sin, it can only lead to the brokenness that comes from a life of quiet desperation, never promising that you'll perform enough good works to earn entry into heaven.

On the other hand, the True Gospel of Faith – which came from Jesus Himself – has the power to transform that broken life of quiet desperation into a life of hope and the promise of forgiveness of our sins and an eternity spent in the presence of our Savior in heaven.

Paul's point in these first 3 verses can be summed up in our Big Idea:

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II Second Point – Paul's Call

Continuing with his opening statement, Paul tells us of his salvation and calling to his apostolic office:

Galatians 1:13-14 – ¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ESV

A Little Backstory on Paul

So a little backstory on Paul.

Paul was a Pharisee, one of the religious leaders of the day. He was respected as an expert in the Law, what we call the Old Testament today. And like most Pharisees, he hated Jesus and everything He stood for. Paul believed Jesus and his followers were a threat to Jewish tradition and beliefs and that this threat should be stamped out.

When Paul is introduced to us in Acts, chapter 8 tells us that Paul, then known as Saul, consented to the murder of the believer, Stephen. He agreed that Stephen should be killed and, although he did not participate directly in Stephen's murder, he was present as a witness and held the cloaks of the other Pharisees while they stoned Stephen to death.

As time went on, Saul's hatred of the followers of Jesus increased until he was leading a paramilitary organization dedicated to hunting down and imprisoning and killing these believers in Jesus in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside.

Acts tells us that Saul went house to house, arresting men and women for the "crime" of believing in Jesus for eternal life.

But the anger and hatred in his heart was so strong, so overwhelming, so overpowering, that this wasn't enough to satisfy him. No, he had to persecute and hunt down these Jewish traitors, these heretics, wherever they were.

So he petitioned the High Priest for a letter giving him authority to arrest Christians in Damascus and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial and imprisonment.

And that leads us to the moment Saul met Jesus Himself.

We find the story of Saul's conversion and call to be an Apostle in the 9th chapter of the book of Acts, where we read:

Acts 9:3 – Now, as he went on his way, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ESV

Acts 9:4 – And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ESV

Acts 9:5a – And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." ESV

The immediately following verses tell us that Saul's companions saw the light and heard the voice, so Saul was not imagining or hallucinating his encounter with the Lord.

Jesus then tells Saul to continue on to Damascus and await further instructions.

But after rising from the ground where he had fallen, Saul realized he was blind and had to be led by the hand by his cohort.

He ended up at the house of a believer named Judas, possibly one of the names on his list of people to arrest and drag back to Jerusalem to face imprisonment and possibly execution.

I tell you, God's sense of humor never ceases to amaze me. Someone Saul was trying to persecute became his helper.

He stayed with Judas for 3 days but was so overwhelmed with everything that happened, he was unable to eat or drink anything for those three days.

In the meantime, unknown to Saul, Jesus paid another believer, Ananias, a visit and told him what had happened. Jesus told Ananias that he was supposed to visit Saul and lay hands on him to restore his sight.

Of course, Ananias was very confused over this and apparently was worried that God was confused, too. He basically said, "Lord, are you sure? Saul? You know who he is, right? I've heard stories about how he persecuted Your followers in Jerusalem and now he wants to arrest us here in Damascus."

But the Lord reminded Ananias that He knows what's what and tells Ananias:

Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” ESV

So, Ananias believes his Lord, screws up his courage and heads off to meet Saul.

Ananias finds Saul, lays his hands on him and says:

Acts 9:17b – “...Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus Who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ESV

As soon as Ananias finished speaking, scales fell from Saul's eyes and he was able to see again.

And what did Saul do after all this?

Acts 9:20 tells us, that Saul immediately proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

If you'll remember from our first message in this series, we looked at how some of the disciples of Jesus became apostles, when Jesus took 12 of them and gave them authority to preach in His name.

The same thing happened here in Acts. Jesus took Saul and gave him authority to preach in His name.

The first 12 apostles were called to their office by Jesus Himself. In like fashion, Paul was called to his apostolic office by Jesus Himself.

And so, by refreshing the Galatian's memories of his conversion and apostolic calling, Paul is contrasting his apostolic authority with the false teachers who were leading the Galatians astray. Those false teachers were not commissioned by Jesus, they had never met the risen Savior, Christ had never appointed them to any office. But Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, believed in Him for eternal life and was appointed to his office by Jesus Himself.

Well, back in our text for this morning, Paul continues with his transformation story. In verses 15-17, we read:

Galatians 1:15 – But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, ESV

Interesting little bit of information about that phrase, “set me apart” in verse 15.

In the original Greek, that's a single word:

aphorizo
To separate

Aphorizo. It means to separate and that's the way it's translated in the King James,

“...Who separated me from my mother's womb...” KJV

What's interesting about the use of this word is its similarity to the word Pharisee. Remember, Paul was a Pharisee and the word Pharisee means, “separated.”

The Pharisees were separated from worldly things, separated from things that would pollute them.

This is how Paul was identified in his younger years, as someone who was separated from the world, dedicated to God's law.

But Paul said that God separated Paul even further.

I was once a so-called Pharisee or separatist, but God had separated me to something far better. David Brown

Scholar David Brown says that in effect, Paul was saying, “I was once a so-called Pharisee or separatist, but God had separated me to something far better.”

Paul’s life as a Christian, his apostleship and his gospel have nothing to do with his works, because God chose him to preach His word before Paul was even born. Paul never had a chance to perform any good works that could earn God’s favor.

Adding works to faith is pointless because God’s love or favor doesn’t depend on how we behave. He doesn’t weigh our good against our bad and decide if he should love us or not. He doesn’t look at our good works to determine if He’s obligated to use us for His service or forgive us of our sins or grant us entrance into heaven.

Grace is an unreasonable kindness – it make no sense, we didn’t earn it, we don’t deserve it. David Anderson

In his book, “**Bewitched: The Rise of Neo-Galatianism,**” author David Anderson says, “Grace is an unreasonable kindness – it makes no sense, we didn’t earn it, we don’t deserve it.”

You see, God already loves us fully and unconditionally. He’s not obligated to reward us for our good works. The True Gospel of Faith provides healing and salvation based on His Grace Alone through our Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

In verses 16 and 17, Paul continues the thought that his salvation, apostolic authority and gospel message originated directly from Jesus Himself.

Galatians 1:16-17 –¹⁶ was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus, ESV

You see, if Paul’s apostolic calling and the gospel he preached were from men instead of God, he most likely would have traveled to Jerusalem upon his conversion, where the other Apostles could validate it, make it official and teach him what he needed to know.

Instead, Paul went to Arabia to reflect on what had happened. It was in Arabia that Paul spent time with God. It was in Arabia that God revealed the True Gospel of Faith to Paul and led Paul on his journey from the broken man he was to the whole believer he became. He didn’t travel to Jerusalem to seek out the wisdom and teaching of Peter or James or Matthew or any of the other Apostles. He traveled to Arabia and sought out the wisdom and teaching of Jesus Himself.

The gospel Paul received was not from man, it was directly from God. It did not come from time spent with other men, it came from time spent alone with God.

It was this journey to Arabia, this time of learning from Jesus that led to Paul's transformation from hate & brokenness to love & wholeness.

Paul's conversion and time spent alone with God bears out our Big Idea for this morning:

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III Third Point – Paul's Transformation

After recounting the Revelation he received and his Call to service, Paul completes his opening statement recounting his transformation from Brokenness to Wholeness.

In verses 18-20, Paul writes:

Galatians 1:18-20 – **18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. 20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)** ESV

A few moments ago, Paul made a point to declare that after his conversion and call from Jesus, he did not seek out other Apostles, but rather, he went away to Arabia to reflect on what had happened to him, what it meant and to seek guidance and wisdom directly from Jesus, before briefly heading back to Damascus.

Only after three years had passed did Paul finally decide to meet with other apostles, and then he only met with two: Peter and James.

So, why did he finally decide to meet with them? Well, it wasn't to receive training from them. After all, he only spent 15 days – two weeks – with Peter and James. This is in contrast to the 3 years he spent in Arabia with Jesus.

That word, visit, in our text, gives us our answer.

historeo
To visit for information, an interview

The Greek word for visit, historeo, is where we get our English word history from. It means to visit for information or an interview.

Paul decided to present himself to Peter and James, not to receive any information from them, but to present information to them. Basically, he agreed to an interview.

His visit was designed to allow Peter and James to question Paul regarding his conversion, his call and his beliefs. If there was any error, any heresy, who better than Peter, the leader of the Apostles and James, the Lord's own brother to sniff it out?

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul asserts his apostolic authority. He takes great pains to point out that his conversion, his authority and his gospel were not derived from man. No man taught him, no man or group of men were instrumental in his service to his Savior.

In verses 13-17, Paul makes it plain that his conversion, his calling and his gospel was not *derived* from man, but here in verses 18-20, Paul shows us that his conversion, calling and gospel were acknowledged, confirmed and accepted by the other apostles.

Charles Ryrie makes the point that though independent of men, Paul makes it clear that he is within the stream of apostolic tradition represented by the other apostles who actually lived with Christ.

Thus, the Galatians can be assured that Paul was an independent witness to the gospel and although he received no instructions directly from the apostles – only from the Lord – the True Gospel of Faith he preached agreed with theirs.

The false teachers, on the other hand, preached a false gospel of faith plus works that was in direct contradiction with the beliefs and teachings of not only Paul, but the other apostles as well.

They never presented themselves to Peter and James for questioning, they never agreed to an interview. In short, their gospel was never confirmed by any apostle. They were not to be trusted.

But because Paul did present himself for an interview, the Galatians could rest assured that he preached the True Gospel to them and they could believe and trust him and his gospel message.

And finally, Paul wraps up his opening statement with the following:

Galatians 1:21-24 – 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they glorified God because of me. ESV

According to Acts, after conferring with Peter and James and convincing them that he was indeed a true believer who had received the True Gospel of Faith from Jesus Himself, Paul preached in the Jerusalem church and was confronted by unbelieving Jews who eventually decided to kill him for heresy, much like he had done 3 years earlier.

My, how the tables had turned! The man responsible for so much hatred and persecution was now the object of much hatred and persecution, something Paul was doomed to experience for the rest of his life.

But God ensured that the plot was made known to some of Paul's fellow believers and they escorted him to Caesarea, where he caught a ship to his hometown of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia.

And verse 22 makes it clear that even though Paul was known in Jerusalem, the churches in the surrounding region of Judea had not met him...BUT, they heard of his conversion and preaching about faith in Jesus for eternal life, and they glorified God because Paul was now a changed man.

In fact, Acts tells us that after Paul proved himself to Peter, James and the church in Jerusalem, all of Israel, from Judea to Galilee to Samaria was finally at peace, unafraid and experiencing growth!

Even though Paul was hundreds of miles away in Tarsus of Cilicia, he was having an impact and it was all due to his transformation from brokenness to wholeness based on his belief in Jesus Christ.

Three years earlier, every Christian in Israel was afraid of the man, Paul. His brokenness led him to such depths of hatred and pure evil that he desired to arrest and murder anyone who believed differently than he did.

But after meeting Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul was transformed to a man of love and peace, whose only goal was to see the True Gospel of Faith preached to a lost and dying world who so desperately needed to hear it.

Which is our Big Idea for this morning:

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Let's close in prayer.

I'd like to remind you that we have someone at our Connect Desk in the lobby waiting to greet you with a smile and answer any questions you might have.

Also, someone will be waiting in the prayer room next to the Café if you need to pray about anything at all.

Have a great week. Roger will be back next Sunday to continue his series, "Barf on the Beach." See you then.