

Galatians 1:10-24

Are You A People Pleaser?

Most of the people of Germany during the time of Adolf Hitler weren't evil or stupid, but millions of them eagerly did things that were both evil and stupid. The Fuehrer (leader) manipulated their behavior, and their beliefs, by corrupting their natural love and pride for their country. Hitler's national policy was that "Germany was answerable only to God and itself." It was a very effective propaganda tool for harnessing the people's pride of power and race.

Hitler got them to do what he wanted them to do, and Hitler got them to believe what he wanted them to believe, by appealing to their human pride and ego. He manipulated them by telling them what they wanted to hear, in a way that caused them to do evil that seemed righteous in their minds.

The deception reached its peak when their patriotism was actually embodied in the Leader. They chanted "Hitler is Germany, Germany is Hitler" - so to oppose the evil man was viewed as treason to the nation. It took a lot of years for that spell to wear off, and by the time it did, Germany was in ruins.

It's amazing what you can do when you tell people what they want to hear.

Of course the opposite can happen when they don't like what you have to say.

One of the Hebrew prophets was named Jeremiah. You can read his writings in the Old Testament. God sent him to tell the rebellious people of Judah that they were going to be over run by the pagan nation of Babylon.

The people of Judah figured that they were God's people and God would never let that happen to them. The king had Jeremiah thrown into prison. At one point he was in a deep slime pit, the mud was two or three feet thick on the bottom and only a little bit of daylight trickling through from above.

Sometimes telling the truth isn't popular. Especially if the truth is about religion.

Religion has been the subject of endless debates all down through history. Kingdoms have been overthrown because of religion. Wars have been fought over religion.

And because of all that some people have rejected all religion. They've said religion must be the problem.

Of course anti-religious movements like communism haven't fared any better. Humanistic secularism has killed millions in the Soviet Union, North Korea, China, and Cambodia.

The truth is that an accurate understanding of the truth of the Bible is the solution not the cause of problems.

That's why Christians have been on the forefront of bringing in aid to the tsunami victims. Most of the tsunami victims are Muslim.

But Christian organizations are bring in relief aid just like they would if the countries had been predominantly Christian, or secular with no religion for that matter.

Understanding the truth of the Bible motivates people to do good to others. It's a distortion of biblical truth that drives people to hurt and dominate other people.

Religion isn't the problem. But the distortion and perversion of God's truth is a major problem that ultimately enslaves people and gives them a false hope about their relationship with God.

The Bible is a book that claims to be God's message to us. We would expect a book that came from God to be different. We'd expect it to have the marks of God's inspiration all over it.

The Bible is that kind of book. In fact, it's a book like no other book that's ever been written.

Along with its hundreds of explicit, unambiguous, confirmable predictions about Israel, about the Gentile nations of the world, and about Christ, it's a book that changes lives.

Sir William Ramsey an atheist with a Ph.D. from Oxford set out to disprove the Bible by disproving the Book of Acts.

Because it contained so many detailed descriptions of events and locations in the Middle East during the first century he felt that it would be easy to find inaccuracies and inconsistencies that would bring the accuracy of the whole Bible into question.

After twenty five years of digging, he finally declared that Luke was accurate down to the minutest detail. In his attempt to disprove the Bible he discovered literally hundreds of relics that proved the historical accuracy of the Book of Acts. He stunned the world when in one of his books he finally declared himself a Christian!

Simon Greenleaf was one of the principle founders of the Harvard Law School. He originally set out to disprove the biblical testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was certain that a careful examination of the internal witness of the Gospels would dispel all the myths at the heart of Christianity. But this legal scholar came to the conclusion that the witnesses were reliable, and that the resurrection did in fact happen.

Simon Greenleaf was Dane professor of law at Harvard University. His work *Treatise on the Law of Evidence* was the standard American work on the subject.

One day he was challenged by some students to use the law of evidence to examine the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection. Simon Greenleaf became an outspoken Christian and served as president of the Massachusetts Bible Society.

History is filled with learned men and women who studied the biblical evidence and came to accept the Bible's truth.

The Bible is the most important book that's ever existed because it tells us the truth about ourselves, about God, and about eternity.

Last week we started to study a New Testament Book, the Book of Galatians.
Turn pg 1033

We saw last week that Galatians is a letter written just 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. It was written to a group of churches in a region of Asia Minor known as Galatia.

The author was a man named Paul who was specially chosen by God as an apostle. Paul traveled around the Roman Empire starting churches and he was the founder of the Galatian churches.

Paul's message was simple and straightforward. We are all rebels who have sinned against our Creator. That rebellion has brought a pronouncement of Divine judgment.

The Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that the wages of sin is death. In another place it says, the whole world stands guilty before God.

God is a righteous judge. He must punish sin. It's part of His character.

But God is also love. And in love He made a way for our forgiveness. He sent His Son to take on humanity as Jesus Christ, live a life of perfect obedience, and then die on a cross as our substitute.

Being forgiven and made part of God's eternal family isn't through anything we could ever do. It's by the finished work of Jesus Christ.

That was Paul's message to the Galatians. That was the message they gladly received. They believed and churches were started.

So far so good. See the Bible also talks about a very real enemy of God called Satan. "Satan" comes from a Hebrew verb meaning "to attack," or "to accuse."

Satan has been trying to distort and corrupt God's truth from day one. We'll Satan was right on the heels of Paul.

As soon as Paul left to start churches in another place the attack started. Men came down from Judea saying that they were sent by the apostles in Jerusalem to tell the Galatians that Paul deceived them.

They said, Paul didn't give the whole story. The truth was that the way into God's family was trusting Christ as Savior plus.

From the very beginning of Christianity Satan has been busy trying to detour

people from God's truth. His goal is always the same. He hates God and will do anything to neutralize God's message.

The cross was not only the basis for our salvation but it's the basis for Satan's ultimate judgment, and he'll do anything to see God's plan fail.

God's message has always been that He is the Savior. God's goal has always been to bring us into His family. God's way of salvation has always been by faith. That way He gets all the glory. We only receive what He's done for us.

Satan's agenda is to constantly turn our focus back to ourselves. If he can convince us to trust ourselves then we get glory instead of God. Then it becomes about what we've done instead of what God's done.

And if you think about it, what do the religions of the world present as the way to God? It's always about doing something, right. It's always about working, or joining, or paying, or doing something.

These guys that came down from Judea told the Galatians that they needed to keep the OT law plus believe in Jesus Christ.

In a few weeks we'll see the purpose for the OT law, but for now just realize that it wasn't the way to heaven.

When Paul found out about what these guys were telling the Galatians he wrote this letter that we have in our Bibles.

Remember, the point of contention was that they were telling the people that God wouldn't accept them unless they did something.

We finished up last week with verse 9 so let's go back there and use it to get our context for today.

Read vs 9

The clear message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing is so important that there's judgment pronounced on anyone who changes it.

The problem is God's gospel message isn't very popular. If you really want to get

people riled up just try telling them that their religion of good works won't save them.

Try telling people that there's nothing they can do to earn God's forgiveness.

That's what's going on in the book of Galatians. Paul is having to defend himself against these critics who say that his message of salvation by faith alone was bogus.

I. Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You Won't Please Everybody

read 10

These guys came to the Galatians and said, "Paul's just telling you what you want to hear. We're the ones bringing the truth."

His answer was this: "If I was just about pleasing everybody, I wouldn't be going around pronouncing judgment on people. But, then if I just told people what they wanted to hear I wouldn't be a servant of Christ."

Now, here's an important question. Isn't it biblical to please people? Doesn't the Bible talk about pleasing others?

Rom 15 pg 1010 Read 15:1-3

Jesus didn't live to please Himself. He lived to please others. He wasn't self-focused. His life was about serving others even to the point of giving up His life.

I Cor 10 pg 1019 Read vs 31-33

Phil 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Pleasing others is a theme that permeates the Bible. Preferring others is the very opposite of selfishness and self-centeredness.

When pleasing others becomes wrong, is when we have to compromise biblical truth to do it.

We should go out of our way to help and serve others because it's the right thing to do and because we want them to listen to the message of the Gospel but we have to stop short at changing the message.

There's a very well known pastor in the US who has a large church with a regular TV program. Thousands come to hear him each week. He smiles all the time, and he says we should never talk about sin.

In fact, he says people need to hear the positive. They already have little self-esteem. We should help them by never focusing on the negatives.

That's like saying a doctor should always tell her patients good news. If they have heart problems, or cancer, or liver failure, don't tell them. It might make them feel bad.

Well of course none of us wants to hear that we have a life threatening disease, but pretending it isn't there isn't going to do anything. In fact that would keep us from getting treatment.

We need to know we're sick and we need to identify the sickness specifically. That's the only way we'll have a chance at being cured.

The Bible uses words like "sin," "transgression," "offence," hundreds of times.

The good news is that God has provided the cure. The cure for sin is Jesus.

So while pleasing others is a biblical concept, changing God's truth to try and please others, isn't.

God's gospel of grace is the greatest ego buster there ever was. It says that we're helpless, lost, hell bound- totally incapable of doing anything to make ourselves right with our Creator.

The Bible says that the only way a person can be saved is to come before God in total honesty and say, "God, I have nothing to bring you. All I have is the filthy rags of my own sin. I'm not here to give you anything. I'm not here to make promises I might fail in. I'm only here to receive what Jesus bought and paid for through His death."

That's God's message. That's a message that cuts across the grain of our self-

righteousness. That's a message that many people don't want to hear.

- I. *Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You Won't Please Everybody*
- II. *Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You'll Stick With God's Truth No Matter What Others Say*

Back to Gal 1 read vs 11-12

Here's a man who could make a statement few others can make. I didn't receive it from man, nor was I taught it.

I didn't get it passed down by tradition. I didn't learn it in Rabbinical school. It came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Most of us in this room can't say that. Most of us were taught by someone else. We heard the Good News of God's forgiveness because someone took the time to share it with us and teach us. That's important. That shows how we need to be actively praying for opportunities to share God's love with others.

For Paul, it was God working through His Word, through experiences that Paul had, and through the Holy Spirit's direct call on his life.

That's powerful. You know we have lots of cults around that say that they have God's true message. Those cults have millions of followers worldwide.

What's telling to me is that no one who's a member of any of those cults became a member from just reading the Bible on their own. They always had someone else teach them.

But history is peppered with the testimonies of people who became believers in Christ by simply reading the Bible for themselves.

Some of them stated out to try to prove the Bible wrong like Sir William Ramsey. Some of them were just searching for truth and they picked up a Bible.

Some of them weren't looking for God at all. The German branch of the Gideons reported that a Siberian prison inmate literally inhaled God's truth. He used the pages of a Bible to roll his cigarettes. The chain-smoker had picked up three copies of the Bibles distributed in his prison. Within four months, he had used up

two of them for cigarette paper. When working on his third copy, he started reading it, saw the Gospel message and eventually trusted Christ as Savior.

So here's Paul writing this letter and he says, "This message came from God, not from people. It gets its authority from God. And here's the proof."

Read vs 13-14

Paul was raised as an orthodox Jew. He studied under the finest teachers. He knew his stuff. Unfortunately the clear teaching of God had become buried under centuries of tradition and rabbinic interpretation.

That's why when Jesus came and clearly fulfilled prophecy after prophecy made in the OT about the coming Messiah they still missed Him.

That was Paul. He originally saw Christianity as just a distortion of Judaism. His goal was to stop it at any cost.

Turn to Acts 22 pg 990 Here he's going to describe in his own words how he reacted to Christianity. **Read vs 1-5, 19-20**

In Acts 26 he said, "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

Back to Gal

In vs 13 he says, "I persecuted the church beyond measure." In other words he said, "If you wanted to try and measure the intensity of my persecution, good luck. I was off the charts. I went right off the scale."

In vs 14 he writes, "I advanced in Judaism beyond my contemporaries." That word translated "advanced" literally means "blazed a trail." He said I was at the head of the pack. No one else could come near my intensity. I led the way." Paul led the way in the religion of Judaism, not God's OT truth. God's truth was barely recognizable because it had been buried by traditions.

At one point Jesus even said this about Israel's religious leaders: *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matt 15:8-9)

Paul was zealous for a religion. Religions are all based on some type of works system and they all appeal in some way to pride and ego.

Paul was proud of his religion with it's forms and ceremonies. He was about as far from becoming a disciple of Jesus as they come.

But... read vs 15-17

The point is, all of this was a total "God thing." it was God working in his heart. It was God who showed him he needed a savior.

And when God showed him he did a complete 180 and never turned back.

Now what do you think was the response Paul got from his friends, his family, and his fellow Pharisees?

Believe me, he got nothing but grief. In fact where ever he went the Jewish leaders followed and tried to cause trouble.

But, When You're A Servant Of Jesus You Stick With God's Truth No Matter What Others Say

Paul went from being honored and looked up to as a leader to being despised almost overnight.

When Sandy and I were first married we went to a Bible study. It turns out the man leading it had been a friend of my parents when I was growing up. He was a member of the large church that my parents joined and took me to once or twice a year.

This guy had come to know Christ as Savior and led the High School group at

the church. He started telling the kids they could really believe the Bible and could know they were going to heaven through faith in Jesus Christ.

It wasn't long until he was forced out. That message of grace wasn't popular.

I met a man who had been a pastor in the UCC for most of his adult life. He got saved and stated preaching about God's free gift of eternal life. They booted him out.

- I. Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You Won't Please Everybody*
- II. Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You'll Stick With God's Truth No Matter What Others Say*
- III. Being A Servant Of Jesus Means You'll Impact Other People's Lives*

Read 18-20

Did you ever notice how we treat famous people who say they've come to believe in Jesus Christ? Some entertainer or politician, or sports hero gets saved we instantly make them a "Christian celebrity" and put them out in the limelite.

So many times that's happened and then the person's stumbled in some sin and it gives Christianity a bad name.

If we really care about people we'll take our cue from Paul. God led him into the desert for three years before putting him out there. Paul needed time to grow in his faith. We all need time to grow.

We all impact people's lives one way or another. Paul had to leave Jerusalem after a short time there because his life was in danger so he left and went north.

Read 21-24

The churches around Judea didn't know Paul by sight. They only had heard the rumors that the former persecutor was now a preacher.

There was real power in that testimony. Here was a man who would stop at

nothing, even using imprisonment, torture, and death to try and stamp out Christianity.

Now the persecutor had become an evangelist, "And they glorified God in me," Paul says.

Is your life about pleasing people this morning? Are you always worried about what people think of you? About whether they like you or not?

Are you people controlled, or are you God controlled?

God's message of faith alone upsets people. It's hard for people to deal with.

But it's a gospel of grace and mercy. God says, *"Come. And let him who thirsts come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* He says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*