

RESCUED AT THE CROSS

Galatians 1:1-5

Intro: In a series of messages which Dr. S. Lewis Johnson preached twenty years ago this year, he said that “Galatians is Paul’s most explosive letter. And he went on to say that if Romans teaches us what the Gospel *is*, the book of Galatians tells us what the Gospel *is not!* Of course, not everything in Romans is positive, and not everything in Galatians is negative, but generally speaking Galatians is the negative expression of the Gospel which Romans is the positive.

To say that the Apostle Paul was upset, is to state it mildly. Look verses 8 and 9 in chapter 1. (Read.) The issue before him was the nature of the Gospel, and we soon realize that Paul considered it one of the worst things that could possibly be done by any Christian, was to corrupt the Gospel of the grace of God. Teachers in the Galatian churches were doing this, and Paul was amazed at how quickly the Galatian believers had been deceived. See verses 6 and 7 of chapter 1. (Read).

Often in Paul’s epistles it is possible to tell from his greetings and introduction, what was bothering him, or the message that he wanted to get across to them. You could call it *keynoting his theme*. And this was certainly the case with this epistle to the Galatians. And when he identified himself as an apostle, this meant that he was reminding him of the special authority that the Lord had given to him, making him an apostle. As I have said before, the authority of the New Testament rested on the authority of the apostles. It was God-given authority, and stands behind every epistle and book of the NT.

A reading of verses 4 and 5 indicates that Paul was going to be writing about Christ, and particularly about the sacrifice of Christ. And so we should not be surprised that *the cross of Christ* figures largely into this epistle. Furthermore, Paul indicated that Paul was going to talk about the results of the work of Christ on the Cross, what He actually accomplished when He died on the Cross. Paul would have much to say about our sins, and even about this present age (“world”) in which they were living then, and in which we are still living today. And then we see that Christ not only gave Himself voluntarily on the Cross, but that what He did there was in complete agreement with the will of God – tracing the planning of the work to God the Father. And, therefore, the Father pre-eminently was the one deserving of the praise for all that Christ did. The way in which this verse 4 coupled with verse 5, covers so much truth in so few words, is

in itself a testimony to its divine origin. And we know from other passages that it was the Holy Spirit Who was leading the Apostle Paul in what he had to say, down to the very words that Paul used. It is truly a remarkable text.

Let us consider these two verses, 4 and 5, by looking at each part of verse 4, and there are three parts, following by the statement Paul made in verse 5.

Right away he began speaking of Christ, and this is where we always need to start especially when we are examining any doctrine which claims to be the truth of God. We must ask, "*What place does this teaching give to our Lord Jesus Christ?*"

This is the first statement:

I. "WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS" (Gal. 1:4a).

We can tell that this has to apply to Christ because He was the One Who "gave Himself" as a sacrifice for our sins." But combining verses 3 and 4 indicates very clearly, unmistakably that Paul was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now obviously this would be a work of infinite value. Whatever our Lord would do would be perfect. And we must add that if the Lord did it, then it was absolutely necessary. It would mean that no man had the ability to do what was necessary to atone for His own sins. In addition, Paul spoke of "our sins" and of Christ in an exclusive way. We would assume from these words of Paul that whatever was required by God to deal satisfactorily with our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ did by Himself. Nothing needed to be added – no work of man, nor even of angels. And for the Lord to have given Himself means that it was voluntary, and also that it was gracious since "our sins" would merit the judgment of God, not an efficient sacrifice.

William Hendriksen, who is now with the Lord, but who did a great work on many of the books of the New Testament, gives us some more insight into the meaning of this statement we are considering, when he wrote the following:

The greatness and magnanimity of Christ' act of self-surrender is stressed in order to underscore the grievous nature of the sin of those who teach that this supreme sacrifice must be supplemented

by law-works (p. 34).

If it were necessary for Christ to come to the earth as a Man, and to suffer and die at all, why would we think that He would leave something undone since His very coming meant that we were unable to save ourselves? And the very sufficiency of what the Lord did is brought out in the next statement in verse 4. We will see this in a moment.

But notice that in giving Himself “for our sins,” would mean that by His death He not only delivered us from sins penalty, but from the power of sin after we are saved.

The NT always traces our salvation to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the salvation which we now enjoy from the penalty that should have been ours, is all because of the death that our Lord died. He gave Himself for “our sins,” the sins of the elect. It was our Lord’s purpose to offer a sacrifice that guaranteed the salvation of all of those for whom He died.

But let us go on. The second part of verse 4 says this:

II. “THAT HE MIGHT DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD” (Gal. 1:4m).

A better translation would be, “*that He might rescue us from this present evil age.*”

The language which Paul used implies that we were in trouble from which we could not deliver ourselves. We needed rescuing.

The word *age* speaks of the world from the standpoint of time. It was evil then, and it is evil now, and it was evil before the time of Christ, and it will continue to be evil until it passes away. And the word for evil means that it is a corrupting world, a defiling world, a world from a moral standpoint that will make us dirty. It is a world that is dominated by evil, and the passing of time has seen no improvement in it. And the world will not only corrupt us morally, but it will corrupt the truth and try to make us believe “another gospel, which is not another.”

So the Lord not only died “for our sins,” but He died to rescue us “from this present evil world.” If any generation should need no proof that our world is evil, it should be ours. Evidence abounds in all directions that this world is an evil place.

Now what does it mean that we are rescued from this evil world. It means that we are delivered from the power of temptation and the power of sin. Our relationship with sin and with this evil world has been changed as a result of our salvation which Christ died on the Cross to obtain and secure for each one of us.

Dr. Johnson brought out in his message on this passage that the use of this word, although not found in any of Paul's other epistles, speaks of a deliverance *from the power of*, but NOT *from the presence* of this evil world. We are still here, but, as Dr. Johnson said, "The tense of the verb stresses the definiteness and completeness of the deliverance. From the beginning of time, based upon the work of Christ on the Cross, our Lord has been rescuing those whom the Father gave to Him from the power of sin and from the power of the world in which we live. There is a coming age when we will be delivered from the very presence of sin and an evil world, but that day has not come yet. Therefore, it is important for every Christian to know the means by which he has been rescued. It is all because of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lightfoot in his commentary on Galatians says that in these words the Apostle Paul has struck the keynote of the epistle. In his words he said, "The Gospel is an emancipation from a state of bondage" (p. 73). And he pointed out that "evil" in "evil world," or *age*, is emphatic, and that it carries with it the idea of a rescue from *all of the world's evils*. *No sin has been excluded. No sin is greater than the power of the Gospel. No sinner who has been saved has any excuse for going on in sin.*

What a wonderful truth this is! Sin has polluted us in our very characters and dispositions. It has polluted the way we think. It has polluted the way we talk. It has polluted the things that we do. But for the Lord to save us, and then to leave us in this same evil world, emancipated, delivered, rescued, set free, is a great testimony to the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All illustrations of the kind of a rescue which the Apostle Paul was defending here are not sufficient to picture the amazing work which our Lord did on the Cross. But one story has come out of Jonesboro, Arkansas this week where those two boys went on a rampage with weapons and killed four students and a teacher. Do you remember how the teacher died. She threw herself in front of a girl who would have been shot, took the bullet that was aimed at the student, and gave her life to save that girl from death. What a heroic act that was! And that girl will

never forget that teacher. But that teacher could not save that girl from future bullets. Our Lord died to save us from the penalty of our sins, but He died also to rescue us from this present evil age. We go on living in this same evil world, but no longer slaves to the evil.

What is our third statement?

III. “ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD AND OUR FATHER” (Gal. 1:4b).

What the Apostle Paul said about his apostleship in verse 1, could also be said about our salvation. It was planned and willed by God. There is no evidence on record that God was answering some man’s prayer when He planned our salvation. It was all planned before the foundation of the world, and was accomplished in the fulness of God’s time when the Lord Jesus came to earth, born of the virgin Mary, and suffered and died on the Cross for our sins and for our emancipation from this present evil world. God left nothing undone.

But have you read this statement carefully. Paul said, “According to the will of God and our Father.” We could translated it, “*According to the will of God, even our Father.*” There is a most wonderful truth conveyed in those words. We know that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but did he mean to write, “our Father.” Yes, He did! Because you see that Christ not only atoned for all of our sins, taking upon Himself the wrath that should have fallen on us, and not only did He rescue us from “the present evil world,” but by the miracle of the new birth we have been born into the family of God. He is our Father; we are His children. In Gal. 3:26 we see that Paul wrote to those Galatian believers, “For ye are all the children (lit., *sons*) of God by faith in Jesus Christ.” And this faith in Jesus Christ must be faith *only* in Jesus Christ – not faith in Christ, and faith in ourselves. And not faith in Jesus Christ plus what others might do for us. But “by faith in Jesus Christ” alone!

Look at Gal. 5:2. If we think that by adding circumcision, or baptism, or the obedience to the Law, or anything else to what Christ has done, Paul said, “Christ shall profit you nothing.”

I have told some of you that years ago Dr. William Pettingill, a great Bible teacher whom I had the privilege of hearing, wrote a book on Galatians which he called, “By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing.” Salvation is by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on

the Cross, *plus nothing!* Cf. Eph. 2:8-10; John 1:11-13.

Now we come to the last statement, and it should be no surprise to us after all that we have seen.

IV. "TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN (Gal. 1:5).

The connection with verse 4 shows us that Paul here was speaking about God, our Father. This does not mean that we cannot give glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, but it does mean that we must not give one tiny bit of the glory for our salvation to anyone but the Members of the Godhead.

By the way, the doctrine of salvation which the Apostle Paul preached excluded every other religion that has ever existed, or that will appear on the scene in the days to come. Every other religion is false. There is no other Savior. All others are impostors, and can only give people a false hope. Only Christ can save us, and He died on Calvary's Cross, taking our penalty upon Himself, and securing our eternal acceptance with God. But not only that, He has delivered us from the power of evil that continues on in this world where we live, and He did it all in pure, sovereign grace! And to add to all of the other blessings of salvation which Paul mentioned here, He by the new birth has brought us into His family, and we are secure in this relationship forever!

Concl: Christ gave Himself for our sins. He has delivered us from "this present evil world," and we have been made members of God's family. And this was all planned for us individually, for us in particular, before the foundation of the world when God determined to save us and to bring us into His family as His own dear children.

There is only one thing for us to do. Have you done it? Are you doing it over and over, day after day? What is it? Giving glory to God Who has planned it all, and secured it for us in the death of His dear Son.

We don't know all that we will be doing in heaven, but we can be sure of one thing. We will spend eternity giving all of the glory to God, thanking God alone for this marvelous salvation that we have in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We should not wonder at Paul's strong words when he was facing those who would lay their hands on this precious Gospel to rob God of His glory

by teaching that you and I have a part in our salvation. It is all of grace, not by any works that we might do, and even our faith is a gift from God. In fact, if the Holy Spirit had not shown us our need, and that Christ was the only One Who could save us, we would still be in our sins.

As we sing so often, "To God be the glory; great things He hath done."

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Galatians 2:11-21

— **Intro:** There is no question but that the Apostle Paul was a very special instrument in the hands of the Lord. He seemed to very sensitive to any departure from the truth. And no doubt this was due the way the Lord worked with him immediately following his salvation. Note the testimony that he gave at the end of chapter 1, and which continued into chapter 2. (Begin reading with verse 15 of chapter 1.)

I. THE TRAINING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Paul could have been taught by the other apostles, but it is clear that he was set apart in a special way, and that the Lord ministered to him. We were reminded of that in our communion service this morning where in 1 Cor. 11, speaking of the Lord's Supper, Paul wrote in verse 23, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ..."

In Gal. 1:11-12 we read similar words:

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

— 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The other apostles could have taught Paul, or he could have learned even from the believers in Damascus, the fundamentals of the faith as they have to do with salvation. But none of that happened. Instead, the Apostle Paul, in ways that are not revealed to us, was personally tutored in faith by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And so Paul had the best teaching and training that is possible for anyone to have, and one reason for what the Lord did was the ministry that was to be given to the Apostle Paul: that of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles! And the controversy surrounding that ministry made up the main problem the early church faced in the first century. It was not the only problem, but it was the major problem. And Paul's instruction at the hand of the Lord made him very sensitive to the slightest departure from the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ alone!

— Many expositors have expressed their conviction that the doctrine of justification by faith was the basic doctrine of the early church. Luther, for one, taught that no church could survive as a church if it abandoned the doctrine of justification by faith. The Apostle Paul would agree with that statement.

Now, in spite of the personal instruction that the Apostle Paul had with the Lord, he felt that he wanted his message checked and approved by those who were apostles before him. (Read what he did, and what their response was, in the first 10 verses of Gal. 2.)

Not only did they have no changes to suggest to Paul, but they agreed that Titus, a Gentile, should not be circumcised. So this was an added victory for the Gospel.

All of this explains why Paul was so quick to rebuke Peter publicly when Peter did what Paul related beginning with verse 11 of chapter. Peter's action seemed harmless enough, but Paul saw in it a contradiction of the Gospel of the grace of God. And Paul knew that if such actions taken by the Apostle Peter were allowed to pass, this could and would lead to other departures from the true doctrine of justification by faith. And, as I said earlier, this doctrine is extremely important because it is the foundation upon which other doctrines rest, including the doctrine of sanctification.

If we need further proof, remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8 when speaking of God calling people to salvation, he went on to say, "And whom He called, them he also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30b). Between justification and glorification, as the epistle to the Romans makes very clear, is sanctification. So for people to be wrong about justification would make it impossible for them to be right about sanctification.

I would add to this Paul's words in 1 Cor. 1:30-31:

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Now not all people who are right on justification are right on sanctification. I say this because many are willing to say that we are not justified in any way by obedience to the Law, but then when it comes to sanctification and teaching about the Christian life, they go back and pick up the Law and make it the means, or a major part of the means, of our growth in the Lord – which is sanctification. The Law has no part in either. The book of Hebrews tells us,

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God (Heb. 7:19).

Again, quoting from Paul and his words which we find in Rom. 8:3-4,

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

But just in case we are inclined to minimize the importance of the Law in the plan and purpose of God, Paul said this in Galatians:

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:21-26).

II. WHAT DID PETER DO? (Gal. 2:11-13).

Paul's words are very clear. Before that delegation came up from James in Jerusalem, he was having fellowship with the Gentile believers, but when they came, because he was afraid of what other Jews might think, he "withdrew and separated himself."

Paul had just one word for this: He called it *hypocrisy*. You see, you can be a hypocrite by doing the wrong thing, but you can also be a hypocrite when you don't do the right thing. And it was clear to the Apostle Paul that Peter "was to be blamed." Peter had not done the right thing. He was more afraid of men than he was of God.

The seriousness of what Peter did is described in verse 13. Others followed his example, and even Barnabas was "carried away" – a word which indicates *compromise*. And to show you the practical effect of what they did, let me borrow the first few words from verse 14. Paul was writing about himself when he said, "And when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel." Their actions were a denial of one of the basic truths of the Gospel, and so we see that they

were really denying a very important aspect of the Gospel, and that was that Jews and Gentiles, both in need of salvation, must come to Christ in exactly the same way.

— **III. WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL SAY? (Gal. 2:14-21).**

Peter's offence was known to all who were present, and so Paul, instead of making an appointment to talk to Peter, brought charges against Peter "before them all."

A. He began with a question (v. 14).

(Read verse 14.) The question was addressed to Peter, but Paul meant it for all who had done what Peter had done.

It seems evident that Paul did not want an immediate answer. He expected to follow his question with some teaching, but at that moment he wanted them to think about what they had done, and how it would affect the thinking of others concerning the Gospel. Clearly Peter had been inconsistent. Was it easier for the Lord to save a Jew than to save a Gentile? Was Peter agreeing with those Judaizing teachers who were teaching that Gentiles had to submit to certain Jewish requirements which they had under the Law if they were to be saved? Cf. Acts 15:1:

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

That matter had already been answered by the Council in Jerusalem.

It is hard for us to realize how bound to the Law the Jews were by their culture, and how quick they were to avoid any criticism from the fellow-Jews even though in their hearts they knew the truth.

The second thing that Paul did was very important:

B. He did some teaching (vv. 15-21).

He began by saying what they as Jewish believers knew. See this in verses 15.

— Let me read this to you in the NASB because, while it changes nothing, I believe the translation may be clearer to us. This is how it read in the NASB:

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how {is it that} you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

The translators put everything from the question in verse 14 all the way down through verse 21 in quotes, indicating that this was what Paul said to Peter on this occasion – and I believe they were right in doing so.

15 "We {are} Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles;

16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

18 "For if I rebuild what I have {once} destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

19 "For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the {life} which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

21 "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness {comes} through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Gal.2:14-21).

Peter and the others, including Barnabas, were telling the Gentiles present that it would have been better for them if they had been born Jews instead of Gentiles. And so Paul took that expression of contempt which the Jews used against the Gentiles to see if there was any validity to it.

If a Jew is to be saved just like a Gentile, then he takes his place as "a sinner of the Gentiles." But what if he goes back to the Law? How does the Law judge a Jew? He is a transgressor. Which is worse, or is there any difference? Well, the Law spelled sin out for the Jews, and so you could probably say that, if you had a choice it would be better to be a Gentile instead of a Jew because you wouldn't have known enough to be a transgressor. And yet Paul said this in his epistle to the believers in Rome about Gentiles:

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Rom. 2:13-15).

So, although the Gentiles were never put under the Law like the Jews were, God has written the Law upon their hearts. So all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, know the difference between right and wrong. So whether you are a Jewish transgressor, or “a sinner of the Gentiles,” the result for both is condemnation.

What then is the answer? See verses 19-21.

Paul claimed that as far as the Law was concerned, he was dead. The Law had no further claim upon him. Every demand of the Law which called for his death had been satisfied! What a claim to make! But how could he prove that it was true. Verse 20 gives us his answer.

“I am crucified” is in the perfect tense, and should be translated (as it is in the NASB), “I have been crucified.” And the perfect speaks of something that has happened in the past, but which has results which carry right up to the present.

Do we say to a person who has just been saved, “Now you have been crucified with Christ”? Of course, not! If you were crucified with Christ, you were crucified when He was crucified – on the Cross almost 2,000 years ago! Everyone who will ever be saved was united with Him in His death. And, as a side, this to me is one of the strongest arguments for Particular Redemption. Could we possibly say that a person could be united with Christ in His death, and still go to hell? How could it be? If we died with Him, our salvation is absolutely secure. Christ died not only as a Sacrifice, but as a Substitute for particular sinners.

But Paul not only died with Christ, but he was raised with Christ, and at that very moment Christ was living in Him!

And the same is true of all of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ today. We were crucified with Him, raised with Him, and now He lives in each

one of us. This is why we don't need the Law. Remember Rom. 8:3-4:

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And Paul concluded with verse 21. To "frustrate the grace of God" is *to set it aside, to do away with it, or to disregard it*. In fact, he did just the opposite; he magnified the grace of God by making it clear that there was no hope for either Jew or Gentile apart from the grace of God. Christ's death was offered in grace as the one and only way for either a Jew or a Gentile could be saved.

Concl: Justification is by faith in Christ, and not by any good works that any of us can do, whether we be Jew or Gentile. To understand this will keep us from doing what Peter and Barnabas and several other Jews did. There is only one way to salvation for any sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, whether living in the first century or in the twentieth century – or any other century. And regardless of what nation he might be a part of. And through the Cross of Christ we not only have a secure salvation, but have the power of the living Christ within us, and it is through Christ, and only through Him, that we can live lives that are pleasing to God, and glorifying to Him.

THE HIGH COST OF OUR REDEMPTION

Galatians 3:13-14

Intro: The Lord had done a mighty work in the Roman province of Galatia. Some of the cities in this area were Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. You can read in Acts 14 about the ministry that Paul and Barnabas had in these places. At Lystra Paul was stoned, and many think that he was actually killed and raised again from the dead. But, in spite of all of the opposition, a great work was done, and churches were established.

However, the opposition continued from unbelieving Jews who did everything that they possibly could to get rid of the Gospel of the grace of God. The result was that within the churches of Galatia there were those who were swayed by the false teachers, and they turned away from a Gospel of grace to the doctrine of salvation by works. And the works which they taught were works in obedience to the Law of God.

In chapter 1 we in verse 6 that Paul was astounded by how quickly they had turned from the Gospel of the grace of God to “another gospel,” which he declared was not really the Gospel, but a perversion of the Gospel. (Read 1:6-7.)

And then in verses 8 and 9 Paul pronounced judgment upon those who would dare to proclaim *that other gospel*. (Read 1:8-9.)

The area of Galatia was populated mainly by Gentiles, but there were also Jews there, many of them. There was no doubt among the people that people needed help from God, but among those who professed to be Christians, there was a great difference as to how that salvation could be claimed. And that difference continues on down to the present hour both among Jews and Gentiles.

As I think most of us know, the controversy among the Galatian churches, and, in fact, among many of the young churches in the first century, was over just what the Gospel was. There were those who felt that it was necessary to keep the Law in order to be saved. And this was just a part of those who feel that salvation is our reward for doing good works of any kind. But the Gospel which the Apostle Paul preached was a Gospel of grace. And this is the true Gospel. Paul taught that salvation is not a reward for good things that we do, but it is a gift of God. Our sins are so great that no amount of good works could possibly atone for them. Man by nature is a slave to sin, and it takes far more than what we can do for

ourselves, and more than what anyone else can do for us, that if our relationship with God is dependent upon what we can do, then truly we all are in an utterly hopeless case. This Easter Season is supposedly a time when we remember the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it has gotten far removed from that. Even Sunday has in the past been the day when we gather to worship the Lord because it was on that day that He was raised from the dead. But now Sunday has gotten to be like any other day of the week – a day when most people do what they want to do, but not a day when they give even a single thought to God.

And so I am thankful that today I have another opportunity to speak to you about the death of Christ and what His death really means. And I trust that the Lord will open all of our hearts to this wonderful message of the Gospel.

First of all, let me say just a word about the Law. And when I speak about the Law, I am speaking about the Law God gave to Moses, which most people are inclined to think about as just the ten commandments. But the Law included much more than the commandments although they were basic to all of the Law.

I. THE LAW.

There are many parts of the Bible we could turn to for the truth about the Law, but there is really no need to go beyond our Scripture reading for the morning.

In these first thirteen verses of Gal. 3 the Apostle Paul quoted from the OT six times: in verses 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Approximately 500 years before God gave the Law to Moses, it was said about Abraham (and you have the words in verse 6) that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” This verse, which is a quotation from Gen. 15:6, gives us the basic truth about salvation. It was not a reward that God gave to Abraham for good works that he did, nor for being a good person. Abraham was a sinner just like you and I are, but he believed the promise that God gave to him of a Savior, and so he was declared righteous before God.

But what about the Law?

Read Gal. 3:10. (Read.) The Law was not given to save the Jews; the

Law was given to show that they were already under the judgment of God. The Law showed people in those days that they could not perfectly do what God required of them, and so it showed them that they were under the curse of God. They had to recognize that if they were to be saved, they had to be saved by believing the promise of salvation which had been given to Abraham. To break the Law in even one point, meant that they were guilty of it all. So the Law was given to show the people their sin.

The Apostle Paul explained this to the Christians at Rome when he wrote the words that we find in Rom. 3:19-20:

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

A lot of people set their own rules for themselves, but the rules that we make for ourselves fall far short of what requires. God requires perfection. And none of us is perfect. So, from a human standpoint, we are in a hopeless situation. We all have to confess that we don't even live up to our own standards, and so we ought to realize that we could never live up to God's standard. Even if we started out with a perfect record, which none of us has, the first sin would wreck it all.

And so, if we know what the Bible teaches, we have to admit that we cannot be saved by our own works. *How then can we be saved?* In answering that question I want to take you word by word through verses 13 and 14 of Galatians 3. And the first word we come to is:

II. CHRIST.

Here the Apostle Paul was speaking about God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is going to tell us that our only hope for salvation is in Christ.

"Christ" means *the Anointed One*. And it means that Christ, God's Son, was *anointed by God to come into this world for a very specific reason*. There was no man who ever lived who was capable of doing for us what Jesus Christ came to do. Abraham could not save us, because he was in the same trouble that you and I are. He couldn't even save himself. The same was true of Moses. He never saved anyone. Neither did he save himself. And you could go through the whole list of the great men and

women in the Bible, and you would never find one person who could help us in our need. The Pope can't save you. Take any person you want to, man or woman, in all of human history, and you will not find a single Savior. Every person who has ever lived has been under the curse of God. All are sinners and have come short of the glory of God.

Many people today are taken up with angels. But no angel can help us. Our only hope of salvation was that God would have mercy on us, and send someone who could save us. And He did just that when Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and untouched with human sin. He was born without sin. He lived a perfect life and in every way manifested that He was not only a real human being, but that He was truly God the Son.

So the true message of salvation is about Christ. And don't ever let anyone ever convince you of anything else. God would never have sent His Son into the world if there were any possibility at all that we could save ourselves by anything that we could do. For Jesus Christ to come into the world meant that there was no possibility of salvation in any other way.

But now we need to ask,

III. WHAT DID HE DO?

And for the answer to this question we simply need to go on in the verse. And so we read, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law."

What is "the curse of the Law"?

In Rom. 6:23 the Apostle Paul said, "The wages of sin is death." And in 2 Thess. 1:9, 10 the same Apostle Paul said that those who "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ... shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." There are only two ways we can go when we leave this life: one is to heaven; the other is to hell. To go to hell people don't have to do anything, but to be sure that you are going to heaven it is absolutely necessary that you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. And you have to trust Him before you die because there will be no way that you can trust Him after you die.

Eternal judgment is the penalty for sin. It is "the curse of the Law." But

the good news is that Christ has “redeemed us from the curse of the Law.”

Rom 3:19-20

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

(KJV)

IV. HOW DID HE DO IT?

He was “made a curse for us.” What does this mean, and when did it happen?

It means that He took upon Himself the full penalty of what we would have had to suffer if we had to face God for our own sins. And when did He do this? He did it when He died upon the Cross.

This statement that He was “made a curse for us” reminds me of another verse that is very similar. You will find it in 2 Cor. 5:21. And this is what it tells us:

He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (NASB).

So the Lord Jesus was not only “made a curse for us,” for those of us who are saved, and for all who will ever be saved, but God made His Son “to be sin for us,” that we might be delivered from the terrible penalty which we all face unless Jesus Christ is our Savior.

So you can see why Paul was so disturbed by those false teachers who were telling people in the Galatian churches that they could save themselves by trying to obey the Law. As I have been saying, salvation is not a reward for good works that we do, nor for trying to be a good person. Salvation is a gift from God, given not because we deserve it, but because of God’s great love for us. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He was not dying as a martyr. He may have been that, but the main reason for His death was He was dying to pay for the sins of all of the people who will ever be saved. He died to save Abraham and Moses and David. He died to save Peter and James and John and Paul. And He died to save all of us who are saved today, and the message we can proclaim is that He will save all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. You can’t buy it with money.

You can't earn it with good works. You come to Christ as a guilty, lost, and hopeless sinner, putting your trust in Christ and His work on the Cross. That is the only way anyone can escape the eternal judgment of God.

I doubt if any person who has ever lived has completely understood what it means that Christ became a curse for us, or that He was made sin for us. What Christ had to suffer for the salvation of sinners, is really beyond our understanding. It was terrible beyond what words can describe. But we can thank God that we know that "Jesus paid it all," as our hymn says. He left nothing for you and me to do. He even is "the Author and Finisher of our faith" by which we trust Him to save us.

It is in the OT that we learn, as Paul said at the end of verse 13, that "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." These are the verses to which Paul was referring. You will find them in Deut. 21:22, 23:

22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

The way people were usually put to death for their sins in OT times was by stoning, but then hung on a tree. Jesus Christ was nailed to a Cross, and it was there that He died – died as no one else has ever died.

V. WHAT DID HE ACCOMPLISH FOR US?

We have already learned that He "redeemed" us. Two ideas are in that word "redeemed":

- 1) That the Lord Jesus Christ died *to rescue us from the penalty of our sins, to save us from "the curse of the Law."*
- 2) That the Lord Jesus Christ died to purchase us for Himself, that we might live to please and glorify Him.

But Gal. 3:14 gives us two additional blessings.

A. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:14a).

You see, there is only one way of salvation. One way of dividing the human race is into Jews and Gentiles. If you are not a Jew, then you are a

Gentile, and if you are not a Gentile, then you are a Jew. You are either one or the other. But when it comes to salvation, it makes no difference whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. There is only one way of salvation. And there is only one way of salvation whether you lived before Christ, or after Christ. So the Apostle Paul went to Jews and Gentiles preaching the same Gospel, the same Savior. No one will be in heaven who has not been saved by the work of Christ on the Cross.

But there is another blessing that we have now, and which every believer has. You get this blessing when you are saved. Notice how Paul expressed it in the last part of verse 14.

B. “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14b).

The Holy Spirit lives in every child of God. And what will this mean to us? Well, it will mean that we will be able to live an entirely different kind of a life. Listen to Rom. 8:3-4:

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And let me add to that one more verse from Galatians: Gal. 5:16: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

You see, before we were saved we lived our lives “in the lusts of our flesh.” We were unable to please God with anything that we did. But that is changed for a Christian. When we really know the Lord we want to live lives that are pleasing to God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, we are able to live lives that are pleasing to Him. *And remember that all of the blessings of our salvation are traceable to the Cross of Christ.*

Concl: Let me add one further word as I close. It is this: We do not serve a dead Christ. He died, and He was buried. But very early on the first day of the week He was raised from the dead, never to die again. He had put away forever the sins of His people, and now He lives at the right hand of the Father where He intercedes for us, and where He awaits that day when He will come again to receive us and take us to heaven. Is He your Savior? Make sure that He is today!

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

Galatians 6:12-15

Intro: When I will have finished my message tonight, we will have had four different ways in which the Apostle Paul has referred to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ in this epistle. Paul was combating a most serious error which had found its way into the Galatian churches – an error which sought to turn the minds of people from what Christ had done to what they needed to do for themselves. It was an attack upon salvation by grace and a proclamation of salvation by works, the works of the Law.

In chapter 1, as we considered Paul's introduction and greetings in this epistle, we saw that Paul emphasized the voluntary nature of our Lord's sacrifice, which at the same time was "according to the will of God and our Father." The Lord had not undertaken to do what He did "on His own," but He had been sent by His Father. And in 1:4 we see that our Lord came on *a rescue mission. He came to deliver us from the defilements which the world always causes, and from the judgment which was upon the world because of sin.* The Apostle Paul attributed our rescue from *this present evil age* to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ when He "gave Himself for our sins." And that *giving* was done on the Cross.

In chapter 2 we saw that our justification before God was due to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we were united to Christ and with Christ in His death. *But as we must always remember the Lord's death was not the end of His work. He was raised from the dead, and now, while He is seated at the Father's right hand, yet He lives, He lives in us, and we live by faith in Him.*

These are glorious truths, and they must not be forgotten.

This morning we examined the Apostle's words in chapter 3, the first fourteen verses, but especially in verses 13 and 14. And there we saw the shame of our Lord's death where He became a curse for us that we might have the blessing of the salvation that had been promised to Abraham, and also the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Judaizing teachers had nothing to offer that could in any way approach what Christ had done for us.

Tonight I would like to direct your attention to chapter 6, verses 12 through 15, with special emphasis upon verse 14. And Paul again focused his attack upon the Judaizers, to expose what they were, and what their real objective was. Let us examine what he said about them.

I. PAUL'S ATTACK ON THE JUDAIZERS (Gal. 6:12-13).

They were trying “to make a fair show in the flesh.” This means that they were out to prove that “the flesh,” human nature, was not as bad as the Christians were saying that it was. They wanted to show man in a good light. They wanted to show that if man is given an opportunity, he will seek after God, and that he is actually capable of saving himself!

You see, one thing that makes the Gospel so offensive to people is because it utterly condemns all that man is, and all that man can do, and it leaves him helpless and hopeless unless God has mercy upon him. All man-made ways of salvation are out to prove that man is not so bad after all. Those who teach a salvation by works are usually willing to admit that man is sick, but they refuse to say that he is spiritually dead in his trespasses and his sins. And so these particular false teachers were encouraging circumcision! But Paul said that there were three things wrong that all of the Galatian believers needed to understand:

A. They emphasized circumcision to avoid persecution (v. 12b).

These teachers of the Law, false teachers of the Law, were seeking to avoid the persecution that the cross of Christ brings. Man hates to be put in a position where he is totally dependent upon God. He hates to be told that he deserved to die, and to die in shame because of his sins. The cross was not a symbol that people wore on their lapels, or around their necks. It was a mark of shame! Families who had one of their members crucified were held in disgrace for generations afterward. The message of the Cross is one which pictures man as so totally defiled by sin that his only hope is in the grace of God. This is the first point that Paul made. The Judaizers knew what it would mean to them to turn to Christ, and they were going to avoid that with all of their might.

In the Jewish community they would be praised for being circumcised, but to turn to Christ in faith would mean persecution.

B. The teachers of the Law did not practice what they were preaching (v. 13a).

They were asking people to do what they were not doing. Circumcision was only a small part of Law-keeping. When our Lord faced the scribes and Pharisees, He said that “they say, and do not” (Luke 23:3).

The dangerous thing about some error is that there can be a mixture of truth and error. And people are inclined to excuse the error in favor of the truth. That is because the heart is deceitful above all things, as Jeremiah had told us in Jer. 17:9. And besides being “deceitful,” it is “desperately wicked.”

So, when Paul said what he did here, he was saying the same thing that the Lord said, and this would mean that the false teachers, by their own definition of what salvation is, were not saved themselves. You can't keep just part of the Law; you have to keep it all. Cf. Jas. 2:10:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Obedience to the Word of God always follows salvation, but it does not lead up to salvation, nor does it secure salvation. Remember what the Apostle John said on this point:

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:3-5)..

So we don't get salvation by our obedience, but we show that we are saved by our obedience to the Word of God.

But there was another problem with the legalistic teachers.

C. They wanted to be able to boast that they had made another convert (v. 13b).

Have you ever noticed how false teaching always excludes rather than includes? Circumcision says nothing about the salvation of women. In fact, you would have to come to the conclusion that if that is the way of salvation, then now woman can be saved.

The same is true about keeping the Law. There is no point in talking to people about keeping the Law when they have already broken it by their disobedience.

It is not possible for some people to do work because of the physical limitations or disabilities. And if salvation were only by purchase with money, who could afford it. Even faith is impossible because sinners are spiritually dead. Faith is a gift of God only after we have life. Believing

in Christ is the first evidence that a person has eternal life.

False teachers love to “count noses.” *Their object is really not what they can do for us, but what we can do for them.*

Illus: M.L., my mother, and a friend who attended a special meeting where everyone in the congregation had gone forward except for them. And the preacher came and asked them to go forward “to make it unanimous.”

So remember these points by which the Apostle Paul was exposing those enemies of the Gospel of Christ.

But what is the truth? Where did Paul stand with regard to the Gospel?

In His closing words of this epistle, written by himself in large letters (see 6:11), Paul reaffirmed his faith in:

II. THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (Gal. 6:14-15).

To glory is *to boast*. And this is one activity that all of us are inclined to engage in. However, boasting can simply become an expression of our pride. We glory in our accomplishments. We glory in our strength. We glory in our relationships, the people we know and who know us. We glory in the money we make (until tax time comes around). We glory in what we have done, or in what we have not done. Listen to your thoughts, and listen to what you and others talk about, and you will see that this is a favorite occupation that we are all good at. If we don't have much to boast about in ourselves, we boast in the accomplishments of our children or grandchildren. Have you noticed the sticker on many cars, “My child is an honor student at” (such and such a school).

Paul looked on boasting as a sin. We saw in our lesson this morning in Romans 11 that Paul solemnly warned the Gentiles not to boast about themselves against the Jews.

Paul did a lot of boasting before he became a Christian. Listen to what he wrote to the Philippians in Phil. 3:1-11. (Read.)

However, after saying all of that, there is one legitimate way in which we can boast, and that is what Paul tells us in verses 14 and 15 of Gal. 6. Boasting is “out” for us as the people of God, except for boasting about

“the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Isaac Watts was speaking about the truth of this verse when he wrote the second verse of his great hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”

Let me read the verse I am referring to:

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

James Grigg also, in his hymn, “Jesus, and shall it ever be,” emphasized what the Apostle Paul told the Galatians. Listen to what he wrote:

Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days!

Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may
When I’ve no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, not soul to save.

Till then – nor is my boasting vain –
Till then I boast a Savior slain;
And O may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me.

In Gal. 6:14 Paul said three things about the Cross.

A. It was the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Cross” and that holy Name of our Savior, given here in its fulness, certainly do not belong together! But here they are, in the very Word of God. He of all persons would never deserve the Cross with all of its shame and reproach. And yet it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the very sinless, spotless Son of God, Who laid His life down on that Cross. He died as a criminal. But why? You know the answer very well. Because He died in the place of His people who were all criminals in the court of heaven, sinners against a holy God, condemned to eternal judgment with no hope of escaping the penalty of sin.

But He did it because God loved us, sinners though we were, and still are. And He did it because He loved us, loved us with an everlasting love, and with a love from which nothing can separate us. He is the only hope for lost sinners. Paul said that it perfectly acceptable to boast in such a Savior if it is our intention to glorify God, not ourselves, by our boasting. As Paul told the Corinthians,

1 Cor 1:26-31

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

There on the Cross the Lord purchased our redemption. He rescued us from the penalty of our sins. And they are gone! They will be remembered against no more. What a Savior, and what a salvation!

But something else happened on the Cross of Christ.

B. The world was crucified unto us.

Before we were saved, the world was what we lived for – this world under the dominion of Satan, a place of corruption, a world that has rejected God and His Son, a world that promises so much and yet all that it produces is empty and only vexes our Spirit. This is what Solomon had to say about it many, many years ago in the book of Ecclesiastes.

People who live for what this world can give them, are living for nothing. The world always demands our conformity to its standards which are just the opposite of what is pleasing to God. But by the death of Christ the hold that the world had on us, is gone. We are rescued, set free, not to do what we want to do – that is what has gotten us into so much trouble –but free to live lives that are pleasing to God.

But that is not all.

C. We are crucified to the world.

Not only are we through with the world, but the world is through with us. The world has lost us, but it can still give us trouble. This is where our persecution comes from.

This is what the Lord was speaking about when He said to His disciples as they walked from the Upper Room to Gethsemane:

John 15:18-21

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

(KJV)

So knowing Christ brings us into a new relationship with the world. We are free from it, but often the object of the world's ridicule, or worse!

But this did not discourage Paul. Instead he gloried in it all. Why?

Verse 15 in Gal. 6 gives us his answer. (Read.)

What is important to God is not whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or not circumcised. What avails with God is that we are a new creation in Christ. This is where old things, vain things, are passed away, and we have an entirely new life in Christ.

Concl: Is it any wonder that Paul was so greatly concerned about the believers in the churches throughout Galatia? The Christ of the Cross is the only hope the world has. What would the Apostle Paul say today if he could see the way the world has come into our churches, turning us away from the simple teaching of the Word of God, placing the emphasis on attracting the world by the world's means, instead of by the preaching of the Gospel of God's grace. May it be our prayer and our purpose, that we, too, like Paul, will glory only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.