

## Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

### Lesson 2 – This is the Lord's Doing and It is Marvelous in Paul's Eyes. How About in Ours? (Gal 1:10-24)

In Lesson 1, we saw that Paul began his letter to the churches in Galatia by reminding them of his authority as an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father and by expressing his amazement that the Galatians were so quickly abandoning God and His message of good news. That message of good news, or the gospel, is summarized in Galatians 1:3-4, namely that God, through his own will and desire and by the gift of His Son Jesus, was offering grace and peace to mankind and to us as individuals in order to rescue us from this present evil age.

For the remainder of Galatians 1, we might think Paul is giving us his résumé, detailing all that he has done for God; but when we look more closely, we see that is not what Paul is saying at all. Paul takes absolutely **no credit for the message** that he has delivered to the Galatians and to us. It was and is from God, and he is obviously confident in its source, its accuracy, and its veracity. (Gal. 1:11). He takes **no credit for the changes in his own life**. They are clearly the result of God's intervention in his life, God's planning from Paul's birth, and God's calling through His grace (Gal. 1:13-16). Paul takes **no credit for his ministry or the fruit of his work**. God's name was being glorified and that was the way Paul wanted it (Gal. 1:24). In Paul's mind, God was being glorified, because God was the One who was accomplishing much. Paul had brought a message of good news to the Galatians; but, to Paul, the gospel did not come in word only but also in demonstration of God's power (I Thess. 1:5), **power to change lives, beginning with his**. To paraphrase the words of the Psalmist (118:23), **the gospel is totally and completely God's doing, and it was, no doubt, marvelous in Paul's eyes**.

Do we share Paul's opinion of the gospel, and can we share his confidence that God's hand is active in every aspect of our lives? **Does the gospel still hold power to change our lives?** To get some insight into the answers to those questions, we need to spend some time looking at Gal. 1:10. In some ways, that verse is a transition from the first part of Galatians 1 to the second half, but it may also give us some insight into the transition from Paul's former life to the one he enjoyed under Christ.

**"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 men, I would not be a servant of Christ." (ESV)**

Paul asks "am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?" A good lawyer never asks a question when he is unsure of the answer, and Paul seems confident that both he and his readers will agree that he is now seeking to please God, not man. But he then states, "if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." That little word "still" indicates that Paul now realizes there have been times in his past when he was trying to please man, not God, and those times almost assuredly occurred during his former manner of life in Judaism, when he was persecuting the church, advancing beyond many of his contemporaries, and exhibiting great zeal for his ancestral traditions (Gal. 1:13-14). But wasn't Paul trying to please God when he persecuted the church? He may have been in error, but wasn't he sincerely seeking to serve God? Why else would he have done it?

If we are honest with ourselves, our motives for doing almost anything as humans are often muddled and cloudy. Last week in our first lesson in Galatians, we saw how mankind, including you and me, often seek **to appease God rather than please Him**. We feel the need to influence His opinion of us, to prove our worth to Him or at least not reveal our unworthiness. We may even come to believe subconsciously that our "service" to God obligates Him in some way toward us. We may come to expect special treatment because of what we do in His name. Of course, in those cases, we want something for ourselves not God, and we are seeking to serve ourselves not God.

**This week, maybe we need to take a long look at our motives in regard to those around us.** Could Paul have come to understand that his actions in his former life were more to impress and please his fellow Jews than to serve God? Could Paul now realize that, as he "advanced beyond his contemporaries" in the Jewish religion, he was really trying to "**elevate himself** above his contemporaries"? What was Paul seeking to prove by his zeal for the traditions of his ancestors? Could he now see that his motives were different than he originally thought? As humans, we understand that ulterior motives often sneak into our lives, and **those ulterior motives normally involve US**. Pleasing ourselves or impressing others is the way of the world; but pleasing ourselves or impressing others while we claim to be seeking to please God is both hypocrisy and a sure-fire way to miss out on God's power and love in our lives.

**We want our lives to matter, and we seek meaning and purpose in a world that seems so random at times. We want others to respect us, or maybe even think highly of us. We believe somehow that our lives are defined by our accomplishments, and we live in fear that our failures will render our lives null and void. And so we struggle on, seeking one more accomplishment for ourselves; all the while hoping to avoid one more failure. The message of the gospel is that our lives do matter--- to God. Regardless of what others think of us, the gospel demonstrates what God thinks of us. Long before our first accomplishment or failure, God sought us. He wanted fellowship with us, and He longs to offer peace to our restless souls and direction to our wayward lives. The apostle Paul had experienced the power of God's message, the power of His love, and the power of His Spirit. His life had been changed by the gospel, and he was baffled why anyone would abandon it? That is a good question, isn't it?**

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