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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
June 23, 2019  
(previously preached June 2007)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: 1 kings 8:22-23, 41-43 Luke 7:1-1-0

Hymns: 239; 245; 759 50:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Galatians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), <sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>6</sup> I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

<sup>10</sup> For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

**INTRO:** Dealing with all these foreigners.

This has become a big political football in the United States. It is complicated because there are so many aliens residing in the United States. It is complicated because so many more are streaming toward the United States southern border, some fleeing poverty, others running for their lives because of the violence in their home country, still others are criminals desiring to sneak into the United States with evil intent. It is a complicated problem, and it doesn't seem to have straightforward answer. But that is looking at a social and political; problem of the Unites States.

At the time that Paul wrote this letter to the predominantly gentile Christians in the region of Galatia this was a dire spiritual problem within the Christian Church. How should the church deal with all these "foreigners" that "Paul" was bringing into the church? The church was still very much made up of Jews who had recognized that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, and their Savior from sin. However they grew up with the culture that people coming into the faith should adopt their Jewish customs. And now so many "foreigners" were coming into the faith that soon they would outnumber the Jewish Christians, if they hadn't already. Some thought it necessary for these "foreigners" to become Jewish in order for them to be true believers of the one true God.

Without doubt this is an issue of great significance to us. We are now among those foreigners who have been brought into the Christian Church. Are we here with the proper legal status? Are there certain prescribed procedures we must fulfill before we can be "legal?" This is what the Spirit addresses in these opening words of this Epistle to the Galatians, words which declare--

**THEME:** One Gospel For All People!

This is --

## I. God's Message for the World.

Note Paul's emphasis on that fact:

**Galatians 1:1-2** Paul, an apostle (**not** from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

One of the greatest challenges to this message which Paul preached was that it was perceived by many as *Paul's* message, and as such it would be flawed, because it would be loaded down with his own personal opinions and prejudices. Others came along who instructed these new converts in the "superiority" of the "old covenant," while still others claimed to instruct with increased wisdom.

This false impression about Paul and the message Paul declared needed to be addressed. Paul introduces himself as "*an apostle.*" That has a very particular meaning which Paul clearly presents. He is a messenger, but not one sent with a message from another man. Paul was called by Jesus Himself to be God's messenger to the Gentiles. The message which Paul delivered to any and all of these people who were foreigners to the covenant of God, that message came from God Himself. He was representing Jesus and God the Father as he spoke, and as Paul wrote to the churches which were scattered throughout the region of Galatia.

This is such an important point for us in America today. Many have attempted to discredit the inspired writings of Paul by accusing Paul of particular prejudices which affect and seriously flaw the message which Paul delivered. If that were the case then **all** of Paul's words would be under suspicion, and called into question. The message which God sent out into the world through the Apostle Paul was **God's** message directed to the people of **all** nations who were **strangers** to God and Jesus our Savior. It was sent out and accurately delivered to strangers and aliens like us that we might have salvation, that we might be received by God as **His own people**, that we might be **citizens** of His kingdom of grace.

And what a message it is that makes it possible for the Lord to

declare, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God!” (Ephesians2:19)

This is the message of Christ our crucified Savior whom God the Father raised from the dead. It is a most marvelous message so beautifully captured in a few precious words of our text.

**Galatians 1:3-5** Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Grace and peace comes to us from God. He is kind to us foreigners, in spite of the fact that we were completely ignorant of Him, and His holy law. He is kind to us and brings us peace, in spite of the fact that we have violated every one of His laws in every way imaginable, because the imagination of our hearts is evil, and has been so from our very youth (Genesis 8:21). And still this divine message delivered to us through the inspired writing of Paul is one of grace and peace which comes to us from God, and Jesus **who gave Himself for our sins!** This is not a baseless wish for grace and peace but a proclamation of grace and peace that is found in the context of the sacrifice which Jesus made for us upon the cross. He gave Himself into death that by the shedding of His blood full atonement might be made for sin, for the sins of the world, the **whole** world!

What He did He did for a most wondrous purpose that He might deliver us from this present evil age. Everything “bad” that happens to us and around us is all on account of sin, sin which held all mankind prisoner to its corruption, and to its condemning power. The only possible escape is the one that Jesus provided for mankind, (yes, for us foreigners also) by the redemptive power of His death on the cross.

That is God’s message to the world, presented by His authority, a divine authority that is above question and above correction. This is a unique message unlike any other in the world, and it is

## **II. An Exclusive Message.**

We have just made it clear that this is the **one** message that is to be delivered to **all** people, so then the idea that this is an exclusive message is not intended to exclude people. It is the idea that it excludes all other ideas or procedures, or any other message proposed as a gospel of salvation.

**Galatians 1:6-8** I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

It is all too easy to be taken in by the ideas that appeal to the pride of our flesh. All too many people have strayed away from this marvelous message of saving grace, the only message that saves, not even realizing that in doing so they are turning away from God. It happened already among the Galatian Christians. After Paul moved on to different places, proclaiming the gospel to different people, others followed Paul that prescribed certain customs and requirements of the Old Testament law as added assurances of salvation. People were drawn in by this false teaching because they seemed to draw it from Scripture, and they were assured that all this was a companion truth to the cross. What it actually did was detract from the cross and supplement *human merit*, *human righteousness* to Christ's merit and righteousness.

Paul was very clear about it being a horrible mistake to turn away from the pure gospel of Christ to follow after some other gospels, which are in fact false gospels. All merit, all righteousness for salvation comes to us from God in Christ alone! That is the One and only gospel that saves. Any addition of human merit is a perversion of the gospel. **It stops being the gospel!** Such a message becomes a death trap for souls rather than a life giving power.

Perhaps you might think that we are not susceptible to this kind of gospel corruption. After all, we are not about to begin insisting on circumcision as a requirement for salvation. We avoid those churches which prescribe worship on Saturday only. We won't fall

for dietary requirements as assurance of salvation. However what makes these things the evil they are is the merit of righteousness, and the assurance of salvation ascribed to them.

Some today would ascribe such merit or assurances to the faithfulness of their church attendance, to the size of their church offerings, to their service to their church or their community. While such things ought to be a fruit of the gospel evident in the Christian's life, they are never, ever a contribution to that salvation. To make them such not only diminishes the gospel but completely perverts it so that it is no longer the gospel of Christ crucified. Those who declare such a message condemn themselves and those who follow them. Such tampering with the gospel is dangerous, dangerous beyond measure.

But there are so many churches that have different teachings. So many churches have simply advanced with the times. So many teachings of the Bible appear to be so harsh on so many people. Isn't it better to accommodate people where they are so they can know peace with God? Isn't it better to show how open our church doors can be to diversity? That is not the truth. It is not good to say "*Peace, Peace!* When there is no peace." (Isaiah 6:14) That is a deception that leaves people ensnared in sins that will drown them in perdition. That is hardly the loving thing for anyone.

True love for souls is found in this message of the gospel of Christ --  
**III. Without Popular Accommodation!**

Paul was very firm concerning the purity of the message preached.

**Galatians 1:9-10** As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

The gospel is not open to human editing. The gospel is already the best and only possible accommodation to a condemned mankind that God could make. He sent His Son to die that we might live. He sent His Son to free us from slavery to sin. This is God's truth that saves. It is not subject to man. It is not meant to accommodate

the culture of mankind. It is not to be subject to man's reason, that the mind of man should be able to grasp the mind of God. It is certainly not subject to opinion polls. That may now be the way we govern, but that is not the way God operates. **POLLS DON'T ESTABLISH TRUTH. GOD DOES!** The mess made of God's gospel of grace and peace by many of the "Christian" denominations of the world has robbed Christ of His glory and the gospel of its power to save. Then it is no longer the gospel.

Paul wasn't out to win a popularity contest. He was dedicated to the gospel, and to be faithful to His Lord who entrusted that gospel to him, that by its proclamation souls of men everywhere might be saved.

**CONCL.:** The pure gospel is God's plan for dealing with strangers and foreigners. It is a package deal plan. Take it as it is, and one is saved! Yes, if that sounds like an amnesty plan that is exactly what it is. It is the perfect amnesty plan pardoning us from every sin and all punishment. How could anyone make it better! No one can! Why would anyone mess with it at all? It already offers us the free gift of eternal life. There can be no better plan for foreigners like us which brings us into citizenship in the kingdom of God.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.