

## What's Worth Fighting About?

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Galatians: Free At Last Series

Galatians 1:6-10

Over the last 20 or so years it has been continually reported that America is facing a litigation explosion. Millions of our fellow citizens are suing each other for things that in the past would have been considered part of life. You can't live in a risk-free world. But now, it appears that if there is an injury, someone else is going to pay.

A few years ago the parents of a Little Leaguer sued their city's Little League because of an injury to their child. Apparently, their little Johnny, who was un-athletic, was playing in the outfield when he allowed a batted ball to hit him on top of his head. The parents sued the League because little Johnny was not required to wear a batting helmet while playing in the outfield. Nor, apparently, was Johnny required to wear shoulder pads, knee pads, or carry a police shield.

Have you been to a local playground recently? There is no playground in America with seesaws any more. They are considered way too dangerous. Most communities have replaced them with a little mermaid on a stiff metal spring that a typical child could maybe an inch. At a park near my house I have to take all 185 pounds of me and jump on the back of the little mermaid to make it move for my granddaughter. I read reports that playgrounds have become so boring for children that kids are now crashing their bicycles into each other just for a little fun.

Everyone is so concerned about the possibility of a lawsuit that we have eliminated healthy interactions from public life. Psychologists tell us, for example, that children need affection. Even before there were psychologists most people and most animals as well showed affection to their young. But in America, hugging, or indeed, even a pat on the back is now considered so dangerous that teachers can't do it. The spokesperson for the National Educational Association said recently:

Our policy is basically don't hug children.

The guidelines in NAE state chapters urge teachers to do no more than "briefly touch" a child's arm or shoulder. Michigan passed a law that forbade teachers to touch students for any reason. One special-ed teacher said, "We're well on our way to a society in which we teach kids that karate and taekwondo are okay, but receiving a hug or a pat on the back isn't."

Some police officers fell out of their swivel chairs in Seattle. They sued the city. What could the city do? A doctor's letter said it was an injury and the injury happened in the line of duty, so the city replaced all the swivel backed chairs in the police department with straight-back chairs that didn't move.

We can laugh about these cases, or the \$2.9 million verdict against McDonald's which was later reduced to a mere \$640,000 when an elderly lady spilled hot coffee while pulling away from the drive-thru window.

But sometimes our propensity to sue results in the loss of life. In Chicago a 15-year old boy named Christopher was shot while playing basketball on a playground close to Ravenswood Hospital. With the help of two friends, the boy made it within 30 feet of the hospital entrance. When Christopher collapsed, almost at the hospital door, his friends ran into get help. But the emergency room staff refused to come out. Hospital policy was that they should not leave the hospital because, as the explanation later indicated, the fear of possible legal liability for neglecting patients already in the hospital. As Christopher lay bleeding on the sidewalk, a policeman begged the staff to come out. But the hospital staff refused to budge. They, instead, called 911. Christopher lay on the sidewalk for 25 minutes and died.

So we have a society that fights about everything and is concerned about safety to a ridiculous degree, and then let's a child die.

The litigation explosion, of course, means that companies have to go to absurd lengths to warn the public of obvious dangers. A warning label on a chainsaw says, "Do not hold the wrong end of a chainsaw." Or how about this Scrubbing Bubbles toilet cleaner? The warning label says, "Do not use for personal hygiene." I do not know about you, but if there wasn't that kind of warning, just a little imagination would lead me to think about all kinds of alternative personal uses for toilet bowl cleaner. Here is a warning label for a little seat called The Rocker: "Warning: Improper use of this product may result in injury or death. Do not jump on the rocker projecting oneself through open space that is inherently dangerous and may cause injury or death. Do not eat the rocker or anything included with the rocker including, but not limited to nuts, bolts, tags, cardboard, packaging, plastic bags, plastic pieces, Styrofoam, etc." It does look tasty, but don't eat it!

Are there any good fights left?

When is it okay to get upset?

W.B. Yeats wrote a poem back in 1921 titled "The Second Coming" in which he said:

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Yeats was looking out at a world falling apart in which he saw nice people who lacked any conviction about anything. And he also saw a world in which people with conviction don't know how to be nice.

Nice people lack conviction. They won't fight about anything. They have jello for spines; their favorite Bible verse is Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge, lest you be judged." "We can't be judgmental," they say. "We can't have any moral conviction about anything."

Of course, when Jesus commanded us not to judge, he was warning us against a certain kind of judgmental spirit. In Matthew 7 he was talking about hypocritical people who criticize others without paying attention to their own faults. People who scream about gay marriage destroying traditional marriage while they themselves are on their third marriages. Jesus was not condemning moral clarity. The Bible regularly tells us to exercise judgment about questions of truth, questions of value. So when Jesus welcomed tax collectors and prostitutes to himself, he didn't condone their stealing or their sexual practices. He welcomed people in spite of their practices and then called them to renounce their sin and to become disciples of himself.

Last week I started a series from the book of Galatians that I have titled "Free At Last." I told you that we were going to go through the book of Galatians verse by verse which is a really helpful discipline because the church gets trained to value every phrase in scripture; and, preachers can't ride their favorite hobby horses. Together we have the privilege of hearing God's Word. I've called today's talk, "What's Worth Fighting About?" Let's pray.

### **Galatians 1:6-10**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let that person be under God's curse! 10 Am I now trying to win human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

What do we fight about in the church?

We get upset in the church about such trivial things – whether we can bring coffee into the sanctuary or not, is the church charging for coffee, what people wear to church. What Christians mostly fight about in America right now is the same thing that everyone else in the country is fighting about and that is secular politics. As Almighty God has been pushed to the margins of 21<sup>st</sup> century life, as we push God to the periphery, what has replaced God in America is a whole host of idols.

Tim Keller, the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, wrote a fantastic book titled *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters*. Tim Keller defines an idol this way:

If you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend you are likely going to be upset; you may be depressed for a few weeks. You may cry. But if your girlfriend or boyfriend has become an idol and you break up with them, you want to kill yourself.

You know you have an idol in your life if when that thing is removed you are devastated, you are destroyed. And so if your house burns down, or you lose your job, you may be really sad. You say, “What I’m going through is really hard.” But if your possessions or your job has become an idol, you say, “This is the end. There is no hope. My life is over!”

Currently, secular politics, according to Keller, has become an idol in America. Here is what Keller writes:

When either party wins an election, a certain percentage of the losing side talks openly about leaving the country. They become agitated and fearful for the future. They have put the kind of hope in their political leaders and policies that once was reserved for God and for the work of the Gospel. When their political leaders are out of power, they experience a death. They believe that if their policies and people are not in power, everything will fall apart...In our politics [we believe] that opponents are not simply mistaken, they are absolutely evil.

Keller quoted his 84-year old mother, who after a recent election, said to him:

It used to be that whoever was elected as your president, even if he wasn’t the one you voted for, he was still your president. That doesn’t seem to be the case any longer.

Keller says that in the last few elections more and more people believe that the candidate that they didn’t vote for is absolutely morally bankrupt.

We get upset about politics. We get upset by little slights in the church. But what we don’t fight about very much in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church is the gospel, the core message of the Christian faith – that our human situation is absolutely hopeless and that self-help is no help at all. But that God, as a result of sheer grace, has taken the initiative and intervened through the self-giving sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and through his resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit we can be rescued from the power of this old age and be changed. And then God in love invites all of us who are transformed to partner together with him. He says to those who are changed, “Come join me and let’s change the world together.”

But we don't fight for this gospel message. Instead, we Christians snatch up books by the millions whose message is essentially are that your success in life is entirely determined by whether or not you have a positive attitude. We have no problem listening to and then contributing to ministries that essentially tell us that God exists, almost entirely, to say "yes" to our desires and our dreams. It doesn't matter to us any longer if there is no discussion of the cross of Christ. Nothing about his self-sacrifice for sin, nothing about our hopeless condition apart from the rescuing activity of God, nothing about our utter helplessness to save ourselves, nothing about self-denial, saying no to ourselves so that we can say yes to God and his will.

We fight about everything except the gospel. Let's look at the text, verses 6-7:

### **Galatians 1:6-7**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

In virtually every other one of the Apostle Paul's letters, Paul begins the letter by offering thanks for the church that he is writing to. And he almost always offers a prayer for that church. But not here; not to the churches in Galatia, a region that today would be in South-Central Turkey. Paul doesn't begin with thanks or with prayer. He begins with astonishment, stunned amazement.

### **Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

What has Paul so upset?

We need to step back from the text for a moment and remind ourselves that the Apostle Paul is not one of those angry, aggressive people, who is always spoiling for a fight – one of those people who is already to announce their opinion to you and who has no tact or sensitivity to your opinion. Following Paul's encounter with Jesus Christ, and Paul's receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Paul became the most flexible and gracious of people. He was a peacemaker who genuinely tried, as much as he could, to accommodate the preferences of those around him. We see his accommodating spirit in passages like 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

### **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the

weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

In other words, he says, “I will eat whatever you put in front of me with no questions asked. I go along with people without objecting or showing in the least way my preferred tastes. I don’t complain.”

But in the book of Galatians we find that there is one place where Paul draws the line and it concerns the gospel, the core of the Christian message. I can go along with a lot, he says, I can be as flexible as anyone. But if you attack the gospel, you destroy the church.

What has Paul so upset?

### **Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

The Galatians had warmly received the gospel message that Paul preached. They were excited about it. They saw God doing amazing things in their churches. People’s lives were changing; folks were getting healed. We’ll find out later that they were experiencing miracles in the church. But after Paul left, they turned their backs on God. The Galatians were acting like the Israelites in the Old Testament about whom it is frequently said, “they quickly deserted God.”

You know some of the stories. The Israelites experienced an amazing deliverance from slavery. God leads them through the Red Sea. He destroys their enemies and sets them free. He brings them to Mt. Sinai where God shows up and gives Moses the Ten Commandments. And while Moses is up on the mountain, it says in Exodus 32:7-8:

### **Exodus 32:7-8**

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’

And in Judges 2:16-17:

### **Judges 2:16-17**

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their ancestors, they quickly turned from following the way of their ancestors, the way of obedience to the Lord’s commands.

Do you see this in your own life? You listen to a message preached and you feel like God is really speaking to you. He's nailing you. You listen and you say, "Yes, I really do need to reach out to a family member and get reconciled." Or "I feel like God is putting his finger on this addiction or habit in my life and I absolutely have to join a recovery group, or a small group. I need a change." You feel the Spirit of God speaking to you, "I've got to change my behavior towards my spouse. I've got to tell my kid that I love them. I've got to breakup with my girlfriend or boyfriend." God does something amazing in your life. He supernaturally protects you or a loved one from an accident. You see a healing. For a few days or weeks you are so grateful. You say, "My life is changed. I'm on a different path." And then you go right back to the same behaviors, the same activities, you don't follow through on your commitments.

Do you see this behavior in your life what Paul says is quick desertion? The language he uses in verse 6 is the language of personal betrayal.

### **Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

When we are experiencing God's mercy, turn back. When we refuse to follow through on what we know God wants us to do, we're not just sinning against some abstract principle, some abstract commandment. We are committing spiritual adultery against our heavenly spouse. The language Paul uses is the language of personal betrayal. We're traitors. He accuses us of cheating, of infidelity, of spiritual treason.

Do you see this lack of spiritual fidelity in your life, friend? Do you see how you blow hot and cold like the Galatians? That is why I have, from the day I heard it, loved that old hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." It contains this verse:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing  
O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!

Let Thy grace now like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

Do you pray that way? O, God, I'm prone to wander. Lord, I feel it; I'm prone to leave the God, I love. Lord, give me the grace to follow through on commitments that you are calling me to.

So, Paul is upset because the Galatians are deserting God, the God who loves them and who has blessed them and who has worked so powerfully in their lives. He's going to fight. He's going to fight for the church.

How are they deserting God?

### **Galatians 1:6-7**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Let me give you background to this text. Paul founded the churches in Galatia during his missionary travels through Asia Minor. Apparently, the converts that he gained were from Gentile backgrounds. They were from pagan backgrounds. Paul came and preached to them the message of Jesus Christ crucified, who sacrificed himself to rescue us from this present evil age. And these pagans in Galatia received the message joyfully. They were baptized and they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

Well, Paul left the region and then received word that his work among the Galatians was being undermined by some Jewish Christian missionaries who had arrived on the scene. They were preaching a different gospel. They were telling the Gentile Galatians that they needed to be circumcised and that they needed to stop eating certain foods. They needed to keep the Sabbath in order to be considered full members of the people of God. "Yes, you believed in Jesus, but you need to take some other steps otherwise you aren't members of God's covenant people."

Paul is deeply distressed that the Galatians are responding to these outsiders and they are believing that their faith in Christ alone is not enough to make them full members of the body of Christ. So he says in verses 6-7:

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What are the marks of a different gospel?

The NIV and the TNIV versions don't quite have the literal words of Paul here in verses 6-7. You miss the little bit of his play on words in verse 6. Paul says that you are turning to another gospel which is really not another at all. There are two different Greek words that Paul uses for "another." The first is *heteros* which really means a difference in kind. We would say that we're trying to mix apples and oranges here. You

are mixing up bears and pears. The second Greek word is *allos*, which is another of the same kind in a series. Well, we've got six oranges, we'll add a seventh orange.

Jewish Christian missionaries who were coming into the church were saying, "Well, yes, we agree that we're adding to Paul's message, but our addition is consistent with Paul. It is not a difference in kind; we're not changing the message. We're just filling it out. Paul gave you half a message – the message of grace, the message of Christ crucified. But he didn't tell you that to be full members of the body of Christ you need to be circumcised, keep the Sabbath, and keep from eating certain foods. He didn't tell you that."

Paul says they were preaching a different gospel. What is the mark of a different gospel?

A different gospel is marked by additions to Christ alone

Now, some additions are consistent with the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There are lots of things that the contemporary church does that doesn't undermine that message at all. We have children's Sunday School. There's nothing about that in the Bible. But it is not inconsistent with the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. You can celebrate Christmas. There's nothing about the celebration of Christmas in December in the Bible. But it is not inconsistent with the gospel.

But there are some additions that strike at the core of the faith and will destroy the church, if the church embraces these things. Some additions actually subtract: If your spouse, or roommate, or friend serves you a cup of coffee and just adds a little bit of poison to the coffee, just a little addition – no big thing, just a couple of drops of poison. Or you are eating your cereal in the morning and your roommate adds just a few pieces of gravel – not that much. Some additions subtract. And the mark of the false gospel is adding to Christ in a way that subtracts from the work of Christ.

Tim Keller, who I quoted before, gives a really helpful illustration. He said in the liberal church today someone might come up to you and say that it's great that you feel like you are born again. "Wonderful! We have no problem with that. I just want to add one little thing to what you believe. Don't say that good people with no religion, or good people in other religions can't get to God. Don't insist that people have to come to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Don't insist that people have to in any way appreciate or believe in Jesus' death on the cross as the atonement for sin. Just one little thing..."

But is it a little thing to say if you are good enough, God will accept you? No, that's a huge thing! That destroys the gospel. Because the gospel is not just for good people. You see every system in the world says that the good people get in, but the bad people are kept out. But in the gospel, God says, "I'm welcoming everyone – good people and bad people."

See, the gospel is good news. It is not just good advice. It is good news. Advice is something that when you hear it you've got to do it. News is something that has already happened. The gospel does not say, "Here is something you need to do." The gospel tells us about something that has already been done. Christ has already accomplished your salvation at the cross.

"Just one little addition." In some extreme Pentecostal churches, they say, "Well, there is one little thing that you need to do to really be acceptable to God. You need to speak in tongues." Some conservative evangelical churches say, "There's just one little thing. You want to be a full member of the body of Christ, don't smoke cigarettes and don't drink."

What are the marks of a different gospel?

A different gospel causes us to lose our peace

#### **Galatians 1:6-7**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

You see, any message other than the message of by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is going to trouble you. It is going to cause you to lose your peace. Any time someone gets you to look inside yourself for something that would make you really acceptable to God, you are going to lose your peace. The reason the gospel provides peace is because it has nothing to do with you or me. The activity is wholly God's. It is entirely outside of you, entirely outside of me, entirely outside of our accomplishments, entirely outside of our motives, outside of our sincerity, outside of our zeal, outside of our commitment, outside of our faithfulness.

The gospel has nothing to do with you or me and everything to do with what God has done through Jesus Christ. All that I need, all that I based my life on, all that I build on – it is all outside of me. It is all there on the cross. It is Christ plus nothing! And only when I rest on Christ plus nothing do I in any way feel peace. Every other message gets me to introspect and look at how I'm performing. Every other message says, "Here is what you must do...do...do." The gospel says, "Done...done...done by Jesus Christ!"

A different gospel reverses the order of salvation

#### **Galatians 1:7**

which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

The word "pervert" literally means "to twist so as to reverse." You see, the true gospel says that God in his grace has intervened in your life so as to rescue you from powers

that are too strong for you. God in his grace has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit and has transformed you. And now that you are a rescued person, now that you are a changed person, live as a changed person. Live out what God has done for you.

But you see, a different gospel reverses the order. The different gospel says live as a changed person, live a holy life so that you might be accepted by God. Two radically different messages. You are accepted by God; you are loved by God, therefore in light of that, live a life consistent with what God says about you. But the different gospel flips that on its head and says, “You live a different kind of life. You clean up your act. You stop smoking. You get off drugs. You deal with your addictions, and *then* you will be accepted by God.”

And the final mark of a different gospel is false authority:

A different gospel is marked by false authority

### **Galatians 1:8-9**

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God’s curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let that person be under God’s curse!

Paul says, “Here are two authorities that you should not appeal to you concerning your beliefs.”

### **Galatians 1:8**

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God’s curse!

It doesn’t matter who the leader is, how much you esteem them, and it doesn’t matter what sort of mystical experience you’ve had. “Well, you don’t understand, Rich, an angel sat in my room. I had a vision. I went to this meeting and there was so much power. The guy up front had these unbelievable prophetic words. He knew my social security number. He knew everything about me.” Paul says, “It doesn’t matter how much you esteem the human leader, or what kind of mystical experience you’ve had. The messenger is unimportant. What matters is the message.” Is the message by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? If it is not that message, it is a different gospel.

What are the marks of the true gospel?

The true gospel is marked by God’s call

### **Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

There is a power in the true gospel. Listen to this in Romans 1:16:

**Romans 1:16**

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

We read the same kind of thing in 1 Thessalonians 1:5:

**1 Thessalonians 1:5**

because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

Here is what Paul is talking about by the true gospel being marked by calling. I've talked with people who have been church goers for years. They say, "You know, I feel like in my old church I never really heard the gospel. I didn't get it. I didn't understand what my old pastor was talking about." Have you had that experience? You sat in church for years and you didn't connect with the message. You didn't get it. Maybe you were confused.

Or maybe in the past you were uninterested in the gospel, or you were bored as you listened to the gospel, or maybe you were a person who actually hated the gospel. You hated everything about Christianity. But then God called you through the gospel and you had this experience of awakening. The lights suddenly came on and you got it. You felt God breaking into your life. The true gospel always has this quality of power of in-breaking, of awakening, of enlightening. Have you ever experienced this, God calling in a way that you had to respond?

I've had individuals tell me that during the invitation when the gospel was being presented and there was an invitation to respond and they felt literally thrown out of their seats. They said, "I felt like there was a power gripping me and pushing me out of my seat." Others say, "I felt my chest was going to explode. I just knew God was speaking right to me." Some of you say, "I've never had that in-breaking. I don't understand what everyone else is talking about. I don't get my wife's passion, or my husband's passion. And I certainly don't understand what is so great about this Christian thing at all. I can't for the life of me understand why anyone would give 10% of their hard-earned income to the church."

Well, perhaps, as you investigate the message of the gospel, that our human situation is hopeless and that self-help is no help at all, but God as the result of sheer grace has taken the initiative and through the self-giving sacrifice of Christ on the cross and through his resurrection and gift of the Spirit God changes and transforms anyone who turns to him in faith and then invites us to partner with him in changing the world, as you hear that message, perhaps you will experience the in-breaking.

What are the marks of the true gospel?

The true gospel is marked by God's grace

**Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

Why are we called? Why did God call you through the gospel? We often say, especially in a world filled with disasters, like the earthquake in Haiti – why them? When tragedy strikes us, we ask, “Why me?” Sometimes we’ll even add, “You know, I didn’t deserve this. I didn’t bring this on myself. Why did this happen?”

People who have experienced God’s in-breaking, his effectual calling through the gospel, say the exact same thing, “Why me?” You know that you’ve met the true gospel when you say, “God, why me? I’m a person who twists things to suit myself. Why would you break into my life? I’m a person who is really selfish. Why would you come to me? I multiply idols so quickly, my heart strays from you, God, so easily. Why me? I know that I am not a seeker after you, God. Why would you come and seek me out?”

As the hymn writer says:

How can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior’s blood?

You know that you’ve encountered the true gospel when you just throw up your hands in total amazement and awed puzzlement and say, “Why me? How did I come into this amazing relationship with God? Why would God bless someone like me?” Then you know you are in touch with grace. It is nothing in me! Not my goodness, not my intelligence, not my religious fervor, not my faith – it is totally outside of me – it is God and his love!

And finally:

The true gospel is marked by humbling

**Galatians 1:10**

Am I now trying to win human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

The Jewish Christian missionaries who came into the Galatian churches and added to Paul’s message accused Paul of being a man-pleaser, playing to the crowd. You haven’t talked with people about circumcision, about the Sabbath, about what they must eat because those things were too difficult. You gave them half a message, Paul. You gave them just the message of grace and you are doing it to play to the audience.

But Paul says, “No! That’s not it at all!” The message of grace is hardly a man-pleasing message. The message of grace, if you really understand it, humbles people. Because the message of grace says that there is absolutely nothing in you, nothing that would get God to love and accept you. There is nothing that you’ve done in the past, there are no accomplishments, no spiritual disciplines, no amount of prayer that you’ve prayed, no amount of tears that you’ve shed, no amount of religious activity, or church activity that would ever get God to love and accept you. God loves you and accepts you simply because he loves and accepts you!

It is not about you. It is God. It is not you. It is what Christ has done for you. The gospel is not about anything in you. The gospel is totally outside of you. If there is anything about the gospel that lifts you up in your pride, you don’t get it. As Paul says:

**Galatians 1:10**

Am I now trying to win human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

The gospel preached purely and cleaning lifts up only one Being – the Triune God. Let’s pray.

## What's Worth Fighting About?

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Rich Nathan  
January 16-17, 2010  
Galatians: Free At Last Series  
Galatians 1:6-10

- I. When is it okay to get upset?
  
- II. What do we fight about in the church?
  
- III. What has Paul so upset?
  
- IV. What are the marks of a different gospel?
  - A. A different gospel is marked by additions to Christ alone
  - B. A different gospel causes us to lose our peace
  - C. A different gospel reverses the order of salvation
  - D. A different gospel is marked by false authority
  
- V. What are the marks of the true gospel?
  - A. The true gospel is marked by God's call
  - B. The true gospel is marked by God's grace
  - C. The true gospel is marked by God's humbling