

Stay the Course – Stick with the True Gospel


1:6 – 2:21 – The Only True Gospel is Worth Defending

As we said in our introduction this is a no nonsense letter from Paul to people who were in danger of forsaking the true gospel for a false gospel. The alternative to the true gospel is no gospel at all. We will consider why this is true in this section of our study. In this section we will look at what Paul says about the need to defend that gospel.

This section is a call to action. Sometimes we are less than willing or interested in defending the gospel or God's word for fear of being seen as divisive. In our day people throw the accusation of *intolerance* around free and loosely to anathematize anyone who would take a stand for truth. But some things are worth fighting for. Our country has a rich history of the knowing the value of fighting for freedom in this world. There is a freedom which involves an eternal reward. The Gospel of Jesus Christ sets us free from the penalty of sin and opens the door to freedom not to sin. That is a freedom we can not allow to be watered down or misrepresented. That is a freedom rooted in the only true gospel and that is worth defending.

How Could You?

Galatians 1:6-7 - ⁶ 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.

The word “marvel” is an interesting word. “Marvel” (Strong’s # 2296 - qaumavzw , THOUMADZO) means, “admire, have in admiration, marvel, wonder.”¹ But Paul is not speaking to the Galatians as though they were admirable in a good sense. If we look at other occurrences of this word in their contexts we see that the term “marvel” can mean:

- **Response of unexpectedness, confusion, or bewilderment** - John 3:7 - “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (See also 1 John 3:13)
- **Response of wonder, surprise, and amazement** - John 5:20 - “**For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.**” (See also Revelation 17:7-8)
- **Response of astonishment** - John 5:28-29 - “**Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice²⁹ “and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”** (See John 7:21 also)
- **To look intently at something in order to figure it out** - Acts 3:12 – “So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why

¹James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (See also Acts 13:41)

Why does Paul “marvel”? Paul “marvels” that they are “turning away.” What does “turning away” mean? “Turning away” here is a translation of one Greek term (Strong’s #3346 - *metativqhmi meátatitheµmi, met-at-ith´-ay-mee; met-at-ith´-ay-mee*) which has the idea of, “to transfer, i.e. (lit.) transport, exchange, change sides, or (fig.) pervert: carry over, change, remove, translate, turn.”² Why does Paul use this phrase and what does it imply? Paul marvels that they are changing sides that they are willing to exchange what they have for something else. Paul marvels that they are not satisfied with the gospel that was preached to them.

Then it says Paul marvels that they are “turning away so soon.” They aren’t even putting up a fight. They don’t even see that what they are doing is wrong. This implies they have easily bought into this other gospel. They haven’t learned the value of the gospel of grace in Christ preached to them by Paul. They haven’t learned to distinguish truth from falsehood. The gospel hasn’t had the desired effect on them that Paul had hoped for and it doesn’t appear to have taken root in them.

Paul marvels that they are “turning away so soon from Him.” They are easily turning away “from Him” from God. Paul mentions this because the gospel brings forgiveness to sinners and reconciliation with God by grace through faith in Christ (1:6; 2:16). They are easily forsaking a *personal relationship* with God for something of far less worth.

Paul marvels that they are “turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ.” They are turning away from God’s grace to another gospel that Paul later says is based on works and human efforts and that is therefore doomed to failure (2:16). The reason Paul says this is because he is pointing out the importance of God’s grace in Christ. God’s grace is essential to relating to God.

Paul marvels at them because this alternative view they are mistaking for another “gospel” is really “not another” (1:7). What does “gospel” mean? “Gospel” (Strong’s ##2098 *eujaggevlion - eáuageálioán, yoo-ang-ghel´-ee-on*) literally means, “a good message, i.e. the *gospel*.”³ Why does Paul mention the “gospel”? He is pointing out that any alternative to the gospel of grace in Christ is really not a “gospel” because it isn’t “a good message.” When you try to relate to God apart from His grace, in your own strength, that’s bad news. (Later Paul tells us that you can’t be justified other than by God’s grace – 2:16. To try to be justified by works of the Law is to say Jesus died for nothing – 2:21. That’s very a very bad message.)

Paul marvels at the Galatians because they are turning away from God and the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus because “there are some who trouble you.” In effect

²James Strong, *New Strong’s dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

³James Strong, *New Strong’s dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

what Paul is saying is that they are being swayed by men rather than following God's word and His plan in Christ. It is foolish to respect the words of men rather than the words of God. Those who try to present alternatives to the gospel of Jesus Christ are troublemakers. It is astounding to Paul that people would take the word of men over the word of God!

Paul also marvels at the Galatians that they are not only being swayed by troublemakers, but by troublemakers who “want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” What does the term “pervert” mean? The word “pervert” (Strong's #445 - *metastrevfw* - *meáastreáphou*, *met-as-tref'-o*) means, “to turn across, i.e. transmute or corrupt; pervert, turn.”⁴ It means, “to transform into something of an opposite character.”⁵ “Pervert” here means to try to change to the opposite. Paul is saying that what these troublemakers will have accomplished if they are successful is to turn the good news of the gospel of grace in Christ into something that is quite opposite to that and bad news. Turning the good news of God into bad news is something worthy a sever judgment. It's as though Paul is saying to those who are perverting the gospel of God, “How could you?”

Not only is Paul bewildered and astounded by they behavior of the Galatians and their openness to leave the true gospel, but such behavior will meet with astounding consequences. In 1:8-9 those who choose this alternative are astoundingly accursed.

Accursed for an Alternative to the True Gospel

Galatians 1:8-9 - 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. ⁹ 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.

Paul is astounded and surprised; he's bewildered and just trying to figure out why the Galatians would so easily give up the gospel of grace for an alternative that is not good news at all. Paul is flabbergasted that these people would turn away from a personal relationship with God by taking the words of men over the word of God. Such behavior has an astounding consequence. Those who teach false gospels are accursed or anathema.

What does “accursed” mean? “Accursed” (Strong's # 331- *ajnavqema*- ANATHEMA) refers to a religious *ban* or *excommunication* of a thing or person. It means literally, “accursed, anathema, curse.”⁶ We can get a further understanding of this term by observing how various other translations render it.

⁴James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

⁵W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

⁶James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

- Galatians 1:8-9 – “We preached to you the Good News. So if we ourselves, or even an angel from heaven, should preach to you something different, we should be judged guilty! ⁹ I said this before, and now I say it again: You have already accepted the Good News. If anyone is preaching something different to you, he should be judged guilty!” ⁷
- 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 him be eternally condemned! 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 him be eternally condemned!” ⁸
- Galatians 1:8-9 – “Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other message than the one we told you about. Even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be forever cursed. ⁹ I will say it again: If anyone preaches any other gospel than the one you welcomed, let God’s curse fall upon that person.” ⁹
- Galatians 1:8-9 – “But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!” ¹⁰

Based on what Paul says, why would someone here be accursed? The message is more important than the messenger when it comes to the gospel. Whether if Paul himself or an angel from heaven comes and preached a gospel other than the one first preached, they are “eternally condemned; accursed; judged guilty.”

There is only one gospel that can save. Alternative “gospels” result in eternal condemnation and a judgment of guilty. This also implies knowing and abiding by the true gospel is extremely important because our eternal destiny depends on this. Paul is emphasizing the singularity and purity of the gospel already preached to the Galatians.

Who Should we Please God or Men?

Galatians 1:10 - 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 questions voiced by Paul are rhetorical. A rhetorical question is a question asked that has an obvious implied answer. Paul is actually asserting a truth and making a statement in the form of

⁷*The New Century Version*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing) 1987, 1988, 1991.

⁸*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

⁹*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

¹⁰*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

such a question. By asking the rhetorical questions, “For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men?” the obvious answer implied is that Paul does not seek to please men but rather first and foremost seeks to please God. The context and following statement of Paul confirms this, “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

What does the statement, “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” mean? This statement contrasts pleasing men with pleasing God. This statement means that living to please people disqualifies you from being “a bondservant of Christ” or pleasing God. Paul is saying this because the Galatians as well as the Judaizers and even Peter on occasion have shown a preference to act in ways that are based first on pleasing men rather than first and foremost on pleasing God. Paul’s statement, “if I still pleased men” implies that there was a time when this is how he operated, i.e. to please men. Now however he is a “bondservant of Christ.”

What is a “bondservant”? A bondservant is a servant who when given the option of being freed from their master instead chose freely to remain a slave to his master. Paul likely said this because of the “bondage” the perverted gospel led to (2:4). It implies that to live to please men enslaves you to men who are fleshly (see Galatians 5), but to please God enslaves you to God who is Spirit and bears fruit in you (see Galatians 5).

By asking these rhetorical questions Paul is pointing out that the Galatians have lost sight of God and are more concerned with pleasing men than God. God is unseen, men are seen, and therefore it appears that the Galatians are making their decisions based purely on the seen temporal world rather than the unseen eternal world.

The bottom line here is that the believer must focus on pleasing God first and foremost. If pleasing people is your priority you won’t be pleasing to God. God must be first in the believer’s life.

The True Gospel is Delivered by God Ordained People Not According to Man

Galatians 1:11-12 - ¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Whenever a false teacher comes with a false gospel it is not uncommon for their first step of deception to be an attack against those teaching the true gospel. If the messenger can be discredited, then it is supposed that the message can be discredited. And there is an element of truth in that. Such an attack may take the form of a question about a person’s ordination. False teachers focus on the approval of human organizations. Authority is associated with the prestige of the persons who have lent a messenger approval. But people are imperfect (such as Peter is shown to be later in this section – 2:11-14) and throughout history there has been a great deal of heresy and blasphemous behavior by those ordained by men but who are not ordained by God.

The true gospel of God is delivered by people ordained by God. The ordination of God is evidenced by compliance with the word of God, God given authority and the power and influence of the Holy Spirit seen in and through the representative of God.

Paul anticipates such an attack against his apostolic position and authority (or he may be addressing such an attack against his apostleship that has already been made). He begins his response by making the following claims in 1:11-12:

- 1.) That Paul's gospel did not come from or originate with man (1:11).
- 2.) Paul did not receive the gospel he preached from man (1:12a).
- 3.) The gospel Paul preached was not taught to him by man (1:12b).
- 4.) The gospel Paul preached "came through revelation of Jesus Christ." (1:12c).

Paul establishes from the start that the gospel he teaches and preaches is not something concocted by people but was received by him "through revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul is a messenger or an "apostle" of this revealed gospel message.

If we backtrack a bit we see that in Galatians 1:1 Paul identifies himself as being an "apostle" whose apostleship was:

- 1.) Not from men (1:1b) – Men didn't give him his apostleship.
- 2.) Not through men (1:1c) – Men were not the means of his becoming an apostle.
- 3.) But through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead (1:1d). Jesus and God the Father were the Ones who ordained Paul an apostle.

So we see from these two portions of the epistle that neither the message nor the commission of Paul comes from people. Paul was commissioned by God to preach a message from God.

The Objections of Paul's Accusers

What objections might be raised to Paul's claims? If someone told you their message was from God and God had called and ordained (i.e. anointed; approved) them, what might you say to them?

When in the book of Acts a replacement apostle was being considered, the requirements were that to be considered one had to have accompanied the original twelve with Jesus during His earthly ministry and been a witness with the apostles of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22). Paul was not one of the original twelve and he did not the early ministry of Jesus as the original twelve had done. This created what opponents believed was a vulnerable position for Paul. Paul's opponents would have raised a number of objections. Below are a few possible objections to Paul's apostleship and authority:

- 1.) Prove it! Prove you're an apostle!

- 2.) Where are your witnesses?
- 3.) Where is the evidence for such a claim?
- 4.) This claim rests only on your words.
- 5.) You didn't accompany Jesus and the other apostles during Jesus earthly ministry; you didn't see Jesus from when He was baptized to when He ascended to heaven after He rose from the dead (Acts 1:21-22).
- 6.) You're different from the other apostles because you didn't have Jesus go "in and out" among you. Why are you different from them in this regard? What do they think of you? Who are you to make such claims?
- 7.) If you are an apostle, you're a second rate apostle appointed by the real apostles who experienced Jesus firsthand.

These are some pretty serious questions and they were likely delivered in an accusatory tone. "Who are you to take such authority to yourself? Who are you to say your message is directly from God? It's very convenient that you have no witnesses to back up such claims." How does Paul anticipate such accusations and respond to them?

The Power of a Personal Testimony

Galatians 1:13-24 - ¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Now *concerning* the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) ²¹ Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which *were* in Christ. ²³ But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

Galatians 2:1-21 - Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), ⁵ to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. ⁶ But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those

who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. ⁷ But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸ (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. ¹¹ Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? ¹⁵ We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; 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 gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

There is a great deal of power in a person’s personal testimony of the Lord’s work in their lives. Paul anticipates potential objections and supports his claim to apostleship by sharing what happened in his life. The result is a personal testimony that demonstrates the power of God at work in and through him. There is little defense against a powerful testimony. What did Paul testify to? What made his testimony so powerful?

In 1:13-16 Paul starts by testifying to the undeniable transformation that God had worked in his life. Paul says when he personally received Jesus as his Savior according to the true gospel, God, “called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me” (1:15-16a). Paul is a living testimony to one who had experienced first hand the transforming power of the gospel of grace Paul preaches. Paul went from one who persecuted the church and “tried to destroy it” (1:13) to one who was a stalwart in defense of the gospel and the church. Paul had advanced in his religion “beyond many of my contemporaries” and was “exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (1:14), but there was something missing. He was actually on the wrong side of God and fighting against Him. It wasn’t until he was knocked down off his high horse that he listened to what Jesus had to say to him (see Acts 9).

Paul states that God “separated me from my mother’s womb” (1:15), with a purpose, “that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” (1:16). God had a purpose for Paul. And that purpose was sovereignly started before Paul was even born. No man could take credit for having taught or passed it on to Paul; it was from conception, from God. This shows that Paul’s calling was ordained by God primarily, not men (i.e. the apostles). He didn’t go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles or consult with any “flesh and blood” person for that matter (1:16-17).

Once Paul had bowed before Jesus and accepted Him as Savior and Lord Paul said that rather than first consulting with apostles, he spent three years in Arabia (1:17-18a). It was only after these three years that he went to Jerusalem and saw Peter and then it was only for 15 days (1:18). And on this occasion he only saw Peter, not any of the other apostles (1:19). What Paul is saying here is that the apostles *had very little influence on him in terms of preparing him for ministry, he got his preparation elsewhere.*

Despite his lack of conferring with the established apostles, Paul began an effective ministry and became known in Syria and Cilicia as the one “who formerly persecuted us” who now “preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.” (1:20-23). Paul’s ministry brought glory to God (1:24). How could this be? How could Paul so powerfully preach the true gospel if as his accusers contended, he was doing so on his own? The answer is in what Paul mentioned before, “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:12). Paul is confirming his earlier statement.

After being in ministry for 14 more years, only then did he go up to Jerusalem “by revelation.” “By revelation” implies that it was God who was directing him. He was not summoned by the apostles, his going to Jerusalem was not required by the apostles; Paul went freely on his own (2:1-2).

Paul went to Jerusalem and told the apostles about the gospel he was preaching among the Gentiles (2:2). (This may refer to the Jerusalem council of Acts 15.) Paul apparently went to Jerusalem to see if what he was preaching was in line with the gospel preached by the other apostles (2:2). This doesn’t mean Paul was uncertain of his message but was more a desire to be united with the other apostles with everyone on the same page.

When he met with the apostles in Jerusalem some Judaizers (who believe you have to follow Jewish tradition when you become a believer in Christ) tried to add to what Paul was preaching by adding that a convert must be circumcised (implied) in order to be saved. But not even Titus, a Greek, was circumcised (2:3-4). Paul did not compromise his view of the gospel because he knew it was the truth.

Paul demonstrated his authority in the face of opposition (2:5). And when Paul made his stand for the gospel he preached, the other apostles supported him and agreed with him and accepted Paul as an equal apostle (2:6-10).

Paul’s equal standing on equal authority was demonstrated by an incident that occurred between him and Peter (one of the original apostles). Peter compromised the gospel by shunning the Gentiles who are viewed as unclean by Jews. Paul confronted Peter on this because

righteousness before God does not depend on keeping the Law and traditions but is based on faith in Jesus Christ (2:11-16).

Paul is quick to assert that Peter's lapse does not make the ministry of Jesus obligated to follow what Peter sinfully did. Peter proved himself a sinner because of this lapse (2:17-18). This is true because if you go back to the old ways of abiding by the Law, you become a sinner under the Law. The Law shows us we are dead under the Law in order that we might find life in Christ (2:19).

Paul finally asserts the essence of the gospel that he preaches in Galatians 2:20 which is that he lives by faith in Christ who died for him. If you return to the life under the Law thinking that is the way to become righteous/justified before God what you are really saying is that Jesus died for nothing (2:21).

The Crucified Life

Galatians 2:20-21 - ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; 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 gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Paul finally asserts the essence of the true gospel applied. The last two verses of chapter two are a summation of the impact of the true gospel. All that has preceded in this section is possible because Paul has lived in a particular way. We can call the way Paul lived, *The Crucified Life*. *The Crucified Life* of Paul enabled him to know what the true gospel was and to take a solid stand for it against its foes (1:6—12). *The Crucified Life* worked a drastic change in the life of Paul that provided him a powerful testimony to share (1:13-24). And *The Crucified Life* gave Paul courage to stand up and confront those who compromised the true gospel (2:1-19). *The Crucified Life* is summarized in the last two verses of this section as they form a summary statement. What is *The Crucified Life* based on Galatians 2:20-21 and this section?

First, the crucified life involves identification. In Galatians 2:20 Paul begins with making a statement of faith, "**I have been crucified with Christ . . .**" This is a statement of identification meaning Paul has put his entire life on the side of Christ. He is relying on nothing else but Christ for His right standing before God. Paul and all his self reliant religious ways are nailed to the cross with Jesus. Paul no longer lives according to a religious system that is based on what a person must do. Instead Paul lives righteously before God based on the work of Jesus not any work that he has done (compare 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Second, the crucified life involves death. By faith Paul identifies with the cross of Christ so much so that he is able to continue and say, "**it is no longer I who live.**" For all intents and purposes, Paul is dead. This means he no longer lives for himself, he lives for the Lord. Crucifixion was a very painful form of execution. It was a bloody, prolonged and painful way to

exact punishment. Living the crucified life can be painful too. Your flesh, (that is your sinful self-centeredness and self-reliance nature; the “old man” – Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:4:22; Colossians 3:9) will fight and struggle to stay alive. Your flesh will not go calmly to its execution. But each time it rears its ugly head you must take it to the cross and kill it.

Third, the crucified life is Christ centered. Paul has died to sinful self and looks to Christ living in him. Paul points to the central focus of the crucified life when he says, “**but Christ lives in me.**” It is the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer who brings the presence of Jesus within. (John 14:16-17; 15:26; Romans 8:9-11). By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit Christ is at home in his heart. Paul and the person who lives the crucified life has a new Lord, a new Master, a new Boss. The one living the crucified life submissively steps off the throne of the heart and welcomes the rule of King Jesus.

Fourth, the crucified life is real. Paul testifies, “. . . **and the life which I now live in the flesh . . .**” Paul is not speaking of some mystical or abstract thinking that has no practical application. Paul is talking about a way of life that is lived “in the flesh” now. How can we live the crucified life now?

Fifth, the crucified life is a life of faith in Christ. Paul continues, “. . . **I live by faith in the Son of God.**” We are saved when we receive God’s true Gospel by faith. We live the new life in Christ that this Gospel opens the door to *by faith* in Christ (compare Romans 1:16-17). Our salvation and righteousness rests by faith in Christ alone. The crucified life we live rest by faith in Christ alone. God makes a way to resist temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). And Jesus provides what we need to live victoriously in life (John 15:5; 1 John 2:1-6; 3:6-8; 5:3-5). But why would anyone want to live the crucified life?

Sixth, the crucified life is motivated by the love of Jesus. Paul grounds the crucified life in the solid foundation of recognizing and relying on the love of Jesus. He says, “. . . **who loved me and gave Himself for me.**” The crucified life is not a way to attain righteousness or make yourself more righteous. Paul has already explained that thoroughly (Galatians 2:16). The crucified life is a love offering the Jesus who demonstrated His love for us at the cross (compare 2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Seventh, the crucified life is a life of grace. Paul says lastly, “**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law [i.e. by human effort], then Christ died in vain.**” Paul said elsewhere that all that he had become and ever would be, was a product of God’s grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). In fact, if we try to live by our own efforts or in some way try to work our way to righteousness, we make the death of Christ “vain” or empty; we make it ineffective and without effect.

The crucified life is a life that lives for Jesus by faith and relies on God’s grace. The crucified life exalts Christ and demonstrates love to Him by putting down the flesh. We bless and show our appreciation for what Jesus has done for us when we by faith identify with Him and nail our

flesh to the cross. The crucified life may be painful at times, but Jesus led the way and we must follow (Luke 9:23-27). So take your flesh as it rears its head in your thoughts and actions, kill it with the cross of Christ, make sure its dead, put it in the coffin, nail it shut, dig a deep hole, throw it in and cover it up. Then do a dance of praise and glory to God on that grave. A.W. Tozer described the essence of *The Crucified Life* when he wrote:

“There are three marks of one who is crucified: One, he is facing in only one direction. Two, he can never turn back. And three, he no longer has any plans of his own.” – A.W. Tozer (1897-1963).

Does that describe your life?

To Sum Up

Paul was faced with a serious problem in the Galatian churches. They were being persuaded to turn away from the true gospel to a false gospel, which could result in their eternal condemnation. In order to persuade the Galatians to turn to their side the enemies of the true gospel tried to undermine the true gospel by first attacking Paul’s influence and authority with the Galatians. They did this by accusing Paul of not being an authentic apostle. Paul asserted that believing in this perverted gospel was a serious problem because this alternative gospel was really not a gospel at all. “Gospel” means “good news” and what these troublemakers were purporting was anything but good news. In fact, the final result of this alternative gospel was to turn people away from God himself, the grace available through His Son Jesus Christ and ultimately experience the consequence of eternal condemnation. It didn’t matter who taught the false gospel, there is only one true gospel and anyone who taught otherwise was headed toward being eternally condemned (1:6-10).

To address this problem Paul first sought to substantiate and validate his apostleship so that the Galatians would understand that he was just as much an authentic apostle as Peter, James and the other apostles. Paul did this first by explaining that the message of the gospel he received and preached in ministry was not from men but from God. He personally had experienced the life changing effects of this gospel and therefore knew it to be real, effective and powerful. He had been changed from a persecutor of the church to a preacher of the gospel that produced the church. He was graciously called by God, (even from his mother’s womb!) to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. When Paul first received this call from God he didn’t consult the other apostles but rather spent three years in Arabia. Only after three years in the desert did Paul go up to Jerusalem where he met only with Peter. Paul’s stay in Jerusalem was only for 15 days. He then spent another 14 years in God glorifying ministry in Syria and Cilicia (1:11-24).

After 14 years of ministry Paul finally went up to Jerusalem to show he wasn’t a maverick but rather was in fellowship with the other apostles and in line with what the other apostles taught. When he got to Jerusalem a group of those who taught the perverted gospel tried to establish that along with accepting Jesus by faith you also had to be circumcised. Paul knew this was wrong

and stood firmly on the truth of the gospel that is by grace not works. All the other apostles were in agreement with what Paul preached. Paul was welcomed into their apostolic group as an equal apostle (2:1-10).

That Paul was equally an apostle was evidenced by a circumstance he had with the apostle Peter. Peter normally ate with the Gentiles but when certain Jewish believers came from the apostle James Peter shunned the Gentiles he normally ate with as though they were second-class citizens. Paul confronted Peter on this and told him, “Listen Peter, you are a Jew but since you accepted the gospel you no longer live by Jewish traditions pertaining to cleanliness (Jews viewed Gentiles as unclean and defiling). How come all of a sudden, when these Jewish friends of James come along, do you now shun your Gentile friends in order to please your Jewish friends? It’s not right. You know that the gospel teaches that you aren’t justified by trying to work your way to heaven under the Law and tradition, you’re justified by faith in Jesus.” Paul went on to say that just because Peter had this lapse it doesn’t give credence to what Judaizers believe (that you have to be circumcised and believe in Jesus – Acts 15). Paul said that if you go back to trying to live by works under the Law you are a transgressor. The purpose of the Law is to show us we are dead under the Law and to point us to life in Jesus. Truly the gospel teaches that we have died with Jesus by faith and He lives in us now. And the life we live now is lived **by faith in Jesus**, who loved us and died for us. If we try to go back and live by works under the Law it’s as though we are saying, “It was not necessary for Jesus to die.” That would be tragic and that is what in effect those who left the true gospel were saying. That is why Paul was so amazed at these Galatians and why the true gospel is worth fighting for (Galatians 2:11-21).

How about you, are you swayed by the opinions of people? What is more important to you, the word of people or the word of God? Any dead fish can float down stream with the current of the world. It takes a live fish to swim against the current of the world by staying the course and sticking with the true gospel. Are you a live or dead fish? Are you a follower of people or a follower of God? Is your heart’s desire to please the Lord or please people? Are you living *The Crucified Life*? These are life challenging questions from God’s inspired epistle to the Galatians. How will you answer them?