

GALATIANS 1
Introduction to Galatians and Salutation
By Ron Harvey

INTRODUCTION

Galatians ranks right up there with Romans and Hebrews as one of the most important doctrinal books in the Bible. It is a short book (it is only six chapters) but it is a critically important book.

Galatians is like Hebrews in that it deals with the relationship of Judaism to Christianity. You will remember that Hebrews was all about the superiority of Christ and Christianity to that old form of religion called Judaism. The book of Hebrews showed that Christ was the substance behind all the rituals and ceremonies of the Old Covenant. The priesthood of the Old Testament was merely a type of the real priesthood performed by Christ. The animal sacrifices were merely a type of the real sacrifice performed by Christ. The deliverer Moses was merely a type of the real deliverer who is Christ. The land of Canaan was a type of that better heavenly land. Joshua was a type of the real Captain of our salvation who is Christ.

So, we learned in Hebrews that once Christ was here, the types are obsolete. Judaism is an old religion. It had its day. But its day has come and gone. It served a purpose. But its purpose has been accomplished.

We learned in Hebrews that Judaism was a legal system rather than a grace system. Judaism was a system of law. Judaism was harsh and rigorous in its requirements. Under Judaism a man was sentenced to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath. Under Judaism there were severe penalties for violations. And this was to teach that the holy law of God was a high and lofty standard.

Judaism showed clearly that man cannot be justified by the law. Israel had its chance. They had 1500 years under the law. And they proved over and over that they could not do it. And once this was established, it paved the way for pure grace that was brought in by Jesus Christ.

Now the book of Galatians is addressing an issue that had arisen in many of the churches which Paul had founded on his second and third missionary journey. If we go to the book of Acts you will find that Paul and Barnabas began their second missionary journey in Acts 15:36. And in Acts 16:6 it says that they went throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia. In Acts 18:23 we find that Paul went to Galatia again on his third missionary journey.

When Paul first went through the towns of Galatia, preaching the gospel, they gladly received the free gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh how these Gentiles were happy to hear that there was salvation for them too through Christ. And furthermore, this salvation was available by pure grace. Paul put no Jewish restrictions on them. They did not have to become a Jew to be saved. They did not have to conform to the requirements of that old Jewish religion. Salvation was not by the keeping of that old Jewish law, but was by faith in Christ alone.

What a wonderful and free gospel that is! Once Christ has come and has made that one acceptable sacrifice, God does not then require us to perform those old typical ceremonies. God does not require us to join that worn out religion of Judaism. God does not require us to bring lambs for slaughter. God does not require us to obey every jot and tittle of the Hebrew law for salvation.

It was already thoroughly proven that the law of Israel could not save. Even the Jews could not be saved through their own law. They observed all the religious feast days. They meticulously observed the many intricacies of the ceremonial law. They circumcised all of their male infants. But in the end, none of this was sufficient to save them. After 1500 years of instruction under the law, they were as lost as ever.

But when the Savior of the world came and died as that one true sacrifice for sins, he offered salvation by the pure and simple mechanism of faith. Jesus preached that salvation was not after all by the Jewish law. It was not by being a descendent of Abraham. It was not by circumcision. It was not by works. But it was by believing.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Thank God that the only way of salvation is the simplest way. It is justification by faith. And as Galatians will teach us, it is justification by faith alone. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the freest gift ever known to man. God requires nothing of the sinner and gives eternal life freely.

Christ does not require any outward acts whatsoever. He doesn't require the doing of anything. And this is quite a shock to the human mind because by nature we are merit oriented, aren't we? We think if we are to have something we must earn it. And that is because that is a valid principle in the world that we live in. Even the Scriptures say, "If a man does not work neither should he eat."

And so this works mentality is built into our human makeup and when it comes to salvation we think that we must make ourselves acceptable to Him. But when it comes to salvation, God turns that works principle upside down. He does not require one penny of payment.

Listen to how the Scriptures beautifully describe the free grace that is in Christ.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Isaiah 55:1

And it is a very good thing that salvation is free, because we don't have a penny to give him. We have no spiritual assets in the bank. We have no righteousness at all to offer so that he might accept us. And so, Jesus comes to bankrupt and helpless sinners and says, "Here, take salvation as a free gift. I give it to you. Simply receive it by faith and faith alone."

What a beautiful, beautiful thing the gospel is. It is the most beautiful news that has ever been brought to the ears of man. It is an offer of free grace. The gospel is such a rich treasure of grace that the Bible says,

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.

Romans 10:15

The most comely parts of man are the feet - those old, dusty feet, cracked and worn with age. But the feet of those who preach the gospel are beautiful. And they are beautiful not because of the feet, but because of the splendid beauty of the gospel which those feet bring to the people.

The most glorious sunset is not equal to the beauty of the gospel. Go to the highest mountain and the most glorious vantage point on all the earth and the view is not as beautiful as the gospel of Jesus Christ. Go into outer space and look down and see the magnificent beauty of God's creation from hundreds of miles above and still, it is not as beautiful as the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of our Lord is the most beautiful sight ever to be imagined. It is the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all of his majesty and glory, in all of his righteousness and purity, opening his arms in full acceptance of the sinner and giving the sinner a full pardon for sins.

The gospel is the sight of Jesus embracing the sinner as a son. It is the sight of Jesus coming to a homeless, destitute sinner, adopting him and opening up his whole creation and making the sinner a joint heir. And all of this is as free as the air we breathe. There is no cost to secure these riches. The cost was paid by Jesus himself. But the pure benefit is reaped by the sinner.

I think for all eternity sinners saved by grace will admire the magnificent beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it is most beautiful because of its simplistic purity. It is grace and it is grace alone that saves a sinner. And it is free grace that is the great beauty of the gospel. And this, you will find, is the message of Galatians.

Now, when Paul first marched through the cities of Galatia with this gospel, many accepted the free offer of salvation by faith alone. But after Paul left, teachers came in and led many astray by teaching that Christianity is not by faith alone, but rather, it is faith in Christ plus the requirements of Judaism. They were preaching that it is not sufficient to simply believe in Christ but that it was necessary also to continue in those old ceremonies of Judaism. Specifically, they said that it was necessary to believe in Jesus and to be circumcised.

But look what Paul says about that.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Galatians 5:2

That is, there is no profit in circumcision any longer. It had its purpose and it had its usefulness as a sign of Jewishness. But it is not useful unto salvation.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Galatians 6:15

And so, that is the issue of Galatians. These Judaizing teachers took as it were the pure water of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they put a drop of Judaism in it. And this drop of Judaism permeated the whole glass and tainted the water. And it was no longer the pure gospel. But it was another religion all together.

Now what I'm doing for you this morning is giving you a feel for what Galatians is all about. I am orienting you so that you can better understand when we begin to study the book word by word.

And to give you a better feel for the book, I think I should point out the anger of Paul when he writes this epistle.

The Anger of Paul

Now, you will notice that when Paul writes the book of Galatians he is an angry man. He is angry that the pure gospel of Christ is being mixed with Judaism and perverted. And there is an angry tone to this book.

Example: Let's say that as your pastor I labored for six months teaching Hebrews so that you would understand that Christianity is far superior to Judaism; that the priesthood of Christ is far better than the Levitical priesthood of Judaism; that Christ's sacrifice is better than the sacrifice of animals; that Christ's rest in heaven is better than the rest which Israel enjoyed in Canaan. And then, I left on a three month missionary trip. And when I came back, I found that some teachers had come into the church while I was gone and had convinced you to set up an altar in the front of the church. And I

looked, and there was blood dripping from the altar. And I could hear sheep bleating in the back room. And then our deacons, Bro. Jack, Bro. Mark and Bro. Dana came out dressed in priestly clothing. And they told me that while I was away the church decided to adopt Judaism rather than Christianity. Now I must say that I would be absolutely astonished if that happened. It would be an unbelievable turn of events.

And this is how Paul felt. He said,

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.

Galatians 1:6

Paul said, "I marvel." To put it in modern language, Paul says, "I am blown away. I cannot believe it."

Now Paul was astonished when he heard that they had left the true gospel and he was absolutely stunned that such a thing could happen. And when he caught his breath, Paul felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up and his blood began to boil in him. And he picked up his pen and his anger flowed out through his fingers and onto the pages of his letter.

As early as verse six, the chastisement of Paul begins,

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ . . .

Paul is saying, "I am amazed. I cannot believe it." And notice, he says they have left God. He says,

"You are removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ."

Now they have been fiddling around with the gospel. They have tampered with it. They have added to it. But notice, they are not merely manipulating the message, they are removing themselves from God.

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ . . .

And not only does Paul marvel that they have removed themselves from God, but Paul is astonished that they fell away so quickly. He says, “You are so soon removed.”

And so, Paul is an angry apostle. And Paul is so angry that he says in verse eight that whoever is preaching such things to you, let them be damned.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (damned).

Galatians 1:8

Paul says, “I don’t care if an angel himself comes down here and preaches a different gospel, let that angel be accursed.”

You can sort of see the veins popping out of Paul’s neck as he writes this letter.

The Theme of Galatians

So, you see here, the theme of the book of Galatians. Paul is going to defend the pure gospel of Christ. Paul is going to defend the gospel as a grace kind of gospel. And he is going to defend it against this false gospel that has crept into the churches which is a works kind of a gospel.

There were some teachers who were teaching them that, among other things, you must be circumcised to be saved. And this infuriated Paul to think that they were changing the gospel into something other than salvation by faith alone.

Let me say that defending the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is a warfare that continues to the present day. Just look around at the religions of the world and you will find gross perversions of the gospel. And even in evangelical churches, the pure, sovereign grace of the gospel is largely denied and contaminated with preaching and teaching which incorporates works and human effort into the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Salvation by grace through faith alone was the great arguing point of the Reformation and during this time the book of Galatians took center stage.

Galatians was the favorite book of Martin Luther

You will remember that Martin Luther was a monk in the Roman Catholic Church. And he began to see the errors of the Roman Catholic religion. In particular, he began to see the truth and the utter importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

And Martin Luther adopted the book of Galatians as his lifelong project. And he wrote a commentary on the book of Galatians that stands even today as one of the leading voices on this great book.

And now Galatians is our favorite book here at Grace Baptist Church because it is the book that we will now study for the next several weeks and months.

And so I present to you the book of Galatians. And I present it to you word by word and line by line and precept by precept. And I hope it will be a blessing to you as we study this book.

Now the first word in the book is the name Paul. Most of you probably have a good understanding of who Paul was. Before he was Paul, he was Saul. He was a first rate Jew. He was rising in the ranks of the Hebrew religion. And he was making a name for himself not only in Jewry, but also throughout the world. He was the killer of Christians. It was his mission in life. He had a personal vendetta against anyone who would name the name of Jesus Christ.

And Saul was on his way to Damascus one day. And he was going with what he considered righteous indignation against those who had left Judaism to attach themselves to Christ. And while on the road to Damascus, the bright light of Jesus Christ exploded in Saul's way and he was so startled that he fell to the ground and he was blinded.

And Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes me?"

And Jesus told Saul to go into the city and wait. And the next time we see Saul, he is in the city praying. And I strongly suspect, that this time, he was not praying the empty prayers of Judaism, but he was praying the prayers of earnest commitment to the One whom he formerly persecuted.

And his name was changed to Paul.

Now the question is, "How did Paul learn the gospel message?" He was steeped in Judaism, but how did he come to know the great message of the gospel?

Now Paul claims that he learned the gospel message by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11,12

And it appears that Paul was personally instructed by the resurrected Christ for several years. In verse 17, Paul says that after his conversion he went into Arabia. Now it doesn't say how long he stayed in Arabia, but apparently it was some years.

In verse 18 Paul says it was three years before he first went back to Jerusalem.

Chapter 2 (verse one) indicates that it was another 14 years before he went up to Jerusalem again.

So, there was a long period of time, perhaps 17 years, in which Paul was instructed by Christ himself and prepared for his momentous ministry.

So, it is this Paul who is the author of Galatians.

The Salutation

Now the first thing that we are going to see here in Galatians is the salutation. And the salutation is found in verses 1-5.

Now, remember, Paul originally preached to these Galatian churches on his second and third missionary journeys. But since he has been away, other teachers have come in disputing Paul's gospel of salvation by faith alone. And they have convinced the churches that Christianity is compatible with Judaism and that it is still necessary for Christian males to be circumcised in order to be saved. And of course, if circumcision be allowed as a necessary element of salvation, then who is to say that all the other ceremonies of Judaism should not also be admitted.

So, who should the churches believe? Should they believe Paul or should they believe these other teachers? And there is a question of authority that arises.

And so, Paul begins the book of Galatians by establishing his authority. And we see first of all,

His office in the church

Paul says, "Let me tell you who I am. I am Paul, an apostle." Now when Paul says, I am an apostle, he is setting himself apart from the other teachers and preachers who have come into the churches. He is telling the churches that he has more authority than them.

STOP HERE AND READ GALATIANS 1 AND 2 WHERE PAUL DEFENDS HIS AUTHORITY

1. Paul was a representative of Christ,

That is what an apostle means – a sent one. Now this is its very general usage. Paul was the representative of Jesus Christ. Now many could claim to be an apostle in the general sense. But Paul is claiming more than that here.

2. Paul was claiming to occupy the highest office in the church.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

I Corinthians 12:28

Paul is here putting himself on a par with the original apostles of Jesus Christ. Now this office is a most unique office. It is an extremely authoritative office in the church. In fact, when they (the apostles) spoke on behalf of Christ, their words were infallible. It was just as though Christ was speaking himself.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

I Corinthians 14:37

There were only a handful of men in all of history who were invested with the authority of apostleship and they were all men who had intimate fellowship with and instruction by Christ either during his ministry or after his resurrection.

The apostles and the prophets laid the foundation of the church. The whole church of Christ is built upon the truth that was laid down by the apostles and the prophets. These men received direct revelation from Jesus Christ himself. And they wrote these words down by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and their words are thus the very words of God. They are infallible and they are authoritative.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone.

Eph.2:19,20

Now the churches of Galatia were struggling with this idea of authority. And Paul is telling them, I am an apostle. I am on equal footing with Peter and James and John. My words are authoritative words. My words are the words of Christ himself. I am an apostle and you better take heed to the things that I tell you.

Note: There were no apostles left on the earth after the first century AD. They all died. But they left the foundation fully laid. The truth of God was laid down in its entirety and the purpose of the apostles was fulfilled. Are there infallible teachers on the earth today? No, the infallible apostles died, but not until the full revelation of God was complete and sure.

Note: The Catholic Church maintains that the infallibility of the apostles is passed down by succession through the Bishops of Rome (the popes). And the Catholic Church maintains that the Pope may issue infallible statements of dogma which are binding upon the church.

We believe on the other hand that the office of apostle was held by only a few of Christ's closest disciples and that when they died, there are no more infallible teachers.

3. Paul describes the origin of his office.

Not of men.

Now when it says, "Not of men," this is talking about the original fountain of his office. It is talking about the source of it. Where is the well from which his office springs?

Example: Every river flows from a source.

And the office of Paul flowed from a source. But the source of his authority was not men. The source was not a human source. They didn't have a meeting in Jerusalem of all the religious heads and make Paul an apostle.

Do you remember how the eleven remaining disciples drew lots and they replaced Judas with Matthias? Not so with Paul, his apostleship did not derive from men at all.

It might have been supposed that Paul's apostleship was inferior in some way to the apostleship of the original disciples of Christ. Maybe the churches of Galatia thought of Paul as a "little" apostle. Maybe they thought the Jerusalem counsel got together and laid hands on Paul and conveyed apostleship on Paul.

But remember, Paul spent very little time with other men after he was saved. (1:17; 18; 2:1)

Not by man.

Paul's apostleship was not even conveyed to him through the instrument of a man. God didn't speak to Peter and tell Peter to go lay hands on Paul and make him an apostle. God commissioned Paul directly.

So you see that the origin of Paul's apostleship is first described negatively: It was not of men (that is, it did not spring from men as a source) and it was not by man (it was not conveyed by a man).

But by Jesus Christ.

Paul was commissioned directly by Jesus Christ as an apostle. And therefore the origin of his office is divine and not human and his authority is absolute and cannot be questioned as a work of man.

Note: The Divinity of Jesus Christ. Although this is not the theme of this text, it is a good idea to note here that Jesus Christ is set in contrast to a mere man and placed on a par with God the Father.

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ . . .

You see here that Paul is saying, "I was commissioned as an apostle by a higher authority than men. I wasn't commissioned by men. Rather, I was commissioned Jesus Christ and God the Father."

Anyone who denies the deity of Christ, not only denies the words of Jesus himself who said, "I and my Father are one," but they deny the whole tone of the Bible which honors Jesus Christ as being God himself.

The Addressees of the Letter

It is the churches in Galatia. Paul's other letters are letters to individual churches. But this is a letter to be circulated among the churches in the Galatia region.

Now it is uncertain exactly which churches there were in this area. But Paul had preached through the area of Galatia before on his second and third missionary journeys. (See Acts 16:6; 18:23)

His Greeting To the Galatian Churches

Now you will notice that the greeting in this book is quite different from Paul's greeting in the other epistles. It is very brief. And it lacks any commendatory words at all.

Now in virtually every other epistle, Paul heaps praise on the saints and gives thanks for them and asks God's blessing on them.

In Romans he says,

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Romans 1:8

In Ephesians he praises God for them,

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:3

And on and on he goes in chapter one blessing God for them.

Even in I Corinthians where there was gross sin going on, Paul first says,

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 1:4

But, there is no such blessing or thanks given in this book of Galatians. Paul sat down with an angry pen and he wrote a stern message to the churches in Galatia about the perversion of the gospel which was going on in the churches.

Now let's evaluate the problem in the Galatian churches. They were wanting to incorporate the old Jewish way of religion into the church. They said, "We believe in Christ. We believe that he is the Messiah. But surely these old rites of Judaism should not be abandoned. We have done it this way for 1500 years. Should we now just give it all up?"

Now what were they saying? They were saying that the death of Christ was insufficient in itself for salvation. It was necessary to believe in Christ and also to be circumcised. It was necessary to believe in Christ and also to have human priests. It was necessary to believe in Christ and also to do something to be saved.

Isn't this always the way of man? Man wants to devise a way of salvation that does not give God all the glory but rather gives man some of the glory. How many religions of the world are based on the works of man?

Judaism: A system of works. It is called the works of the law. It was designed as a system to work condemnation. It was a ministry of death.

Catholicism: Must be baptized to be saved. After you are saved, you must perform good works to maintain that salvation.

Mormonism: Must be a member of the Mormon church. Must be baptized. Saved by works including such things as faithfulness to Mormon church leaders, tithing, secret temple rituals, etc.

Jehovah's Witnesses: Must be baptized as a Jehovah's Witness and then must earn everlasting life on earth by witnessing door to door. By the way, only 144,000 Jehovah's witnesses will have eternal life in heaven. And this number has already been filled. So everyone else is scrambling around for a lesser blessing here on earth.

Islam: Humans are basically good, but fallible and need

guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines one's eternal destiny in paradise or hell. Allah's mercy may tip the scales to heaven.

Hinduism: Salvation is achieved through yoga and meditation.

Hare Krishna: Salvation is achieved by chanting Krishna's name constantly, by worshipping images and obeying rules of the religion.

Buddhism: Salvation is achieved by eliminating all desires and cravings.

The Greeting Itself:

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Paul's standard greeting. It was what Paul wished upon his readers.

Grace: The unmerited favor of God. It is the heart of the gospel. Paul says, "I hope God blesses you even though you don't deserve. It is the antithesis to law. Law is giving you exactly what you deserve. Grace is when God brings you out from under the law and gives you what you do not deserve.

Peace: Peace is the natural outflowing of grace. There is no peace under the law. You can get no rest there. That was one of the characteristics of Judaism. There was never any rest from the requirements of the law. Every day there were sacrifices and rituals and ceremonies and legal requirements. Just when you thought you had done your duties, they all started over the next day. And there was no peace.

But under grace, God forgives sins once for all and the sinner can breathe out a sigh of relief. And it is a sigh of relief for all time. There are no more requirements. It is all done in Christ.

And so, Paul says, "Grace be to you and peace . . ."

Note the shortness of the greeting: This suggests a sense of urgency on the part of Paul.

Example: When the house is on fire you don't stroll up to the upstairs bedrooms and engage in long conversations, do you? When the house is burning down you don't greet your children with, "Hello. How are you doing this evening? You certainly are looking well. And let me take a moment to congratulate you on your fine grades this semester. You seem to be acting very responsibly these days. No. You run upstairs and you yell, "Fire."

And this is why the greeting is so short and sweet. Paul is angry. There is a fire raging in the churches and Paul is in a hurry to put it out.

Paul States His Gospel

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

Now let me say that the gospel that was being perpetrated on the churches during Paul's absence was a Judaistic kind of gospel. It was a law kind of gospel. And Paul characterizes it as such in Galatians 3:2.

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

He called it the works of the law. You see the law required works. It required all kind of works. It required circumcision. It required sacrifices. It required feasts and ceremonies.

And Jewish teachers were trying to Judaize the church. And they were teaching that you must be circumcised in addition to having faith in Christ.

But here is the true gospel according to Paul:

Jesus gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world. (v.4)

Now when it says Jesus gave himself for our sins, you don't see anything mentioned about circumcision. You don't see anything mentioned about keeping all the requirements of the Mosaic Law. What you see is work being done by Jesus that we might be delivered and in verse 5 you see that this redounds to the glory of God.

Now, when people claim that the sinner must do something to obtain salvation,

I. They deny the sufficiency of the work of Christ.

It was a nice thing that he did, but his death alone is not enough. His death is not effective. His death doesn't really accomplish anything. It may pave the way. It may be the ground upon which salvation is based, but his death does not save. And anyone who takes that position writes over the cross of Christ in big letters, "INSUFFICIENT."

And if the work of Christ on the cross is insufficient, then what hope is there for sinners like us? What can we possibly add to the magnificent work of Christ to make it more pleasing to God and to cause it to atone for sins?

Do you know that the masses of people out there in evangelical churches think that the death of Jesus Christ did nothing more than make it legally possible for sinners to be saved. And now, they think, sinners will add something to the mix and they shall be saved.

I tell you, the moment the sinner thinks to add something to the mix, the mixture perverts the gospel of Jesus Christ. (see. v.7)

When God determined to save helpless sinners, he determined to do it not by the work of the sinner, but by the glorious and gracious work of His Son.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 5:8-10

How dare these Judaizers come in and teach that the death of Christ is insufficient! How dare they teach that such an act as circumcision would assist the blood of Christ in atoning for sin!

And so these Judaizers label the work of Christ as insufficient. But when they add to the requirements of the gospel,

II. They deny the purpose of the work of Christ.

Now they would say that the work of Christ by itself delivers the sinner from nothing. It is the work of Christ plus the work of the sinner that delivers from sin. It is faith in Christ plus circumcision that delivers. Today we might say that it is faith in Christ plus baptism or faith in Christ plus church membership or faith in Christ plus good works.

But notice the true gospel in verse four. Deliverance from sin has nothing to do with our work at all, but it has everything to do with his work. And it delivers us from this present evil world.

What is the purpose of the death of Christ on the cross? It is to deliver us. It is not to help us deliver ourselves. It is not to create an environment in which sinners can somehow deliver themselves.

He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age.

Now let me also say that those who claim that salvation is by faith in Christ and circumcision or and anything else,

III. They deny God the glory.

God is very pleased to save sinners all by himself. He doesn't need the help of sinners. He doesn't sit around and beg for the cooperation of the sinner so that he can save someone. He saves them by his own initiative and by his own work. And therefore salvation is by grace and not by works. It is by faith and not by circumcision.

And the glory goes to God alone.