

**Wednesday, October 7, 2020**

**SERIES: WE ARE FREE (A Study of Galatians)**

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**TITLE: Torn Between Two Lovers**

The Monkees wrote a song called *Look Out (Here Comes Tomorrow)*. In that song, Davy Jones sings about a predicament he's in. He is apparently in love with two different women. He sings, "Told them both that I love them, said it, and it was true. But I can't have both of them. Don't know what to do... ...Look out, here comes tomorrow. Oh, how I wish tomorrow would never come."

Are you like Davy Jones? Are you torn between two lovers? Are you torn between loving the world and loving God? If so, you're not alone. Many people today - many Christians today - are feeling torn between trying to win the approval of man, while trying to win the approval of God. The question is, can we do both? That's what we want to talk about today.

In case you're tuning in for the first time in a while, we're continuing our series called "We Are Free (A Study of Galatians). Galatians is a powerful letter written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches spread throughout Galatia.

Paul was convinced that there is one true Gospel. And that Gospel message sets us free. It sets us free from being a slave to sin, and it also frees us from being a slave to legalism. That is what Paul is primarily writing the Galatian church about: Reminding them of the true Gospel, and that it frees them from legalism. Legalism is that nasty bit of religion that we tack on to the Gospel of grace. It's that tendency to try to earn our Salvation or keep our Salvation. But the reality is, the Gospel says, *for by grace you have been saved through faith*. We are saved by what Jesus has done - not what we can do.

Today we're picking it up in Galatians Chapter one, beginning in verse 10. In the previous 9 verses, Paul has identified himself as a true Apostle. He was one who was commissioned by Jesus Christ himself, after his death, burial and resurrection. He saw a risen Christ, and that changed everything. He reminds the Galatian churches that God offers them grace, and because of that grace, they can experience divine peace. He has to remind them of this grace, because they are deserting Jesus Christ and the true Gospel message. He would go on to say, that any distortion of the Gospel is no Gospel at all. The Judaizers, who were perpetuating this false Gospel, were *to be accursed* - in other words condemned - because they have distorted the truth of God, and it was leading people astray.

And that's where we pick it up - Galatians Chapter one, beginning in verse 10 (ESV):

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul uses a rhetorical question to emphasize that he is not trying to please people. He is saying really “therefore”, instead of just “for”. It is a conclusion. Paul has just said that those who are preaching a false gospel should be cursed. Therefore, he is distinguishing himself from them. He is saying they are distorting the gospel, and there is a price to pay. Therefore, look at me. Have I sold out? Am I a slave to the approval of other people? Or am I a slave to God? Because you cannot serve both God and man.

In Matthew Chapter 6, Jesus talked about storing up treasures in Heaven versus here on Earth. And then in verse 24, he would say that you cannot serve 2 masters - you'll either hate the one, and love the other, or you will be devoted to one, and despise the other. Now I know Jesus was specifically talking about where we invest, but the principle still stands that you have to choose. This is why Paul would go on to say at the end of verse 10, “If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” If Paul had desired to please people, which he surely did not desire, then he would not have become a follower of Christ –or as he put it – “Christ's slave”. The fact that he is calling out these false teachers shows he is not going to please people, but instead try to please God.

We have to remember Paul’s background, which he'll talk about here in the next couple verses. But as a religious Pharisee, he was well respected. He was trained by the best, which brought perks. But he traded all of that for persecution, rejection, and abuse. It is clear Paul is not concerned about winning the approval of people, but instead the approval of God.

I think we need to pause here for a moment, and do some self-reflection. How are you doing in choosing God over people? When you look at your daily life, are you involved in winning the approval of others, or of God? Is it possible to do both? Well of course it is. When you aim to do your work with integrity and with excellence, you glorify God. When you serve at your local church, if your church is meeting right now, and your motives are right, you both please God, and you are pleasing people, because you are serving them. But what about the rest of the time? Do you sit quiet in the face of evil? Do you sit idly online, as people you know perpetuate false gospels? As they promote false teachers? Do you speak up lovingly, and in private, or do you sit quietly on the sidelines?

Remember, what you tolerate, you promote. James 4:17 says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” The reality is, we are not called to be divisive as Christians, but we are also not to be cowards. The Apostles were committed to sound doctrine. They called out error for what it was. Paul would use some really stinging names as he called out these false teachers. I'm not saying we go out and just do name calling - that's ineffective and rude. But we need to come back to the Bible daily, so that we can discern right doctrine from wrong doctrine. And we need to be willing to look foolish in front of the world, to look right

before God - that means calling out brothers and sisters in Christ, who are teaching, adopting, promoting, and tolerating false doctrine.

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Are you a slave to the approval of others, or to Jesus Christ? It is far better to be a slave to Christ, than it is to be a slave to the approval of other people. When we remember that it's by God's grace we are saved, we won't work *for* His approval, but instead we work *from* His approval - it changes everything. Paul's point is scary and convicting. A mark of saving faith is being a slave to Christ, and not a slave to the world. Today, just like in Jesus' time and Paul's time, there are people who will profess to be Christians, but sadly they are not, in reality.

Jesus recognizes this in John Chapter 2: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man."

These people said they believed, but Jesus knew their heart. Today, He would say that they are Christians based on their Facebook profile, but there was no evidence in their life. This is what Paul is saying: To be saved means to be a slave to Christ. You cannot be a slave to the world and truly be a slave to Christ.

Paul continues - Verse 11: <sup>11</sup> For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul says, "For I would have you know." "Know" is a very strong Greek word which means to make certain. Today we would say, "Let me make this perfectly clear to you". Paul is trying to press the fact that the Gospel message that he has been preaching is not his own - it's not something he copied from a book. It's not something he heard from another Apostle. No, the Gospel he was preaching was not according to man. He wanted to make it known, that the Gospel was from Jesus Christ. You see, the Gospel is completely contrary to what we would create. If we were to create a religion, as many have done before, it's always about what you can do. It's all about what you can do to earn a reward, salvation, paradise, escape, or something in between. That is man's version of the Gospel. It's about what WE can do. Again, Paul was trying to combat legalism.

And then Paul continues in verse 12, by saying he did not receive it from any man, nor was he taught it. Paul was saying, "Look this is not something I was taught by man." You see, just like today, interpretation, teachers, additional resources and commentaries, can become equivalent to the authority of the Word of God. In Paul's time, the Jews had the Torah, but they also had additional writings and traditions. Paul is saying, "Look, this has nothing to do with traditions. This has nothing to do with my favorite teacher." Instead, he says, that the Gospel message was from Jesus Christ Himself.

In Acts Chapter 9, Paul is on the Damascus Road. He was getting ready to do some more persecution of the church, but Jesus appears to him and it changed everything. Many people have claimed revelation from God, but rarely do they attempt and succeed in proving it. But Paul is different. He's not content with making the claim. He goes overboard in the next few verses to substantiate what he has said.

Verse 13: <sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

If there is anyone to brag about their past – humanly speaking – Paul would have to be at the top, especially in regards to being religious. In Philippians 3, Paul would give a very extensive resume both of his ancestry and qualifications for being a religious zealot. He had the right background, he had the right experiences, and he excelled in his religious activity. He was the real religious deal. Today it would be like saying, “Look, I'm part of so-and-so family”. Depending on what you're into, it may be the Rockefellers, it might be the Kardashians, and maybe the Hiltons. It could be the Trumps - whatever the modern equivalent is. It's looking at that name, and saying “look at me”, and then pointing to your resume, saying “Look, I went to the best colleges. I had the best teachers. I had straight A's. And in my first year on the job, I rose the profits in my division by 150%.” It's all about background, resume and experience. But as we'll find out, Paul would discover that his resume, his past, the approval of man – it was empty. It was garbage.

What about you? Do you look to your own resume for your approval and value? Or are you resting in the resume of Jesus Christ? If you really want to know the answer to that question, look at your calendar and your bank accounts - Where you've spent your time and your talents can tell you whether you are a slave to Christ or a slave to the world. Paul was clear – playing by the performance system of the world is empty and deceitful. And not only is it empty and deceitful, but it distinguishes those who are not followers of Christ.

If you have been saved by Christ, you are no longer a slave to the world. You are a slave to your Savior. You don't have to choose, because you've already chosen. By God's grace, we do not work *for* God's approval - we work *from* His approval. This frees us to speak openly, and to live freely, no matter who or what is around us. Paul reminds us we are free. The question is: will you live like it?

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N: Let me bring in my discussion partners, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney, and ask for some pointers on speaking truth when you hear lies. How do you do that, and what can you expect when you do?

C: Well, in private, for sure. I mean, calling someone out on social media, or something like that - I mean, if someone believes something - to call them out, and to do that, could embarrass

them, I guess. I mean, and they believe it - but so a private conversation, a lot of the time - because, so when you do that, it seems like you're actually concerned for them, that they have the wrong information.

N: But do you think there's a time to call people out in public?

C: Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Especially someone in a position, where they're feeding a flock and misguiding them. Absolutely. You can call them out. But I think when somebody's supporting something, and they really believe it, a private conversation. It's like the Gospel, Nat, so if it's done in a loving and concerning way, it's probably going to go a lot better than to publicly humiliate them.

N: Right, right.

A: So wait a minute, you two. How do you call somebody out in public about their misguided teaching? Because I can think of a lot of - if I took your advice - I'd be showing up at a lot of different places, with maybe even friends of the two of you, where they're teaching a false gospel, or certainly they're teaching a Jesus not of the Bible. So you just call them out in public?

C: I think it depends, because if you have someone that is up there telling people that there's another way to get to Heaven, other than Christ Jesus, I'm going to say, "That is not true, and that's unloving." And to say, "Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one gets to the Father, but through Me." So what else in the Bible then, according to you, is true, or which is false? You can't claim some and not the other. I would totally call them out for that. Now prosperity gospel, Arnie, I feel like that's a different category. It's wrong gospel, but then that's a private conversation for somebody, to say, "No, that's not true. Jesus said we were going to have trouble." That's I think different, when you're just flat out telling someone that they don't need Jesus.

N: You know, here in Galatians, you actually see both kinds. You see both Paul calling out to a group of people - the problem with the Judaizers, and what they were teaching. But then it was also clear, that Paul would confront Peter later on in Galatians, and in a public manner. So he did it generically to a group of people, and their false gospel, but he also did it publicly, and directly, with Peter. And part of that is the relationship that Paul had with Peter. There was an intimacy, but it was also a very public issue that they were addressing. So I think it takes a lot of discernment, when knowing *how* to call people out, and *when* to call them out. But I think to Cara's point, a majority of the time it's going to be in private, because we have the relationship with them.

And a lot of times I found out, people don't even know what they're doing. I can think about a situation in the last couple of years, where a friend of ours was sharing all these articles by a prosperity preacher. She didn't necessarily know that what she was sharing was tied to that. How, I don't know, but we said, "Hey, this person is not someone you want to follow. They are actually teaching something that is contrary to the Bible. And so you may want to pull down

these articles, and be careful how much you share, and even how much you consume of their content.” And they said, “Oh my goodness, I had no idea. Let's talk about it.” And so then, they realized the error of their ways, but that was done in private. And again, I think generally speaking, that's very effective.

C: I also would like to add too - that I think we have to be cautious. I mean, you take a prosperity preacher, like a Joel Osteen for instance. And I know people that have been introduced to at least something spiritual through him, and then they've moved past that, but maybe an introduction in. And so to come in right away, and attack someone who's just on this spiritual journey - I think that's where with the Gospel, it has to be a relational piece. You have to say to your friend, “Well, I'm glad you're considering things that are spiritual. But I tell you what, I really prefer this preacher over this, because for this reason.” It's all relational. But I have no problem, if somebody tries to tell another soul that there's another way to get to Heaven - you bet I'm going to speak up, because that is not true. It is just - you're damning that person. That isn't right.

N: Right. And what I found too, is generally speaking, when you are addressing a larger audience, you can talk about sound Christian doctrine, generically, and talk about what truth is - and here are variations of the gospel, which as Paul said, is no gospel at all. A lot of times, people will say, “Well, give me an example. Well, who are people that are doing that today?” And that again, creates an avenue very naturally, to say, “Okay, here are some people that you may want to be aware of, that this is what they are teaching, and you may want to be cautious of them.” So again, it depends on the situation and the context of the offense.

A: So take this for example, [Yup] that I'm dealing with right now. We did a bunch of research on racial reconciliation across the United States - scientific study. And we found that Christ followers are very open to racial reconciliation. Four weeks later, a test comes out that says Christians are against racial reconciliation. And two different studies - and it looks like one of us has an agenda to try to build product, or whatever; And one of us doesn't. Now, it's false - it has big implications - when really, if you take the time to look, they never defined what a Christian is in their study. So it's really hurting. It's becoming even more, “Oh, there's the white people against the blacks”, or whatever. And it's put more of a wedge that's already out there, on stuff that is simply false teachings. So for me though, I wrestle, you know - do you blow the whistle on it, or do you just kick back?

N: I think you've seen a lot of people already doing some kickback, depending on specifically what we're talking about. You know, in the area of racial reconciliation - and I'll just say in general, social justice - that seems to be the overarching theme today - is you have people coming out - black, white, Indian, you name the background. And they're saying, “Look, if we're going to talk about it from a Christian worldview, Jesus Christ wasn't sharing a social justice gospel. A social justice gospel, again, is a variation of the Gospel. And so, if you want true reconciliation, it has to come through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But that's not what people are talking about. They're talking about all different other prescriptions to make things better. One of them, as you brought up, is maybe just saying, “Well, this certain demographic, their voice

doesn't matter. And you're pushing an agenda.” Again, we're not really addressing the issue, but I think there's a good many real Christians out there today who are speaking up, that are saying, “Look, that isn't the Gospel - this isn't the right thing.” So I think people are speaking up today, Arnie, but to your point - when's the right time? How do you do so? Man, I don't know - that's really hard to decide. We should talk about it a little more, I think.

A: No, it's just whether it's a false teacher - especially in media, you know, and we're so watched, you know. And you look at the Jerry Falwell, Jr. fiasco - that just hurts Christianity, I think, or hurts our testimony. It doesn't help, put it that way - where were all the people all these years? I mean, this just didn't happen overnight. And if it was just one case, you know, but you see this over and over - all these guys in their fifties to sixties - all of a sudden you find out a double life - pretty messed up. And it really - Satan uses it of course. It just makes me wonder, why all these good people never said a thing.

N: Right. Well, and I'll be honest, you know - I think about a secular example. Think about the case of Enron, right? When they had that whole issue blow up, there was a struggle between some core values. They had loyalty and integrity as two core values of Enron, right? Well, people are saying - well, the right thing to do - integrity - is to blow the whistle. But I'm also loyal: I'm loyal to the leader. I'm loyal to the organization. I'm loyal to the people around me, who are going to be negatively impacted if I blow the whistle. And so I think we, as Christians, get into that same thing, as well, we say, “Well, clearly we're called to be people of integrity - to speak the truth, to adhere to truth. But also we want to come alongside the church - the body of Christ, this individual”, and we put ourselves into a corner falsely. But I think that happens more and more. So in the case of Falwell, you know - here we have a great example. Someone - clearly, come on now - someone knew about it. Many people had to know about it, and yet they put themselves in a corner. “Do I blow the whistle? But this will take down potentially the school. And this will bring me into the discussion. And I don't want my sins, you know, brought to the light.” I mean, there's so many layers to it. Should it have been exposed? Absolutely. In private to start off with - most likely; and then to the public, if it's not going anywhere - maybe.

But the reality is, we are all called to speak truth in love. If this is you today, don't sit on the sidelines. God has given you truth. He's put it into your hands - act upon it; pray for wisdom; go get godly counsel on how to handle it. But whatever you do - do not sit there idly. What you tolerate is what you promote, and we need to promote truth. And we need to promote the reality of Christianity.