

**Galatians 1: 10-12; “Seeking to Please Men”, Message # 5 in a series entitled – “Christ has made us free”, A sermon delivered online during the time of the coronavirus restrictions, by Pastor Paul Rendall, on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.**

The last time that we were together we examined the Apostolic curse which the Apostle Paul places upon anyone who preaches another gospel. This curse is specifically placed, by Apostolic authority, upon the person who is preaching that there is some other way to be justified (to be declared righteous) before God, than faith in Jesus Christ. The curse falls upon anyone, it says in verse 9, who preaches any other gospel than the one which the Apostle Paul preached to them. What was Paul’s gospel? It was, and is, for all generations till the end of the world – “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Anyone adding anything to that gospel, preaching and saying that God requires people to do something, themselves, to merit salvation, the curse falls upon them.

Now in the next 3 verses Paul wants to go a little deeper and show us the reason why the false teachers were preaching this perverted gospel of theirs. It was because they were not seeking to please God; they were seeking to please men. And so Paul is going to amplify upon this truth. We want to look at this truth tonight from 3 vantage points. 1<sup>st</sup> – From the vantage point of the One whom we are trying to persuade. 2<sup>nd</sup> – From the vantage point of being a minister of the gospel. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – From the vantage point of compromising the message of the gospel.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Who is the One we are trying to persuade?**

“For do I now persuade men, or God?” “Or do I seek to please men?” There is a principle here, to be learned and lived out; and it is not only for the man who is a minister of the gospel, but it is also for all Christians as they live their Christian life. We need to ask ourselves at the beginning of this study: Is my greatest object in living my life, to persuade men, or God? This is a question which has for its focus the meaning of life. For, the object in living our Christian life is to persuade God that we really do want Him and all that He has to offer us in Christ. It is not to be trying to persuade men, that I will have more regard for them, than I do for God. So, to begin with, I want you to turn over with me to Luke Chapter 16, verses 13-15. “No servant can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” “You cannot serve God and mammon.” “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.” “And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.’” “For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

If we are thinking about the words of our Lord correctly here, it was not only their love of money, that was the problem with these Pharisees. It was true that they could not serve both God and money. But it is this statement, “what is highly esteemed among men” that I want us to focus on. What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God, because it does not take Him or what He expects of them, into any real consideration. This is the viewpoint that all people have by nature, even those people who are religious, and who are, as of yet, unsaved. They have not been born again; they have not been converted to Christ. Religious people like that, look to each other for their approval. They look to others around them for the supposedly righteous thing that they should, and the false doctrines that they are holding. They do not search the Scriptures to see if the things that they are holding to, in terms of truth, are really true.

And so, they will add to the true gospel their supposedly good works; what they consider good works, to gain the approval of men, or if they do go about to do the works of God’s law, they do it from selfish motives, so that it might make them appear to others that they are very wise and good people. You see, the approval of men is everything to them.

And unfortunately, some of these people, then, will attempt to go on to hold other people in bondage to their opinions of what is true. They will hold others around them in bondage with their

false doctrine, and proclaim a false way of salvation, by insisting that performing religious ceremonies and doing good works which will please other people, that these are the true way of salvation. This is why these men were deriding Jesus. They thought that what he was saying didn't take into consideration what they thought was obviously true; their false views of serving money, and their own interests to be wealthy. They thought that they could do both; have the world, in the sense of leaving the truth of Jesus' words out, and still have eternal salvation. But they were deceived in this. And so Jesus had to tell them this. Think with me about Jesus' words over in Matthew 6: 22-24. "The lamp of the body is the eye." "If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light." "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one despise the other." "You cannot serve God and mammon."

Now, we can see here from these verses that the lamp of the body is the eye. The lamp is that which holds the light, and gives the light out so that the things that we do in the body can be good things in the sight of God. The eye represents the way that we see things. This is the lamp that Jesus is talking about. If the way that we see things is good, then the things that we do for God and for others will be good. If the way that we see things is evil, then that too will affect all of our actions. Then Jesus makes this unusual statement. "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" What does He mean by that? He means that if the way that you see things spiritually is man-centered rather than God-centered, and if the light (that is the truth of what you believe about what is most important, is coming from the reasoning of worldly men, then how great will be the darkness in you. You are persuading men, but you are not persuading God that you are interested in doing what is most important to Him.

The example Jesus uses here in verse 24 is money. No person can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and money. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will hold to the one and despise the other. But don't think that you can do both. The verse could almost be read this way; "You cannot serve God and the sinful selfish thoughts of the people of this world as well." Their way of seeing things, and their motives for doing even good things will be very different from what God is looking for. If as a Christian I understand the meaning of life, my main emphasis in what I do and say will not be seeking to please men. It will be seeking to please God. As Albert Barnes says in his commentary: "One of the main differences between Christians and the world is, that others aim to please people; the Christian aims to please only God." "And this is the great difference."(end of quote) You see, that is the meaning of life; to be learning to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. But here in the context of the verses that we are studying, we often need to be warned of the world's false way of thinking about religion and the meaning of life. The world's way of thinking about religion and the meaning of life is often set in the context of pleasing men.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Let's look at seeking to please men, from the vantage point of being a minister of the gospel.**

"For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." Paul was now, as an apostle, a bondservant of Christ. That is, he was one of His called ministers, and he had been called as an apostle. Paul learned this directly from the Lord's words to him on the road to Damascus, and he also later learned what this would mean, in terms of the way that he would teach. He would not learn the gospel and how he would communicate it to people around him, by learning it from other men. He would learn it from Christ Himself. In Acts 22: 14-18, Paul is relating his testimony to a mob of people at Jerusalem. And he related what Ananias said to him shortly after He had met the Lord on the road to Damascus. "He said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.'" "For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard."

Verse 17 says, "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'" Paul knew that there were many religious men who were enemies to Jesus Christ and the gospel; that they could only be saved by Christ and His finished work on the cross. Paul also knew that The Lord Jesus Christ, in His preaching and teaching, did not try to please men by stating that they were basically good people; or by stating that they, by their ceremonial or moral works, could be saved or accepted by God in that false way of their own reasonings about the law of God. Paul had learned these truths of the gospel, and how they should be preached, from Christ Himself. Because he had before served men and their false views of the true gospel of Jesus Christ, he was very careful now, following his conversion, to serve Christ as His bondservant. He would not to attempt to please men by going back to those who were preaching error and heresy; trying to persuade them that he was accepting them as those who were spiritual brethren; those who somehow still had the truth even though they mixed it with damning error. No, he was very clear. "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man."

So it ought to be apparent to us now, that many religious people in that day, and many religious people now, try to make up their own gospel of how people are accepted by God. They do this without ever looking at the Scriptures or the words of Jesus about how a person is to be saved. The preaching of the Lord Jesus was much different than the preaching of the unconverted religious men of that day. I can show you this if you will turn over to Luke Chapter 6, verse 20. "Then Jesus lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled." "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh." "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake." "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!" "For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets." "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." "Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger." "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Now how are we to understand these words? For we cannot conclude that it is a good thing to be poor unless we remember the words of James 2: 5. "Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him." It is not a good thing to be hungry now unless you remember that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4: 4) And also Matthew 5: 6 – "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." There are the spiritual riches which save and sustain the soul; spiritual food, that the world knows nothing of. And somehow we must convince the unbelieving of this if they are ever to be saved. But in the process of our trying to convince them, we must not compromise the gospel.

And further we must understand that unless they are changed by God's sovereign grace, having their minds illumined by the Holy Spirit, they will not like the things that we teach, and the truths that we live by. Listen to Albert Barnes again: "A friend of Christ must do his duty, and must regulate his conduct by the will of God, whether people are pleased with it or not." "And it may be further implied that the life and deportment of a sincere Christian will not please people." "It is not what they love." "A holy, humble, spiritual life they do not love." "It is true, indeed, that their consciences tell them that such a life is right; that they are often constrained to speak well of the life of Christians, and to commend it; it is true that they are constrained to respect a person who is a sincere Christian, and that they often put confidence in such a person; and it is true also that they often speak with respect of them when they are dead; but the life of an humble, devoted, and zealous Christian they do not love." "It is contrary to their views of life." "And especially if a Christian so lives and acts as to reprove them either by his words or by his life; or if a Christian makes his religion so prominent as to interfere with their pursuits or pleasures, they do not love it."

“It follows from this: That a Christian is not to expect to please people. He must not be disappointed, therefore, if he does not. His Master did not please the world; and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.” (Matthew 10: 25) “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” “It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.”

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – Paul would not be seeking to please men, by in any way compromising the message of the gospel with any of man’s suppose wisdom.**

Verse 11 says “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.” “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The gospel of our salvation is not according to man. It is not the gospel according to any preacher; nor is it of any private Christian’s interpretation. Listen to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1: 18-25 – “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” “For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ “Where is the wise?” “Where is the scribe?” “Where is the disputer of this age?” “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through (its) wisdom did not (come to) know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

This is what we must remember as Christians; our gospel was not made up by any man, but it was delivered by Christ to His Apostles, and to Paul by means of direct revelation. In the wisdom of God, He foreknew and foresaw that men could not and would not come to know Him through their own wisdom; through their debating and disputing with each other about what was true, as those in Athens tried to do. Let us remember this as Christians who would be faithful to Christ and to the gospel. No person is ever saved through man’s wisdom. They are saved when their mind and heart is opened to the truth of what Christ has done for them, to redeem them, to buy them back from their sin. This we declare to men; we do not simply reason with them.

Yes, it is true that Paul reasoned in the marketplace and in the synagogues, but it was not apologetics as we know it today. That is profitable in its place, but it says in Acts 17: 2-4 that he was explaining and demonstrating from the Scriptures that Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” “And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. You see, Paul knew, and you and I should understand that salvation from sin and the power to live a life pleasing to God , does not come by any of man’s self-wisdom or their own perceptions of what God is like, or what He will accept, as the unbelieving Jews foolishly thought. They asked for a sign and Jesus gave it to them.

Matthew 12: 39 – “But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’ “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” They thought this sign foolishness. The Jews request a sign and the Greeks seek for wisdom among themselves, but we preach Christ crucified, which is the power of God unto salvation. Paul knew that the gospel did not need to be debated, so much as it needed to be declared, for it was from God, and not from men. Let us remember this, and not be afraid to debate, but let us never be ashamed to declare that there is only one way of salvation, and that is by faith in Christ.