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Text: Galatians 1:1-5

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: In order to understand Paul's introductions in his epistles, we need to identify the core elements so that we can see how a specific introduction is unique. Here is Paul's core introduction:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints at _____ who are in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God for you, praying always for you.

- I) Stop placing authority on man's words (1-5; cf. 7).
 - A. Paul's authority did not come from man but from God (1-2a; cf. 11-12).
 1. Paul excludes any human source for his Apostleship. He leaves no wiggle room. His authority came *through* Jesus Christ (cf. 12) and God the Father who raised Him from the dead.
 2. Paul likely includes a statement about the risen Lord because an Apostle had to see the risen Lord (Acts 1:22; cf. 1 Cor. 9:1)
 3. Even though Paul's authority came from God, all those who were with him recognized his Apostleship (2; cf. Acts 13:1-3). Typically, Paul includes Timothy (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Phil. 1:1), Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), or Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1), but for this epistle he includes all those who are with him.
 - B. God should get all the glory in rescuing sinners (3-5).
 1. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit, but were now relying on the works of the flesh (3:3). Any time we rely on the works of the flesh, we get the glory (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). But the Gospel is all about God's glory.
 2. Christ gave Himself for our sins. But how? By bearing our sins on the cross in His own body (1 Pet. 2:24). Christ died to sin (Rom. 6:10). And since we are united with Him in death (Rom. 6:8), we died to sin (Rom. 6:2).
 3. Christ did this so that He might rescue us. The word "rescue" is used to describe God's supernatural act of rescuing His people from various trials (Dan. 3:15; Acts 7:10, 34; Acts 12:11). In this passage we are rescued from this present evil age.

4. What is this present evil age? It is clearly referring to the age where Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19). Paul tells the Galatians that this is a “present” age. The Galatians are currently living in this age. But there is an age to come where God shows His kindness toward us who are in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:7).

Conclusion: In Paul’s introduction to this letter, he does not include 2 statements that are found in almost every other epistle. First, there is no mention of being “in Christ.” Secondly, Paul does not mention giving thanks or praying for these people. Why does Paul omit these statements? Even though Paul includes the typical “grace to you and peace from God our Father,” there does seem to be a concern that these Galatians are in Christ. In fact, he says that they deserted Christ for a different Gospel. There is a real danger of placing authority on man’s words.

Text: Galatians 1:6-10

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

- I) Stop placing authority on man’s words (6-10).
 - A. Why would anyone abandon the Good News that justification is by faith and not by works (6-7a; cf. 3:1-5)?
 1. Paul is genuinely amazed (6). This word is often used in the gospels to refer to a response from a supernatural healing (cf. Matt. 15:31; Mark 5:20).
 2. Specifically, he is amazed at how *quickly* they abandoned the grace of Christ for a different Gospel (6) which is not a Gospel at all (7). Paul is likely referring to the time between his initial visit (47AD) and the writing of this letter (48AD).
 3. This problem of abandoning God for a false god is often repeated throughout scripture (cf. Exod. 32:8; Judges 2:17). Even Peter forsakes Jesus hours after stating that he will die for Him (John 13:37-38; 18:25-27).
 4. In Galatians they seem to be in the process of abandoning Christ (“deserting” is in the present tense). By the end of this book he appeals to them to walk by the rule of faith (Gal. 6:15-16).
 - B. If anyone’s gospel does not match the gospel given by the Apostles, then that

person is accursed (7b-9).

1. At this point in the epistle, Paul has not explained the difference between his gospel and the distorted gospel—justification by faith apart from works. Yet, in the introduction he has repeatedly warned them about placing authority on man’s words (1, 7-9).
 2. How would you know if someone is altering the gospel? For those in the churches of Galatia, the Gospel was severely distorted. The word for “distort” is often referring to significant changes (cf. Acts 2:20; Ps. 66:6; 105:29; Deut. 23:5).
 3. The author of Hebrews tells us that the only way to have our senses trained to discern between good and evil is to listen carefully to God’s word (cf. Heb. 5:11-14). One of our struggles is that we have become dull hearers. Because we are dull hearers, when we hear a false gospel that seems attractive to us, we quickly accept it.
 4. What if the message preached comes from a trustworthy source? Paul is abundantly clear on this point. Even if he, or an angel, came and preached a gospel that is contrary to the authentic gospel, that person is to be accursed.
 5. Is Paul overstating the case? No! In fact, he restates his point. Anyone who preaches a gospel contrary to what was already preached—let him be accursed.
- C. You either please God or man (10; cf. John 12:42-43).
1. Paul was probably being criticized for having Timothy circumcised while preaching that circumcision is not necessary (Gal. 5:11; cf. Acts 16:3). Paul would simply have to preach circumcision in order to please man.

Text: Galatians 1:11-24

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: Although this section in Galatians (11-24) gives Paul’s biography, the purpose of this section is to prove that this Gospel came from God and not from man (1). Paul’s biography is simply proof that the message came from God and not from man.

I) Stop placing authority on man’s words (11-17).

- A. Paul’s message did not come from man (11-12).
 1. What does Paul mean when he says that the message was not according to man (11)? He answers his own question in the next verse (12). He did not receive it

from man, nor was he taught it by man.

2. Instead, the message came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is possible to interpret this phrase as either “Jesus Christ revealed the Gospel to Paul” or “God revealed Jesus Christ to Paul.” Although, Jesus Christ did reveal Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-5), the context clarifies that God revealed His Son to Paul (16).
- B. Paul’s sharp contrast in his own life proves that His message was from God (13-16a).
1. Everyone had heard of Paul’s former life. His goal was to destroy the church of God (13). In fact, Paul was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” up to his conversion (Acts 9:1). The only way to explain Paul’s radical transformation is that His message came from God.
 2. Even Paul’s zeal for upholding the traditions of Judaism was unparalleled (14). Paul was not simply an angry man (13), but rather a deeply pious man (14; cf. Phil. 3:4-6).
 3. Even among the disciples, there was significant doubt that Paul was genuine (cf. Acts 9:26-27). It must have felt like a trap. But instead of a trap, Paul was genuinely transformed.
 4. Paul’s former lifestyle radically changed when God revealed His Son to Paul (15-16). In fact, everyone in the churches was talking about this radical transformation (23). Instead of destroying the faith, Paul was preaching the faith.
 5. Paul’s radical transformation caused the believers to glorify God (24). The Gospel truly is the power of God for salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16).
- C. Paul’s lack of interaction with the other Apostles proves that his message was from God (16b-24).
1. It would have been natural for Paul to go up to Jerusalem in order to receive support from the Apostles (17), but instead he went to Arabia for three years (18). Only then did he become briefly acquainted with Peter and James (18-19). Even after this short trip, he was still unknown to the churches of Judea (22).
 2. Those who were distorting the Gospel (7) would likely accuse Paul of lying about his lack of interaction with the other Apostles. Hence, Paul emphatically asserts that he is telling the truth about these events (20).

Text: Galatians 2:1-5

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 either refers to Paul's famine relief visit (Acts 11:27-30; AD 44-46) or the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; AD 50). It's likely that this visit refers to the famine relief visit for 2 reasons. First, it seems unlikely that Paul would not have mentioned the famine relief visit (1:20). Secondly, the Gal. 2 visit was stirred up by a revelation (cf. Acts 11:28; contra Acts 15:2).

I) Stop placing authority on man's words (1-5).

Explanation: In these first 2 chapters, Paul is addressing a primary problem that the Galatians were having. They were placing authority on man's words (1:7). In finding the main point of a passage, we must ask what the author intended the reader to get. Paul's biography was meant to stir up the Galatians to stop placing authority on man's words.

A. Those who distort the Gospel often add requirements that serve as a yoke of bondage (1-5).

1. Unlike those who were distorting the Gospel, Paul was willing to have his message confirmed by the Apostles (2). In contrast, the false brethren could not give a compelling reason to Titus (3).
2. Even though the false brethren in Jerusalem are not connected to the situation in Galatia, their premise is the same (4-5). These false brethren were attempting to put Titus under a yoke of bondage by requiring him to be circumcised. This seems to be the same topic that those who were distorting the Gospel in Galatia brought up (cf. 5:1-4).
3. Throughout scripture these false teachers slip into the church and stir up issues (4; cf. Acts 15:1, 5; 2 Timothy 3:6-9; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4). Let us be on the lookout.
4. What liberty is Paul talking about (4)? These false brethren were attempting to bring Titus into bondage by requiring him to be circumcised. Circumcision is clearly a conscience issue. A few years after this incident, Timothy would be circumcised (Acts 16:2). So, why is Titus left uncircumcised? In part, to show that circumcision was a conscience issue.

Explanation: Paul, in Romans 14 lays out the way in which we ought to work with other believers over conscience related issues. We ought to *accept* the one who is weak in faith because God has accepted him (14:1, 3). Within the local church, there

will be some whose conscience allows them to drink alcohol, so long as they do not get drunk. While others, who are weak in faith, cannot drink any without going against their conscience. Those whose conscience allows them to drink alcohol in moderation should be careful not to cause the weak in faith to stumble (13) and go against their conscience.

- B. Those who distort the Gospel often spy out the liberties of other believers (4).
 1. This passage leaves us wondering how these false brethren sneaked in and spied out that Titus was uncircumcised. Regardless of their method, false brethren look for ways to stir up controversy and cause unnecessary divisions within the church.

Text: Galatians 2:6-10

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: Why does Paul include all this biographical information? He was likely being accused by those who were distorting the Gospel (1:7) that his message was not the same as the other Apostles. Unfortunately, these distorters were causing some of the other Galatian believers to accept a Law based Gospel (1:8; 5:2-4).

- I) Stop placing authority on man's words (6-10).
 - A. Stop placing authority on man's words because God does not make a distinction (6).
 1. Even though Paul was meeting with the "pillars" he didn't view them any differently (6). Was Paul wrong for not making a distinction, even though these pillars were Apostles? No, in fact, God does not make distinctions (6).
 2. The closest parallel in our day is how some people treat the church confessional statements. Like the Apostles in Paul's day, the church confessions are like pillars. But we have gone too far when we place as much weight on the confessions as we do on the Scriptures.
 3. We also make distinctions based on the speaking ability of the preacher. Certainly, it is easier to listen to a dynamic speaker, but we should remember that Paul was not a gifted orator. In fact, his preaching was not with persuasive words, but instead it was a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit so that their faith would rest on God and not man (2 Cor. 2:1-5).
 - B. Even though the distorters in Galatia rejected Paul's message, his message was

authentic (7-9).

1. We often place authority on people who end up being completely wrong. In Galatia, these distorters were wrong. Yet, they led many astray.
2. In contrast, Peter, James, and John recognized that God had entrusted Paul with the Gospel (7) and given him grace to preach to the Gentiles (9). In fact, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul (9).
3. Specifically, the Apostles recognized that God had granted Paul unique gifting to preach the Gospel to the nations, while God had called them to preach to the Israelites.

II) An authentic message ought to be marked by an authentic life (10).

- A. After the Apostles approved Paul's message, they encouraged him to serve the poor which he was eager to do (10).
1. Why do the Apostles mention helping the poor? It seems almost tacked on to the topic. But remember, it is James who records that true religion is to help the widows and orphans (James 1:27). Not only were the orphans and the widows poor, but they also had no means to help in return.
 2. We ought to be careful to live out the Gospel, as well as preach the Gospel to our neighbors. Let's not let our actions negate the message. This is especially true for us as parents.

Text: Galatians 2:11-14

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: Why does Paul continue giving biographical information? He has already proven that his message is authentic (1:11-2:10). He seems to be using his biography to point out the common problem that the churches in Galatia were facing (1:7; cf. 5:13, 15). They had been taught justification by faith alone, but had quickly deserted that truth (1:6). Their struggle was no different than the struggle that all of us face, including Peter.

- I) Even though you are convinced that justification is by faith alone, you must live out your belief (11-14).
- A. Even though you believe in justification by faith alone, it is easy to fall into hypocrisy (11-14).
1. Although some of the details are hard to work out (i.e. were "the rest of the

Jews” believers or just Jewish; 13), the main point is clear. Peter was eating with the Gentiles, but when there was pressure from certain Jews Peter quickly withdrew from the Gentiles (12). Peter was acting in hypocrisy (13).

2. Hypocrisy is saying or doing one thing outwardly, but inwardly thinking another (14; cf. Mark 7:6).
 3. Peter’s hypocrisy caused Barnabas to be carried away into the same hypocrisy (13). This is exactly what was happening in Galatia. Those who were distorting the Gospel in Galatia were causing others to follow in the same way (cf. circumcision; 5:3).
- B. We often fail to live out justification by faith alone because of the fear of man (12).
1. The fear of man (12) is similar to the phrase “seeking to please men” (1:10). It would have been easy for Paul to preach what the Galatians wanted to hear (1:8). Instead, though, he recognized that he could not please God and man (1:10).
 2. King Saul struggled with the fear of man (1 Sam 15:18-20, 24, 30). In fact, even after Samuel told him that God was going to rip the kingdom from his hand, he still wanted Samuel to come back with him so that the elders would think that everything was ok.
 3. The fear of man causes us to completely disregard God’s Word.
- C. What does it look like to fail to live in the truth of the Gospel(14)?
1. First, we must ask what it was for Peter to not live out the truth of the Gospel. Instead of eating with both Jews and Gentiles, Peter withdrew himself and only ate with Jews. Essentially, Peter was making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Peter was viewing the Gentiles as inferior.
 2. Peter was living like a Gentile or like the world. It’s not uncommon for the world to view some people as better than others. But for Christians, we are all on the same footing. We have all been made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ. We were all dead in our sins and needing to be brought to life (Eph. 2). When we view other Christians as inferior, we are failing to live out the truth of the Gospel.

Text: Galatians 2:15-18

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: Justification or righteousness comes up repeatedly throughout the book of Galatians, but what does it mean? Justification is a legal term that means to declare someone to be righteous. Justification is often used in contrast to the works of the Law (2:16). Two arguments for a legal meaning for justification are (1) the Old Testament word for justify often means to declare righteous in a legal sense (cf. Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15). (2) Paul often uses this term to refer to the legal sense of declaring someone to be righteous (Rom. 8:33-34).

- I) If your righteousness comes from Christ, then your good works cannot justify you (15-18).
 - A. Even those who obey the Law (Torah) must be justified by faith in Christ (15-16).
 1. Even though Paul and the other Jews were careful to obey the Law (Torah) prior to conversion, yet they were still sinners (15). It would have been natural for these Jewish people (including Peter) to view themselves as less sinful than these Gentiles. Yet, justification has nothing to do with your own righteousness (16; cf. Rom. 1:28-2:1; Rom. 2:17).
 2. No one has ever been justified by the works of the Law. Even Abraham was justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (cf. Rom. 4:2-3, 9-10).
 3. The works of the Law can never justify a person because even our “good works” prior to salvation are tainted with our sin nature (cf. Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:10).
 4. What is faith in Christ (16)? Although the phrase itself could refer to the faithfulness of Christ, the context specifies that it is belief in Christ (16).
 - B. If righteousness comes by faith in Christ, then is Christ a servant of sin (17-18)?
 1. Paul’s conclusion in verse 17 is clear—“is Christ a servant of sin?”. But how does Paul assume the reader will get to that conclusion based on the first two phrases. He is likely giving a rebuttal to an accusation that he is being accused of. The distorters in Galatia were probably accusing Paul of making Christ a servant of sin because Christ justifies people who, according to Paul’s Gospel, were recognizing at the time of their own justification that they were sinners.
 2. So what is Paul saying in verse 17? He is saying that when a person seeks to be justified by faith in Christ (and not by the works of the Law), then he will realize that he is a sinner (17). In fact, the only way to come to Christ is to realize that you are a sinner (cf. Rom. 3:23). So, since Christ justifies guilty sinners, then doesn’t that make Christ a servant of sin (i.e. a judge who justifies a guilty person is a bad judge; cf. Rom. 3:26)? No! It only demonstrates that the payment has already been made (cf. 21).

3. Christ is not a servant of sin because He justifies people based on faith and not works. On the contrary, those who go back to the requirements of the Law are the transgressors of the Law because they could never fulfill the requirements of the Law (18).

Conclusion: Even though Peter knew that justification was by faith and not by works, he quickly deserted it. He stopped eating with the Gentiles and only ate with the Jews (12). We are not much different. We tend to view people differently based on how they look outwardly. When we view people with distinctions, we are not living in the reality of justification by faith alone.

Text: Galatians 2:19-21

Theme: Justification is by faith apart from the works of the Law.

Introduction: In our text, Paul makes a stunning contrast—"I died to the Law so that I might live to God" (19). Paul is identifying a problem with the Jewish community that came to Antioch and influenced Peter to withdraw from the Gentiles (12) and the distorters in Galatia who were requiring circumcision (1:7; cf. 5:2). Until we correctly understand our relationship to the Law, we will continue to struggle with the same form of legalism that was prevalent in Galatia.

- I) I died to the Law because I am crucified with Christ (19-21; cf. Rom. 7:4).
 - A. I died to the Law so that I might live to God (19-20).
 1. What does Paul mean when he says that he died to the Law? The Law brings a curse to everyone who is under the Law (3:10). But Christ bore the curse of the Law, which is death, by hanging on a pole (3:13).
 2. So, in what sense was our death to the Law "through the Law"? We, like Christ were born "under the Law" (Gal. 4:4-5). Therefore, Christ, who was born "under the Law" was able to free us by taking the curse of the Law on our behalf (Gal. 3:13). Specifically, we died to the Law through the body of Christ because of His death on the cross (Rom. 7:4).
 3. The result of dying to the Law is not lawlessness, but rather, living to God (19-20). So, instead of obeying God out of obligation, we now obey God because He loves us and gave Himself for us (20).
 4. Paul further illustrates our relationship to the Law in Romans 7:1-3 by the marriage relationship. The woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives (7:2). But when the spouse dies, she is released from the marriage covenant

(7:2). In a similar way, we are released from the Law at the death of Christ (7:4-6) because we are united with Him.

- B. When you continue to cling to the Law, you are saying that Christ's death was not necessary (21)
1. Calvin put it this way, "If we do not renounce all other hopes, and embrace Christ alone, we reject the grace of God.
 2. Justification by faith alone often leads to one of two ditches. It often leads to lawlessness or legalism. In fact, when Paul explains the doctrine of justification in Romans 4-5, he follows it up with this question, "should we continue in sin" (Rom. 6:1). Then, he follows that chapter up with our relationship to the Law (Rom. 7). If you cannot see both ditches from where your standing, you're likely in one of those ditches.

Conclusion: Can you say with the Apostle Paul that you died to the Law? Now, for most of us, the Law was not a big part of our life prior to salvation. Our problem is that after salvation, instead of believing in the finished work of Christ for salvation, we cling to our own obedience to God's commands for our salvation. Let us cling to Christ alone.