

# The Gospel is of God

December 5th, 2010 ~ Galatians 1.11-24

The Gospel is of **God** / **not Man** ~ i.e., *“It is supernatural!”*

- Read **v11 and 12** and state the sermon title
- Vss **13 to 24** make his argument

## 3 Points before Main Point

1. In **verse 11** Paul calls them **brethren**
  - He had started this letter with a rebuke
  - He now softens his tone ~ referring to them in familial terms
2. Let's remember **verse 10** too ~ Paul stated that he is **not** a man pleaser
  - Judaizers accused him of preaching an easy grace to gain influence
    - Mainstay of the emerging church movement ~ **no negatives**
  - Two types of failures are common: 1) **legalism** and 2) **licentiousness**
    - Jesus spoke of the wide gate and broad way (*these are on it*)
    - But avoiding these 2 errors puts you on the narrow path
3. Let's address one more question in some depth before we go on...
  - *“Why were the Galatians so easily led astray?”*

## Appeals to our intuitive sense of Responsibility, Justice, and Earned Merit

- The Judaizers convinced the Galatians that salvation wasn't so easy
- People usually believe they must work for what they want
  - TANSTAAFL ~ *“There ain't no such thing as a free lunch”*
  - Paul said, *“If a man does not work neither shall he eat...”* ~ **2 Thes 3.10**
  - All of Proverbs preaches this ~ against sloth – for industry
- !!!: Malaysian real estate developer ~ (*from vacation resort to cart vendor*)
  - Americans love underdogs ~ *‘tilting at windmills’*
    - But there's a fine line between a **proud warrior** and a **sad loser**
- !!!: People see salvation as a very large, but finite number of stairs to climb
  - People start at diff points, they're at diff points, and they end at diff points
  - Man is forever climbing to be 1 step closer to God ~ 1 step more worthy
  - The Tower of Babel is man's attempt to reach God on his own terms
- Mormon woman's perspective ~ *“Evangelical Christians are **not** mainstream Christians. They do **not** believe that you are saved through your works while on earth, but simply by asking Jesus to be your personal savior.”* ~ from Ellison survey

Xition: But God's *“good news”* emphasizes the impotence of man . . .

## Man's Methods of Salvation do not lead to Humility – but to Pride

- They all hold out hope that effort pays dividends
- They all hold the grace of God hostage to the **action / inaction** of the penitent
- They lower the bar of righteousness to compensate for the guilt of failure
- Let's look at the 7 sacraments current in Roman Catholicism (700 years)
  - There were once more: holy relics, prayer to saints, holy water, crusades
  - Protestants Catholics views of grace differ: saving vs. sanctifying

## 7 Sacraments of Roman Catholicism

1. Baptism ~ Removes all original sin and personal sin at that moment
  - Performed upon infants ~ Long ago **waited** until they were old
  - But the Church said those that **die unbaptized are unsaved**
2. Confirmation ~ It perfects baptism ~ **binds one to the Church more deeply**
  - Long ago this was not done much because it required a bishop
3. Communion ~ *mass* ~ Eating and drinking real body and blood of Christ
  - Required only once per year, but greater frequency advocated
  - Long ago commoners **could only eat body** ~ not drink blood ~ fear of spills
4. Confession ~ 3 things 1) contrition, 2) confession, 3) penance
  - Results in forgiveness after penance is performed
  - Only *required* when **mortal** sin is committed ~ opposed to **venial**
  - Mortal sin **empties you of sanctifying grace** and past supernatural merits
  - Encouraged monthly ~ especially during Lent
5. Marriage ~ union between man and woman for love and procreation
  - Results in an **increase in sanctifying grace** for the spouses
6. Ordination ~ the continuation of Christ's priesthood
  - 3 levels ~ each confers special graces (*in place of marriage*)
7. Extreme Unction ~ "Last Rites" or "Anointing of the Sick"
  - Remission of sins and spiritual strength ~ now may be performed many times

## Roman Catholicism is a pragmatic religion

- If something isn't working, if there's a **loophole**, the church just closes it
- !!!: Baptism as the nuclear weapon in war against sin (*house afire*)
- Two weaknesses of last rites
  - If priest missed your death it was too late
  - If you lived beyond that time you couldn't do it again
- This has a strong appeal in America ~ we're pragmatists
  - Cults: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science

Xition: [Let's return to Paul's main Point . . .](#)

## The Gospel was God's Idea ~ Not Man's

- Reread verses 11 to 12
- Note Paul's use of the word "me"
  - He wants them to remember his presence with them
  - Forgetfulness is common to all mankind
  - Yet when memories come back they bring with them more memories
- Paul did not receive the gospel from man nor was he taught it
  - He's using taught in the traditional sense
  - **He learned it**, but in non-traditional sense ~ direct revelation from Christ

## Paul Presents 5 Proofs of his Apostleship

- He presents these only to defend the gospel ~ not himself
  1. He went from persecuting the church to preaching in it
  2. He abandoned a very bright future as a Pharisee
  3. He went out alone ~ without ordination from other Apostles
  4. He only met Peter (*the lead Apostle*) and James after 3 years
  5. He (*and his message*) were accepted by the Judean Churches

## Proof #1: From Persecutor to Preacher (v13)

- "*beyond measure*" beyond all bounds
  - **Acts 7.58** ~ cast Stephen out and stoned him (clothes at feet)
  - **Acts 9.1** ~ "*breathing threats and murder against the disciples*"
  - **Acts 9.1-2** ~ "*went to the HP and asked letters*"
  - **Acts 22.4** ~ "*persecuted this Way to the death*"
  - **Acts 26.10** ~ "*I shut saints up in prison .. voted for their deaths*"
  - **Acts 26.11** ~ "*I punished them .. and compelled them to blaspheme*"
- **v13** ~ "*I persecuted the church .. and tried to destroy it*"
  - **Gamaliel** in **Acts 5.34ff** advised that Christians be left alone
  - Saul disagreed with this advice ~ he broke with his teacher
  - **III: The Persecutor**: Story of **Sergei Kourdakov**
    - Russian officer led raids to break up religious meetings in 60's
    - Witnessed to by young woman (**Natasha**) ~ Couldn't hit older female
- "*How much more can one person oppose something?*"
- But perhaps young people (Saul maybe 30) can be too easily swayed
  - Perhaps he came under the influence under of some radicals
  - **Somali** youth from **Minneapolis** returned to Somalia (3 killed in 2009)
  - **Somali**-born naturalized citizen arrested in **Oregon** last week

Xition: The next point addresses this concern...

## Proof #2: Abandoned Promising Future as Pharisee (v14)

- Some of the young **Minnesota** men had bright futures
  - But they had nothing that filled them with passion like Saul did
  - A good education and prospects for a career in USA was not enough
- Saul was an ambitious man well on his way to being a huge success
  - His religious zeal drove him ~ **Read verse 14**
  - “advanced” ~ **clearing a path, chopping ahead** (*ambition*)
    - III: Miss Stabengrab from Melodrama at Mahoney
  - He was not 20 ~ He was closer to 30
  - Saul had a lot to lose by switching allegiances
  - He was from Tarsus (*not a local*) but held in higher esteem than locals
- He had a lot to lose, a lot more than these young **Minnesota** men
- A man would not do this without very good reason

## Proof #3: Went out without ordination by other Apostles (v16b-17)

- All authority is the Lord’s ~ **Rom 13.1** ~ “no authority except from God”
- God has appointed authorities to exercise power on the earth
  - 3 spheres of government 1) **family**, 2) **civil** and 3) **ecclesiastical**
  - Paul declares that he has “*color of authority*” to do what he’s done
    - This phrase describes the legitimacy of an authority
  - In **2 Cor 10.8, 13-16** ~ authority given him by God extended far
- **v17** ~ “went to **Arabia**, and returned again to Damascus”
  - Paul did not write an autobiography
  - Nor did Luke write a biography of Paul in **Acts**
    - Not that one wouldn’t have been riveting
  - But the Bible contains what God wanted – no more/no less
- Paul’s 3 years in Arabia are not spoken of in Acts
  - They must occur between **Acts 9.19** and **20**

## Proof #4: Met Peter and James after 3 years (v18-19)

- Not only was Paul not commissioned by Peter and the others...
- He didn’t even meet any of them for over 3 years...
- In other words, he didn’t know them
- And her certainly didn’t seek their permission or approval

Xition: And the 5<sup>th</sup> and last proof Paul offers . . .

## Proof #5: Acceptance by Judean Churches (v22-24)

- Regardless of what is said of someone, or what someone says of themselves
  - The truth is in the fruit...
  - The Judean churches ultimately accepted Paul because of his conduct
- Also, if he had been commissioned from Jerusalem, they'd have known him

## "Why did Paul give these Proofs?"

- Paul shared these proofs to point the Galatians back to the truth
  - The Judaizers had accused him of being a licentious man pleaser
- But he reminded the Galatians who he was
- And how he came to be who he was
  - His service to Jesus is rational given the experiences he's shared
  - He presents this information so they can trust him
  - He wants to engage them and he does so personally

## Our Purpose for Sharing

- *Have you ever shared your testimony of faith?*
  - When you share, try to do so with this purpose in mind
  - Convey to your listener the supernatural nature of the gospel
  - Christ's humiliating death leading to our humbling salvation
- Witnessing conversations can easily get off track
  - Let's learn from Paul's example
  - He marshaled his arguments and conveyed them carefully / prayerfully

## Is our faith in Jesus or in our "good behavior"?

- The gospel message is simple, too simple for many
- **Many scriptural commands have nothing to do with salvation**
  - "pray without ceasing"
  - "stand fast in the Lord"
  - "be anxious for nothing"
  - "the things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do"
  - "put to death your members which are on the earth"
- These are commands to faithful children ~ **not** a means to obtain faith . . .
- Such pursuits can **strengthen** our faith . . .
- But they do not **earn** us our faith . . .

Xition: "What is your personal testimony?"

## Sharing Personal Testimonies is Good

- A strong argument in support of the Gospel is a personal testimony
  - Paul shared his several times in Acts and in his own letters
- III: The Fruit of Faith
  - **Rev. H.P. Hughes** street preacher and head of a rescue mission in London
  - **Charles Bradlaugh** an atheist (*infidel*)
  - At an open air meeting **Bradlaugh** challenged **Hughes** to a debate
  - The preacher accepted with one condition
    - **Hughes** would bring 100 people whose lives were transformed by Christ
      - drunks, prostitutes, thieves, convicts, etc...
      - **Bradlaw** could question them about their transformation
    - He invited **Bradlaugh** to do the same
      - Bring 100 people whose lives are better due to their lack of faith
      - **Bradlaugh** did not accept on those conditions
      - “Why?” ~ Because he had no one to bring
- **Read John 1.1-2, 11-13**

## Let's Pray

### ***Glory to God***

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present *you* faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise,  
*Be* glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever.  
Amen.