

"An Introductory Apostolic Rumble Strip"

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[0:00] There is this strip along I-65 between Indy and Chicago. Maybe you've driven it. When you're driving along, if you're in the right lane, there is the emergency lane and there is this rumble strip.

Maybe you notice the title of the sermon, an introductory apostolic rumble strip. That's what Galatians 1-9 is.

A rumble strip is to snap you out of it when you're drifting on a road like I-65. If your tires come and hit that rumble strip, which is these slats built into the road, it's going to get loud and it's going to get rumbly really quick.

Not only do you hear it, you feel it. A rumble strip is a built-in warning system that you're leaving the safety of a roadway and that you're approaching danger.

These verses at the beginning of Galatians is an apostolic rumble strip for Christians. You can sum up these verses like this.

[1:13] There is only one true gospel through which God delivers sinners from beginning to end. And we must not turn from it.

There's only one gospel through which God delivers sinners from beginning to end and we must not turn from it. There's a lot of other false gospels out there.

A lot of people proclaiming man-centered ways with false hopes of self-salvation, but not the one true gospel. These false gospels distort the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A distorted gospel is no gospel at all. It doesn't free, it only enslaves. In Galatians 1, 1-9, we're going to see a progression.

The apostle Paul in verses 1-2, he introduces himself with that word apostle. We're going to key on that. And then from there, he is going to move from introducing himself, God's gospel man, to God's gospel message.

[2:24] In verses 3, 4, and 5, he lays out for us the gospel, the details of it. And then from gospel, he moves to warning, the rumble strip.

And that's in verses 6-9, and that's where you see him say, I am astonished. And then he wraps up twice saying, let him be accursed, let him be accursed.

God damn him, is what he's saying. Strong language. It's an apostolic rumble strip. All this movement, these three moves, are making a claim.

There is only one gospel that delivers sinners from beginning to end, and we must not turn from us. Here's what I'm going after this morning.

My aim is that by the end of this sermon, you will be leaving with this sense of, this sense of weight, because we have an apostle writing to us. Not only just that, the sense of worthy.

[3:27] worthy, worthy, is this God who has called us by his grace, and then warning. The stakes are high. When the apostle says, God damn him, that's getting at something very serious.

So let's turn to verses 1 and 2. The apostle Paul introduces himself. Paul, an apostle.

Who is this gospel man? Well, from the very get-go, why Paul is raising this word apostle is that he's wanting to make sure the Galatian Christians understand what he means by the word apostle. In a general sense, apostle means a sent out one. So for example, Jenny says, Mike, hey Mike, I'm sending you to festival to get some toilet paper. I am the apostle of my lady.

Sent forth on a mission. And what you see in the New Testament, what matters for an apostle is who sends you.

[4:43] And so, we see that played out at the very beginning. Paul, an apostle, not from man, nor through man. It didn't, my apostleship didn't

originate with men, nor was there some kind of ordination council where the group of men laid hands on me saying that I'm apostle.

My apostleship does not come from men. I was not sent from just an ordinary man. He goes on to say, but through Jesus Christ, I'm an apostle through Jesus Christ in God the Father who raised him from the dead.

When you hear raised him from the dead, that is like game changer, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It changes everything. And this God who raised Jesus from the dead through Christ commissioned Paul as an apostle.

Sent him out. And you can read that in Acts chapter 9. Paul's on his way to Damascus. He's going to Damascus to persecute the church and Jesus totally flips him by his grace, converted, commissioned to be a proclaimer of Jesus to build the church.

Flipped by the risen Christ. Sent out as an apostle. You can talk about the word apostle in the New Testament along these lines.

[6:05] There's two ways the word apostle gets used. There's the small a apostle, which is like Barnabas in Acts 13 who was sent out by the church of Antioch.

That's a small a apostle. It's kind of like missionaries today. But the capital a apostle are those men who were sent out commissioned by Jesus himself.

And Paul is claiming to be a capital a apostle here in verse 1 of Galatians. He's clearly establishing his apostolic authority.

Let me try to illustrate this. My wife and I enjoy watching a crime and police show called Blue Bloods. And one of the main characters is a detective, this hothead named Danny Reagan.

And when Danny Reagan shows up to an apartment in the Bronx or in Queens or in Manhattan, he knocks on the door and when somebody looks through the door to see who he is, you know what they're looking at?

[7:12] They're looking at his gold detective badge. Legit. He's there on official New York City police business.

With the word apostle, Paul is telling the Galatians, these churches in Galatians, he is writing on official Jesus church building business.

And they must heed what he is about to say about the gospel. So when we read these, this first verse, Paul an apostle, not from man, but through Jesus, we've got to realize what he's saying.

This is being written by a capital A apostle. It's as authoritative today in the 21st century as it was then in the first century.

So not only were the Galatians and the Galatian churches to heed what the apostle was saying, we must heed what the apostle is about to tell us.

[8:19] In Acts 2.32, the early Christians, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. So must we. Paul is writing as Christ's apostolic spokesman.

He is God's gospel man and we are to heed what he's about to say. We're to feel the weight of what he's about to say. And here's what he's going to tell us.

There's only one gospel by which God delivers sinners from beginning to end and we must not turn from it. Which brings us to verses 3-5.

God's gospel message. Paul has moved from introducing himself in verse 1 to the gospel itself in verses 3-5. And there's a connection. When Jesus sent Paul out as an apostle, he didn't send him out to go to festival foods.

He sent him out to proclaim a message. The message of a crucified Messiah raised from the dead who delivers sinners from beginning to end.

[9:41] And so now this apostle is basically saying to these churches, Okay gang, let's, just hear me out. Let's get on the same page. I want to be clear on what the gospel is before we start talking about what the gospel isn't.

And in verse 3, Paul speaks these words of blessing to the Galatians. He says, Grace to you in peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't miss the hour. Paul believes that these Christians in these churches are actually believers.

At least most of them. That they have experienced God's grace, responded in faith, but they're being misled.

The hour. But I'm going to show you in a second how verse 3 relates to verses 4 and 5 because it's very important. In verses 4 and 5, Paul actually states the one true gospel.

[10:51] He says, Here it is. And it consists of several things. I'm going to walk you through it so that you understand what the gospel is, so that you understand what the gospel isn't.

It begins with the Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel, this announcement of good news is good news about the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of verse 3.

He is the who of verse 4. The Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel, is not a message about us. It's a message about Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ.

The next thing I want you to notice, the gospel is a message about the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself, verse 4. Now, if you're not familiar with the Bible at all, that little phrase, who gave himself, is a way of talking about Jesus voluntarily giving himself up to die on the cross.

It's shorthand for talking about Jesus' death on the cross. The gospel, the announcing of good news has to do with Jesus who died on a Roman cross, crucified.

[12:00] It is a crazy thought back in the day that the Messiah would be crucified who gave himself. voluntary. And let me point out, it's done.

He gave himself. He died. This is an announcement of something that's happened and it changes everything. So this is a message about Jesus.

It's about his death on the cross. And the next thing we see is that who gave himself for our sins.

Our sins are a way in which we rebel against the triune God of the universe and it carries a capital punishment.

And so what we hear here is this good news about Jesus who gave himself is his death is a for our sins death. Which is another way of talking about substitutionary death.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. sins. The death that we deserved, Jesus died for us so that we could live a life pleasing to God that we were incapable in and of ourselves.

[13:16] This substitutionary death of Christ, it forgives all who receive it by faith. It forgives all of our sin, past, present, future.

It is an amazing, an amazing announcement. what God has done for sinners. Paul keeps on going. This Jesus who died a substitutionary death for our sins forgives us but it's to deliver us.

To deliver us. The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross is not just a model for how we are to live to be nice to people.

The substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross is God's power to rescue sinners. That word deliver literally means to pluck out.

To pull out of a trash can. His death that forgives us also delivers us. Delivers us from what?

[14:33] Well the next phrase from this present evil age. The cross of Jesus Christ powerfully delivers us from the world. This present evil age Paul uses a different word for at the end of the book of Galatians in 6.14 he says far be it for me to boast in anything except in the cross of Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

I've been delivered is what he's saying. The world is organized humanity against God.

This present evil age is organized humanity living against God between Jesus first coming and his second coming. The present evil age. this present evil age proclaims gospels that are man centered that are trying are man made attempts for self salvation.

We've been delivered from that from this present evil age. Paul continues in explaining the gospel. He says all this deliverance is according to the will of our God and Father.

There's the hour again. Our God and our Father. That phrase God and Father shows up multiple times in these just few verses. Our God and Father. Paul is saying I'm part of this too.

[16:04] I am a Jewish apostle sent to the Gentiles but I've been delivered by the cross too out of this present evil age and into the family of God.

When you see that word will according to the will of our God and Father. There should be two words in your head. Sovereign grace. God's sovereign plan that depended on nothing on any of us would

ever do to deliver us from sin and its consequences.

God in an act of his sovereign grace sent his son Jesus to die in your place to pluck you from this present evil age in order to place you by his grace into God's family.

It's good news. Notice it's not by your will God sent Jesus to die for you.

It's according to the will of God our Father in grace God has pursued you brother and sister. It wasn't like he figured out like two years ago that you were a sinner and he's like oh I should do something about that.

[17:27] From before the foundation of the world God in his grace set his love on you and has been pursuing you to pluck you out of the world and place you into his family by his grace.

His sovereign grace. This is a gospel about God about what God has done about what God is doing to rescue to deliver sinners from beginning to end but it doesn't end there in verse 5 the result of this gospel when we receive it by faith because there's nothing that you can do to earn such a gospel are you picking up on that?

This is all God's grace from beginning to end there's nothing it's not like God can I write you a check for what Jesus has done there's none of that the only way to respond is to receive it by faith and the result is this in verse 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever amen gospel results in God's glory the one true gospel culminates in the praise of God not man because God is the one who is acting through the gospel to save we contribute absolutely nothing to God saving us and therefore there's nothing to boast in in and of ourselves our boasting is in the glory of God God we are saying worthy is he who pursued us this way and rescued us this way and delivered us this way worthy is this God and now I want to show you the connection between this gospel in 4 and 5 and what Paul says in verse 3 verse 3 he says grace and peace to you do you see the connection he says grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ gospel ongoing grace ongoing well being is founded on sourced in the gospel we live out the gospel as Christians it's it's not like we graduate from the gospel it's not like the gospel is some kind of kind of little snack before a meal and then you get to the real stuff the gospel is the meal from beginning to end the apostle is clarifying for the Galatians and us what the gospel is what the gospel that the risen Christ entrusted to him to proclaim is it's about Jesus it's about his death on a cross that was a substitute for our sin that plucked us out from the world by God's sovereign grace and placed us in his family all to his glory and it's an ongoing source of grace and peace for those who believe have you heard of the secret service maybe when you hear the secret service you think about people in dark suits protecting the president and limousines little known fact that the secret service was originally founded in 1865 to investigate and suppress the counterfeiting of US currency to this day the secret service is training its agents to detect counterfeit money and they train them by making their agents study the real stuff the thinking is if our agents know with intimate detail the true and genuine real

[21:28] US currency they will be able to detect fraudulent currency by what it's not in Galatians 1 3 through 5 the apostle Paul in all of his risen Christ given authority lays out before us the essential truths that define the one in true gospel to help us see know what the gospel is and to help us to see what false gospels are not there's only one true gospel that delivers us from beginning to end and we must not turn from it I want to take a moment here and just point up a couple things by way of application this gospel that Paul has laid out for us that's the same gospel we preach here at Christ the King Church it's the apostolic gospel it hasn't changed it's the only message that saves sinners from beginning to end and did you notice that he's actually explaining the gospel to

Christians this is a letter to Christians so he's aware that Christians can get confused on what the gospel is this gospel message is for us brothers and sisters not only did we need to hear it to be saved we need to understand it and cling to it to walk in the power of it this true gospel it exposes counterfeit gospels and that's where we go to now God's gospel warning it's the apostolic rumble strip if verses three through five is the gospel way it's the path of God's blessing in Christ that not only gets us on the road but keeps us on the road verses six through nine is a kind of apostolic rumble strip but before we actually get to verses six through nine

I got to point out something that's MIA missing in action if you looked at Ephesians chapter one verse 15 and looked at Colossians 1:3 you would notice that in almost all of Paul's letters to the churches in the New Testament there's always this section on thanksgiving I give thanks for you there's none in Galatians there's none in Galatians because there is a clear and present danger facing the Galatians that Paul must immediately address there is a threat to the gospel and therefore to salvation and so Paul makes a pretty dramatic shift from verse five in which he is saying to whom be the glory of God forever and ever and amen he's like yes yes and then in verse six he goes I am astonished that's a pretty significant change

Paul moves from talking about gospel now to warning about a distortion of the gospel and he's shocked by that so in verse six he starts by saying I am I am astonished that's a strong word I am astonished that you're so quickly deserting him our God and father who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel it would be like this it would be like us saying this I can't believe that you are bailing on our God I am shocked that it's you've so quickly turned away from the one who has moved towards you in grace it's really strong strong language and the question is why what's the intensity all about well first let me help you understand what that word quickly is getting at I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ just a little historical background remember

Paul first showed up in the region of southern Galatia in about 47-48 AD he was making his way through preaching the gospel in like Lystra Derbe Iconium and he was proclaiming that 47-48 AD in AD 50 there was the council of Jerusalem which is this big deal and most scholars believe that this letter was written somewhere in between that because Paul makes no reference to the council of Jerusalem which would have been really helpful in this letter and so what this means is he probably wrote Galatians around 49-50 which means if he was just there in 47-48 we're talking about a year since he was there in one year's time these believers who had received the true one true gospel and had been adopted by God's grace into God's family they're now deserting or being tempted to desert the one who had called him that word deserting is a very strong word it means to turn from one for another it's got this soft idolatry sense to it these

[27:19] Galatian Christians Paul is so concerned he's invested his life he's preached the gospel he's seen many of them respond in faith to God's grace and now it looks like they're deserting the God who saved them Paul's shocked astonished and what we learn is that their deserting of their God our God and Father is also a turning to a different gospel and we learn about what this different gospel is in verse seven not that there is another one but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ whatever these people were the some who were troubling these Galatians whoever they were they were distorting what we just talked about in verses three through five they were trying to tweak it they were trying to revise it they were trying to maybe redefine it a little bit and what

Paul says when you do that it's not a gospel anymore not that there is another one a distorted gospel is no gospel at all a distorted gospel is powerless to save a distorted gospel is powerless to change you a distorted gospel has no provision for ongoing grace and peace a distorted gospel doesn't free it enslaves that's why Paul is so astonished what are you guys thinking why would you turn from this why are you settling for this trash gospel how can you guys so quickly swap out the one true gospel that will alone set you free from beginning to end to live for God why would you ever swap that gospel out for this different gospel that's only going to enslave you shocking now if you're wondering what the different gospel was it was a form of legalism these troublemakers who were teaching in these churches in Galatia they were teaching these new converts these Gentile Christians they were teaching that in order to be in right standing with God which is another word for that is to be justified in order for them to be justified not only do they have to believe in Jesus but in addition to believing in Jesus they had to be circumcised and that they had to abide by Jewish dietary restrictions and that they had to observe Jewish holy days so what they were teaching was Jesus plus your obedience justifies you before God and Paul's like that's not the gospel it's only going to enslave you they were adding to the gospel of grace and when you add obedience to the gospel of grace you de-grace the gospel it's no longer the gospel distortions of the gospel take the form of adding legalism to the gospel but they it also takes the form of detracting from the gospel

maybe you know of

Thomas Jefferson's bible Thomas Jefferson one of my founding fathers he got a copy of the new testament and what he did is he took a sharp scalpel like instrument and cut out all references to anything miraculous because of his enlightened mind he cut out all kind of references to the miraculous culminating and cutting out the resurrection of Jesus Christ it's a false gospel it's a man centered gospel so distortions of the gospel take the form of adding to it and distracting or detracting from it but it's all man done so in verses six through seven Paul is voicing his apostolic astonishment by way of warning and rebuke he's saying this guys don't do this I am your rumble strip turn back to the gospel don't cross over this rumble strip

I'm speaking to you you're only going to be enslaved by this Paul above all wants God's gospel protected and these young Christians living in the goodness of it that's why he's saying what are you thinking I'm astonished but it doesn't end there Paul gets a little bit more worked up in verses eight he says but even if we Paul's including himself if I or my buddy Barnabas or an angel Michael Gabriel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you verses three through five let him be accursed that word accursed means destined for destruction

[33:03] God be damned God damn you he's saying he's basically well I'll be damned if I preach a different gospel and he would be and he goes from talking about himself as a possibility just imagine me Barnabas Gabriel Michael preaching a different gospel they would be damned if they did and then in verse nine he says if anyone as we've said before so now I say again it's emphasizing he's repeating what's been said if anyone and what he's getting at there is anyone anyone in your midst right now anyone who's troubling you right now by preaching a different contrary gospel to the one we've preached if anyone if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received let him be damned that's

Paul that's pretty strong language maybe maybe Paul's overreacting a little bit just maybe a little bit Paul's saying it doesn't matter your status or your position whether you're a capital A apostle a small A apostle whether you're a pastor whether you're a mom whether you're an archangel if you preach a different gospel than the only gospel that saves you're damned because you're damning those who hear you you're actually proclaiming a gospel that doesn't save it only enslaves you're proclaiming a gospel that damns people so damn you feel the warning the stakes are high when it comes to the gospel eternity is at stake and this is a warning for us today because there are plenty of false gospels out there there is only one true gospel by which

God delivers sinners from beginning to end and we must turn from it or be damned maybe you've had a Mormon elder come up to your door very nice looking people morally impressive preach to you about the grace of Jesus but oh yeah you need to obey to make you right with God it's a false gospel liberal mainline Christianity invites you to believe in a new improved more palatable gospel of Jesus Christ that doesn't talk about sin and makes the substitutionary death of Jesus just an example of how to be a good neighbor not the power of God to save people it's a false gospel the prosperity gospel in which God is made into this divine health and wealth snack dispenser is a false gospel will not save you not free you it's only going to enslave you and if you're in the room right now and you're thinking that the way that you keep in right standing with

God is if you read your Bible and you pray and you share your faith and you give and you show up to church that's not the gospel through the blood of Jesus God has made you right with him period there's nothing you can do to add to that that's the glory of the gospel this morning we have been warned there are false gospels out there that distort the one true gospel so we need to be clear on what the one true gospel is in order to recognize the false gospels that are making a claim on us and the way that we recognize false gospels is by studying and treasuring delighting in the one true gospel which makes our hearts sing it's about

Jesus it's about his death on the cross a substitute for our sin it delivers us from the world and by God's sovereign grace places us into his family it results into God's glory and ongoing source of grace and peace I hope you're feeling the weight of this these words of the apostle but I also hope you're feeling the glory of it how worthy our great God is who delivered us by the blood of his son on the cross he's worthy and I hope you feel a little warning too maybe maybe your tires are on the apostolic rumble strip and you need to say I need to steer back into the gospel Christ the King Church there's only one true gospel that delivers from beginning to end it's the gospel of our Lord

Jesus Christ and we must not we must never turn from it because there's so much at stake let's pray

[39:02] God in heaven thank you so much for the gospel of Jesus Christ thank you for giving us ears to hear our head was full of rocks our heart was stone and you through the preaching of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit you enlightened us you awakened us and now Lord Jesus would you in your grace and your mercy and the power of the Holy Spirit would you help us to stand firm in the freedom which you purchased for us through your blood we ask this in the name of Jesus amen amen amen