

# Learning To Please

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I think we're going to start. It's good to have you here. Based on the marketplace, Peter Decker, I'm going to ask you to open this up. Where?

Where? Where you are. Father, thank you for being able to come to this place and this busy sector of the world. The leaving behind is those thoughts that we've always been so far in the day.

The probably helps to concentrate on looking at the sails, the very helps to seek your place, helps to put aside those things that might take away from that seeking.

Thank you for this place. Thank you for the great place. Amen. Is there someone who is new today? We can introduce. Just say who you are and how you plug into the city.

Yes. A different person. A friend of Jeff's still. Sorry to hear that. What do you do? Okay.

[ 1 : 07 ] One more, one more. Okay, where? Oh, good. Derek and Ruth. Derek and Ruth Warren, son-in-law and daughter, emigrated to Canada in January.

We'd come out of the spring with the seat after getting on the floor. Straight up. There. Great snap. Your very great son-in-law, Stephen James, been here a couple months ago.

Yes, there. You've been since the lawyer. I've heard the name. I don't remember the name. Yes. I also have a sister.

Great. I thought I said last week the lawyers could all sit up there together. I've never done this before. If we get the lawyers over here and the financial real estate people over here, we pretty much would have a very interesting dialogue.

Anyone else that's new today? It's the first time. One more. One more. One more. One more. One more. One more. One more. Carol's welcome. The student. Very important.

[ 2 : 15 ] One more. Great. Great. We have a year. We have a year. Uh. Announcements, uh, all they are, remember, we have this little sheet of paper, it's back there with the books.

It's called Faith in Marketplace, and it just gives you your address and phone number so that we can send you the mailings that come out every three months. So if you haven't filled one of these out in the last, if you've never filled one out, and you don't have, if you don't have an annulus, please take one and fill it out before you leave.

Uh, next week we continue our series on Galatians. Chuck Ferguson's going to do, uh, the speaking, Harry will be here, but Chuck will be doing the message. And, um, we're really delighted at a growing sense of response.

A lot of you men and women bringing your friends here, because that's what it's for. For people who want to investigate, um, how Christ can make a difference in the marketplace.

Um, Mike, I'm serious, going to read the scriptures. Mike, this is the question as well. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ, and turning to a different gospel, not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

[ 3 : 33 ] That even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preach to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you receive, let him be accursed.

Am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which we preach by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, though I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. [ 4 : 34 ] So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my father. I was born and called me through his grace, and was pleased to reveal his son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, that I went away into Arabia, and again I returned to the man.

I did not confer with the Gentiles.

See, we're starting on the Epistle to the Galatians today, and uh, if you know where Ankara in Turkey is, or can imagine or think about that, that's where Galatia was, you can also take some sense of the nature of things.

If you know that the Galatians were, it's conjectured, they may have been from Gaul. So Galatia was the Quebec of Asia Minor because of the wandering Gauls who went to various places in the ancient world as well as in the modern world.

[ 6 : 11 ] Because it is the letter to the Galatians and you know that there's the four Gospels and then there's the letters of St. Paul and each of the letters of St. Paul tends to be to a church with a problem of which there is nothing else in the world but churches with problems.

It's just a matter of defining your problem and understanding what it is and trying to learn to cope with it so that when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, their problem was that they didn't know who Paul was so he tried to explain to them who he was and what was the basis of what he had to say so that the great theological treatise of the whole New Testament is Paul's letter to the Romans. And when he came to writing to the Corinthians, it was because the Corinthians were a spiritually wide awake, alive, charismatic people with the morals of a gutter snipe, so to speak.

I mean, it was, as I think John Stott described it, the Corinthian church was like a rose growing in a manure pile. And it was, you know, that they were having terrible problems with their morality, even though they were zinging right along spiritually.

And then when you come to the Galatians, you have a different kind of problem and it's that problem that I want to look at for a minute today to try and familiarize you with the epistles of the Galatians so that you will be able to read it and to understand it perhaps somewhat better.

[ 8 : 01 ] The problem was this, that Paul had gone to Galatia. Galatia was part of the Roman Empire.

Throughout the Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Jews had spread into all the Roman cities. And there they had established their synagogues.

So Paul had a network to work from when he went out to preach the gospel. And he preached the gospel in the various cities at the various synagogues.

The difficulty was that the Jewish religion was acceptable to the Roman authorities. And therefore, as long as they could stay respectable, they could continue to exist without being harassed.

But when Paul came along and preached the gospel, what happened was that immediately the kind of forces of conformity moved in and tried to reshape the gospel so as not to upset the political and cultural balance they had achieved in these various cities between the Jewish people and the other Roman people, citizens.

[ 9 : 18 ] And so, Paul came back and he begins this section here by saying, I am astonished.

I marvel. This is, you know, I don't know if any of you went to see Aida, but I gather it was a great spectacular event.

While Paul is thinking in those terms, this is a spectacular event which I could never have imagined that you Galatians should ever quickly, so should so quickly desert him who called you in the grace of Christ.

That the pressures of social and political and economic conformity have so moved in upon you who received the gospel that you've now started to pervert it and to adapt it to your circumstances and what you've done in doing that is you have created another gospel.

Now, that's not really, I mean, that may have surprised Paul, but if he was lived in our world, he'd spend all his time spaced out with surprise by what's happened to the gospel. And just to help you think about it, let me tell you, ask you how you think the gospel should be modified in order to suit the market that's there.

[10:48] How should we modify the gospel? Well, I've got several suggestions. One way I think that the Mormons have modified the gospel is to develop America as the promised land.

And that's where it's all headed towards. And that suits lots of Americans that this should be the promised land. And it makes a lot of sense. I mean, if you look at American history and you look at the melting pot and you look at the Christian influence and you look at the impact of scripture, America is the city to which the lost tribes have come and America is the site of the new Jerusalem. You know, that kind of thinking. Well, that's not really so new because before in the glorious history of the British Empire, we had British Israelites who said, England is obviously the place where the lost tribes have gone and where the new Jerusalem is about to be established.

And so they worked hard on that. And there was a fellow out on the street corner not long ago preaching the gospel in a very, very strong way to everybody who went by just two blocks from here and I stopped and had a talk with him and he has the gospel.

Now, the promised land is Taiwan. And if you want to go where the action is going to be, Taiwan is the place to head for.

[12:16] Now, a lot of people are going there for other reasons but he had it because it was the promised land. Well, that kind of adaption of the gospel to suit our culture and our history and our traditions and our understanding is something that goes on all the time.

You run into the pressure to make it a prosperity gospel. That prosperity and the gospel go together. So if you're prosperous it means you're a believer.

And if you're not prosperous you know what the problem is. So get with it. There is a gospel that is very much that's very much in demand and that is a gospel that everybody can agree with.

And as long as everybody can agree this must be it. So we try and determine what it is that everybody agrees with. If you spend a little time researching that you'll find it's nothing.

There isn't anything that everybody agrees with. But supposing there is we can hypothesize. Other people would like a gospel which makes us feel good about ourselves.

[13:31] I want to feel good about myself please tell me that there is warrant and authority to do that. Other people want a gospel base. This is the achiever's gospel.

A gospel based on what I do and not on what has been done for me. And so these are gospels or there's pressure groups in our society and you could go on I'm sure and make a long much far longer list of things that we would like to say this is what the gospel is all about.

Now if you want to understand Galatians this is the way you understand it and I just put this here so that you can remember this that Paul says in the sixth chapter of Galatians God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the heart of the gospel. You may not like it you may not understand it but there it is and that's so that what our society tends to say is God forbid that I should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

there is so much else to glory in. Look at scientific achievement. Look at the emancipation of human society. Look at the cities we built.

[15:00] Look at the transportation systems we've done. Look at all the accomplishments of man and that gives you reason to glory. Paul says no God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's not really acceptable to anybody. It wasn't acceptable to the Galatians and that's why this passage starts by saying that they had quickly deserted the one who had called them in the grace of Christ and they had adapted and modified and changed into another gospel.

Well I'm a minister in a congregation and whether I'm paranoid or not I'm not sure but I have a deep sense that there is a really strong demand for another gospel something that would be a little easier to live with something that would take account of some of the nicer things about people and not put such a lot of emphasis on the bad things about people always there's that pressure and I think that the church has been subject to that pressure ever since Paul first wrote the epistles to the Galatians well can I just tell you about this word gospel a minute when Paul uses it it is the gospel there's nothing else this is it and this is the focus of it the cross of Christ well now gospel is gradually diluted in our world so that even our church sends out articles talking about the gospel of peace and the gospel of justice and the gospel for the environmentalists and the gospel for the social activists and all sorts of gospels

Paul says and I think that we have to understand this he says the gospel is only one thing gospel is not a word in our language only the gospel and the gospel has a very specific orientation and that is to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that is the point at which God reveals himself so we've diluted gospel down it's Klaus Bachmuel the other day talked about in his commencement address at Regent College which was an heroic event in itself I must say his talk but he said there he referred to this book in pursuit of excellence on how in a sense that has become a gospel for people that's where the good things are in the attainment of excellence and he illustrated it by saying of course you can have an excellent robbery if you want you can apply excellence to almost anything you want to do even so he says excellence has to serve another higher purpose so that when we make excellence a goal we might be undermining the whole reality of our world

George Grant does the same thing for the word value he says we talk about values and he says there is no plural to that word it's a singular word there is value and something has it or it hasn't got it but to say that there are this group's values and this group's values and Christian values and Muslim values and all sorts of other values he said if value means anything it can only mean one thing and there can only be one standard by which it's measured well that's what happens to words and that's what happens in our world to gospel and that's what Paul is fighting against in this passage he says there can't be another gospel so you have this Galatian church you have this the Galatian church to whom Paul has preached if you look at it in verse in chapter one verse nine it says if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you receive so a gospel the gospel concerning

[19:46] Jesus Christ has been preached to them the gospel concerning Jesus Christ has been received by and now others have come in to suggest that this be modified and replaced by another gospel something that would be more acceptable to people something that wouldn't be so divisive something that would unite people something that would give people more warm feelings about it and that's what had taken place and what happens you see is and Paul says it happens is that I think people I launch out on these little excursions sometime and I'm about to launch out on one and I sort of think I might get shot down halfway but there is a sense in which in our world there is only one religion and that religion is based on and focused in the gospel of Jesus

Christ now you may consider this to be arrogance of an extreme order but at least I hope it will provoke you to think a little bit about it you see because there is a gospel there can then be counterfeits you've got to have the real thing in order to create a counterfeit of it if there isn't a real thing then there can be no counterfeits of it and so Christianity has had an enormous influence in our world I'm having a long debate with people about this I mean a continuing kind of debate but Judaism is specifically a rejection of the gospel and the epistle of the Galatians explains how that happens and Mohammedanism is specifically a rejection of the gospel which happens 600 years after Christ and most of the modern religions that we have are based on the gospel

Anglicanism for instance I mean I want to include you all but I just there is the reality of the gospel but then we develop and adapt our own understanding of it and kind of piggyback on it one of the things that delights me about Anglicanism is that it's so frightfully white and Anglo-Saxon and Protestant but most of the bishops are now black men that's numerically true the church in Uganda the Anglican church in Uganda is far bigger than the Anglican church in England which is something in itself well you see what happens here is that you get this gospel which Paul is talking about and counterfeits of it and imitations of it grow all over the world but Paul says if you lose this you've lost it all and what he describes then is how in fact they lost it that they they've perverted it they've contradicted it they've they've chosen the messenger instead of the message they say this person is a very impressive person and because he's a very impressive person

I'm going to believe what he believes and people far more impressive than Paul seem to have come to Galatia and Paul says if I myself came or if an angel came from heaven and preached to you another gospel it is not the messenger that counts it is the message and though there may be many messengers there is only one message and if he doesn't deliver that message then he is he is parh to the crime of perverting and contradicting the gospel now the result of this is if you look at it in the beginning of the story it says there are some who trouble you wanting to pervert the gospel of Christ and so this word trouble means it's a lack of inner harmony Einstein said that when you finally discover something to be true he says it has a certain symmetry to it a certain balance a certain order in retrospect you say why didn't somebody discover this before well in the same way the gospel has a symmetry to it a balance to it and it creates an inner harmony it contributes to that

which

Christ grants to his disciples when he says my peace I leave with you that's the impact of the gospel you have an experience of peace a sense that this is it but having achieved that he says those who pervert the gospel and come along with another gospel trouble you they upset you they come in and instead of being a place where the peace of Christ is apparent there is controversy and there is friction and there is all sorts of things which rob people of that sense of peace and purpose which the gospel alone gives so Paul is very angry and very upset and in verse 8 he says to the man who has done this let him be accursed and you know it is

[ 25 : 53 ] I think a terrible indictment of our world and probably of our churches that we have perverted and contradicted the gospel and deeply disturbed people robbed them of the peace that belongs to and Paul who was very jealous for the truth of the gospel could see nothing for such people except that they should be accursed because they took away from the gospel they perverted it they contradicted it so Paul goes ahead to work on this let me I just have to show you how he does this you see what he says to them is pleasing man is not my business you know you don't do market research with respect to the gospel and then come back and adapt your product to suit the market that's out there you just don't do it this is the gospel and if the market can't bear it then the market's got to change the way the market changes is by people preaching telling you this is the gospel and you do it as

Paul says not as a matter of pleasing men but as a matter of serving Christ let me show you then how Paul develops this argument he says if you want to understand what this is all about I want you to look at my life he says in this passage I did not receive it from man that is my religion is not the tradition I was brought up in I was brought up in a very particular tradition and I am very grateful for the inheritance or the heritage from that tradition but this gospel does not come from that source he says I wasn't taught it you know nobody took me aside and taught me this gospel I don't belong to a particular school from which it came he said this gospel was a personal apocalypse

I can use that word because you've all been to the movie but he says this is where it came from it was a personal encounter with Christ that the apocalypse is that your life goes on and on and on until you suddenly come to the point of your own despair your own destruction your own condemnation your own judgment you come to the point of utter annihilation and at that point of annihilation you suddenly discover that God's purpose is quite different than you ever suspected it was and Paul says I was driven by my tradition and by the things I was taught towards this apocalypse it came to me Paul says as a revelation of Jesus Christ now he said what my tradition taught me and what I learned from in response to that he said I persecuted the church of God that's a very interesting statement because when

Paul was met on the Damascus road by the person of Jesus Christ Christ said to him Paul Paul why do you persecute me now Paul thought he was persecuting the church of God but Jesus thought he was persecuting him and you have to try and work that one through he said I persecuted the church of God I resorted to violence and you know the point at which men feel that they must turn to violence they must actually get their automatic rifle out and start shooting he said my goal was the destruction of the church of God I felt in the name of God and for the cause of God and in the tradition in which I have been brought up this malignancy must die and I must destroy it Paul says so I advanced in

Judaism beyond anyone my age and my zeal was greater than anyone else and this was because I was acting according to the tradition of my father and I think you know we need to examine our own concept of the Christian faith because perhaps we've never gone beyond the tradition in which we were brought up we've never thought about it in terms except in terms of things that we may have been taught about by an alien society we have never really confronted the person of Jesus Christ in a kind of personal apocalypse but Jesus said I did I advanced in Judaism but then he says God didn't change the God whom I serve the God whom I knew according to my tradition and the God that I had been taught about he didn't change but he led me beyond that to this of course he's speaking to Jews who were brought up in this tradition he says your tradition that's fine what you've been taught that's fine but where with

[ 31 : 41 ] Jesus Christ and that's what you've been fighting against and he says God didn't change but I did he says he set me apart before I was born before this process started this God set me apart he called me through his grace that is he called Paul to serve him even though Paul didn't know him he revealed his son to me in that encounter that takes place between Paul risen Christ he

called me to a work which was to preach the gospel among the Gentiles and that was how Paul encountered the gospel and that's why when Paul had preached the gospel to the Gentiles and to the Jews and then somebody came along and said but really you have to adapt that you have to change it and they subtly began to contradict it and to undermine it and to pervert it

Paul says I cannot believe it this is the gospel this is the gospel which is focused in the person of Jesus Christ and there isn't any other gospel because this is the place and this is the person in whom God has revealed himself in a way that you don't know him you don't know him in any other way and if you take that out of the heart of the Christian faith you got zero that's Paul's appeal and that's the appeal he makes to the Galatians and not I would say inappropriate to be made to the Vancouverites either what is the gospel you may know lots of gospels but what is the gospel and Paul says God forbid that I should glory save in that that's the only thing there is if there isn't that there's nothing let me pray

God you have given us Saint Paul with all his tenacity and all his intellectual brilliance and all his passion and zeal and all his longing to serve you and you have entrusted him as an apostle to bear witness to the reality of the gospel give us grace that we may hear from this apostolic messenger the apocalyptic message that our God who is our father has confronted us in the person of our crucified Lord Jesus Christ grant us grace to see this we might know the gospel that we might glory in nothing else ultimately we ask this in

Christ's name amen