Galatians 1:10-12

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[0:00] It's found on page 972 of your Pew Bible. Today we're looking at Galatians chapter 1, verses 10 through 12, just three short verses.

But to give us the context, or if you weren't here the last couple of weeks, I'm going to read starting at verse 1 down through verse 12. So Galatians chapter 1, I'll be reading starting at verse 1, but we'll be looking particularly today at verses 10 through 12.
Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one 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 the one you received, let him be accursed.
[1:34] For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it.
But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Are you a servant of Christ or are you a people pleaser?
This is the basic question that Paul confronts us with in these verses. So today we're going to look at three things. Well, first we'll see what it meant for Paul to be a servant of Christ instead of a people pleaser.
Second, we'll consider what it means for us to be servants of Christ instead of people pleasers. And third, we'll ask how can we become servants of Christ instead of people pleasers?
[2:38] So first, what did this mean for the Apostle Paul? Well, so far in Galatians, we've seen Paul's greeting in verses 1 through 5, grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then Paul's warning in verses 6 through 9, beware of those who trouble you and distort the gospel. And now in verse 10, Paul begins his defense.
In particular, he's defending his authority as an apostle. And that's in this section continues through most of chapter 2. And in this section, Paul is almost certainly responding to specific accusations that were being made against him.
In particular, that he was a people pleaser. Now, as we've mentioned, Paul had traveled through the Roman province of Galatia. He had proclaimed the good news about Jesus to people there. And many had become followers of Jesus and formed the Christian church. Actually, several churches within that province in different cities. But after Paul had left, a group of teachers had come in, also claiming to be followers of Jesus, but questioning Paul's authority as an apostle and questioning the message that Paul had preached.
[3:51] In many ways, these teachers probably agreed with Paul. They would have believed in one God. They would have believed in the Old Testament scriptures. And it seems that they believed in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah.

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But these teachers said, there's one very important thing that Paul didn't tell you about. They said, in order to be part of God's family, in order to be right with God, you must follow the law that God laid out in the Old Testament.
And in particular, if you're male, you must be circumcised. That's what God said to Abraham. That's what you've got to do too. And they said, you know, Paul really should know this because he knows the Old Testament scriptures.
And when Paul spends time with his Jewish brothers and sisters, he follows the law. He observes the festivals. He respects the temple. But when he goes and preaches to the Gentiles, the people who aren't used to obeying the Jewish laws and aren't following the rituals, he just conveniently leaves out that part.
See, they're saying Paul just adapts his message to gain favor with his hearers because at the heart, he's just a people pleaser. That's one of the accusations that was almost certainly being made against Paul.
[5:07] And Paul responds directly to that accusation in verse 10. He says, for am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Paul says, you can't be doing both at once. And in the surrounding verses, Paul gives three reasons to demonstrate that he is truly a servant of Christ and not just a people pleaser.
So first, Paul explains that he has suffered for the sake of following Christ. Verses 13 and 14, Paul explains that before he became a follower of Jesus, he was respected among the Jewish religious leaders for his zeal and for his learning.
He was advancing higher and higher up the religious ladder. But since he became a follower of Jesus, Paul explains that he's been persecuted and beaten by both Jewish and Gentile opponents. And he says this explicitly later on in Galatians in chapter 5, verse 11 and chapter 6, verse 17. So Paul's saying, my message has not simply earned me the acclaim of many people.
[6:22] If I was just trying to be a people pleaser, I'm not doing a good job. So first, Paul explains he's suffered for the sake of following Christ. Second, Paul explains that he has proclaimed one consistent message about Jesus wherever he went.

Verses 8 and 9, Paul declared that anyone, including himself, whoever preaches a different message than the one he preached among the Galatians is under God's curse. A very strong statement.
Now you might have questions about why Paul said that. If you weren't here last week, you can listen to Pastor Matt's sermon. It'll be up on the website. But that's not the kind of thing that a people pleaser would tend to say.
Anyone who preaches a different message than the one I originally gave to you is under God's curse. You know, that's not a vague statement that can be interpreted one way or the other. It's not merely something he said to a small group of people privately that he could, and no one else heard it, and so he could squirm away from it.
It's a public written statement where he draws a line in the sand. It's not something he can easily back away from later on. Paul was convinced that his message, the gospel message, the message about Jesus, carried the weight of God's authority.
[7:44] And therefore it must not be changed, added to, or subtracted from. And he goes on to say this explicitly in verses 11 and 12. He says, Now, someone might ask, someone might say, well, okay, Paul's being pretty, he makes some pretty strong statements here, but does he really teach and live a consistent message wherever he goes?

What about in 1 Corinthians? What about the place where Paul says, I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I might save some? 1 Corinthians 9.22. Or what about 1 Corinthians 10.32 and 33, where he says, Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or the Church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do.
What about those verses? Is Paul just talking a hard line to please the hard liners, and then showing his more accommodating colors to the more liberal Corinthians? Is he just like another politician, speaking a hard line to win the primaries, and then moving to the center to win the election?
But the answer is no. In Galatians and Corinthians, in the book of Acts, and in all his other letters, Paul proclaimed one consistent message about Jesus as the all-sufficient Savior and Lord.

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So Galatians 1.4, Paul says, Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
[9:25] Or in Corinthians, Paul summarized his message as Jesus Christ and him crucified. Or in Acts, when Paul first came to the province of Galatia, he proclaimed this in Acts 13.

He said, We bring you the good news, what God promised to our fathers, he has fulfilled to us by raising Jesus from the dead. Therefore, through this man, through Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.
Or later on in his life, in 1 Timothy, Paul summarizes his message like this. He says, There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.
Wherever Paul went, Paul proclaimed one message, that sinful human beings can be made right with a holy God only through the person and the work of Jesus Christ.
As he puts it later in Galatians 2.16, he says, A person is not justified, is not made right with God by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.
[10:32] Paul did not change or compromise or confuse or back away from that message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Paul proclaimed one consistent message wherever he went, even though in many places he was beaten, threatened, imprisoned, accused, misrepresented, and misunderstood. So Paul proclaimed, so Paul was willing to suffer for the sake of Jesus.
He proclaimed a consistent message about Jesus. And third, because Paul's life was defined by Jesus alone, Paul was willing to be flexible in a variety of other matters that didn't compromise his allegiance to Jesus.
Paul relativized his personal desires and cultural habits for the sake of serving Christ and loving people. See, Paul wasn't just a strongly opinionated person who always wants you to know their opinion on everything and they have an opinion on everything.
He wasn't like a trained member of a debate team who can argue any position to death and overpower you with their rhetoric. They could argue one side of a position and then they could argue the exact opposite side and sound exactly just as convincing for both sides.
[11:49] Paul is not like that. Paul describes himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. And that word translated servant means bond, servant, or slave.

It refers not to a temporary hired worker, but someone who belonged exclusively and completely to their master. And Paul's saying, I belong exclusively and completely to Jesus Christ.
Jesus and no one else is my master and lord. And so I must always live to please him. And so in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says, I am free from all.
No one else except Jesus is my savior and lord. But I've made myself a servant to all. And so he goes on to give the example. He says, if I'm eating with religious Jews who keep the kosher laws, he's saying, I won't eat pork.
I won't, even though in my own conscience I know that I could. I'm free in Christ to do so. I won't needlessly offend people for the sake of food because the gospel is so much more precious than what we eat or drink.
[13:01] But when Paul eats with the Gentiles, he won't pressure them to conform to the Jewish religious traditions because it's not essential for Gentiles to follow Jewish religious and cultural traditions in order to follow Jesus.

See, in matters of cultural tradition and personal preference, Paul makes it his priority to love and serve the people around him rather than to please himself. And it's in that context that Paul says, don't give any offense.
Seek to please others rather than to please ourselves. Martin Luther put it this way. He said, a Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all subject to none.
None except Jesus. And, a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant to all. Subject to all. Paul says, I'm free in Christ.
But I will be a servant to all for the sake of Christ. So, Paul says, these are three reasons why I am a true servant of Christ and not just a people pleaser.
[14:11] Paul was willing to suffer for Jesus' sake. He proclaimed one consistent message about Jesus. And he was willing to sacrifice his personal desires and his cultural habits for the sake of loving people and serving Christ.

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Christ. Now, what about us? How can we know if we are people pleasers or servants of Christ? Again, Paul is very clear that you can't be both.
If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ, he says. And we can examine ourselves by asking these three same questions.
Am I willing to suffer or have I suffered for the sake of obeying and proclaiming Jesus Christ? Now, this is not the same thing as asking, have you suffered a lot in your life?
Sometimes suffering is the result of our own sin, our own foolish choices or bad habits that come back to bite us. Sometimes suffering is the result of someone else's sin.
[15:14] someone else or some group of people has wronged us. Sometimes suffering is simply a result of living in a fallen world where our bodies decay and natural disasters occur and economies crash and life doesn't always go smoothly.

But the question is not how much have we suffered? You know, some of the people, some people who have suffered a lot are unusually wise and compassionate.
some people who have suffered a lot are unusually bitter and foolish. You know, suffering in itself doesn't make you better or worse. It will only put on display some things that are already in your heart.
And it can be an opportunity for God to work in your life, to draw you closer to Him. But it will either drive you to God or you will run away from God.
you won't really be able to stay the same through suffering. But the question that Paul's asking is not simply how much have you suffered, but have you suffered for the sake of Jesus?
[16:24] You know, that's how you know if you really love someone. If you're willing to give up something that you love because you love them more. Now, if you're a parent, you're giving up your time, your money, your energy, maybe your opportunities for an adult social life at times, for the sake of your children.

And parenting can be a great sacrifice, but it's all worth it because you love your kids and you're willing to sacrifice to invest in them. If you're married or if you hope to be married someday, practice self-giving love.
Paul says, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Christ showed us the depth of his love by his self-giving on the cross.
And so the question is, have you given up something that you love because you love Jesus more? Have you given up some of your money for Jesus' sake? Not just the extra money that you don't need anyway, but have you reconfigured your spending so that you can give more away?
or so that you can serve others more effectively for the sake of Jesus? Have you given up your free time for Jesus' sake so that you can grow in your relationship with him?
[17:49] So that you can serve and be committed to the body of Christ? Have you fasted for Jesus' sake? Fasting means giving up food or certain kinds of food for a limited period of time in order to feed on Christ through prayer and worship.

You can also fast from other things like the internet so you can love God and other people with less distraction. Or finally, have you extended forgiveness for Jesus' sake to someone that otherwise you would just want to cut out of your life and never have anything to do with again?
If you have suffered for Jesus' sake, if you have given up something that you would normally hold on to, for him, that's a good indication that you are living as a servant of Christ and not as a people pleaser.
Second question. Do you proclaim one consistent message about Jesus wherever you go? If someone was with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they saw how you speak to your colleagues at work or how you talk with other students at school, how you treat your family or your roommates at home, how you act when you come to church, and what you say when you go hang out with the guys, would they see and hear one consistent message about Jesus?
or would they see that the things you do, the opinions you express, the jokes you laugh at, all depends on who's around and what they like to hear?
[19:31] You know, isn't it true that one of the main reasons why we don't share our faith in Christ more actively is that we're afraid what other people will think of us?

We're not even so much afraid what other people will think about Jesus. We're mostly afraid what other people will think about us. Now, it's true.

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Some Christians are rejected and ridiculed because they share their faith in an arrogant, rude, or obnoxious way. And the Bible never encourages us to be arrogant, rude, or obnoxious.
Much the opposite. But if we are servants of Christ, we're called not just to be nice to everyone, but also to speak about what God has done in Jesus Christ and to call people to turn and follow him.
So do we proclaim one consistent message about Jesus wherever we go? Third, are we flexible in matters of personal and cultural preference for the sake of loving and serving those around us?
[20:33] There are many examples of this that we could look at. But maybe you have a strong preference for certain types of music in church. Whether traditional hymns or contemporary songs or gospel music or something else.

Are you willing to consider your personal preference less important than the good of the whole church? Now it is true that some songs reflect the character of God more accurately than others.
And some songs are more suited for congregational singing than others. But you can learn to worship God through a variety of music styles. Not only the ones that immediately please you.
And as you do so, you will grow in your appreciation of God's character. So a servant of Christ is not a people pleaser who's determined by what everybody else thinks. And also not a self pleaser who doesn't really care what anybody else thinks and just does what you want.
A servant of Christ is concerned above all else with pleasing God. But then you might ask how can I know that I'm pleasing God?
[21:38] What if I don't live up to those three tests? How can I become a servant of Christ and not just a people pleaser?

Or how can I become more of a servant of Christ in the way I actually act and live? Now the answer is not just by trying harder.
You know, for a long time Paul tried really hard to obey the law and please God. And he says in verse 14 I was extremely zealous more than other people in his generation.
But trying really hard is never enough to please God. You know, there's only one place in the Bible where God speaks directly to a human being and says I am well pleased with you.
It's when Jesus Christ is baptized in the Jordan River and God the Father says to him you are my beloved son and with you I am well pleased.
[22:49] See, Jesus alone pleases God perfectly and completely and it is only in relationship with Jesus that we can please God. John 1.12 says that to all who receive Jesus to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God.

And Hebrews chapter 2 says Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. Through faith in Jesus Christ we can become God's beloved children.
We can belong to his family now and forever. We can hear the voice of God the Father saying to us you are my son you are my daughter I love you I am well pleased with you because you are one with Christ.
See, you can only live as a servant of Christ if you actually belong to Christ. A servant see, a servant is not a temporary hired worker who hopes to maybe keep his job in the company and survive the next set of layoffs.
A servant of Christ is someone who belongs exclusively and completely to Jesus. Jesus died on the cross to pay the debt of our sin so that we could belong to God and be part of his family forever.
[24:15] forever. So if you want to please God look to Jesus. Don't just try harder look at who Jesus is believe in him receive him he will send his spirit to live in you so that you might no longer live as a people pleaser or a self pleaser but as a servant of Christ.

So you might ask where do I find the generosity to suffer and sacrifice for Jesus' sake? Look to Jesus. Paul says you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that you through his poverty might become rich.
Jesus suffered so that your sufferings might never be in vain and he promises that whatever you give up for his sake he will repay a hundred times over.
Or you might ask how can I get the courage to proclaim one consistent message about Jesus wherever I go whatever people think of me even if I face threats even if somewhere even if there might be a threat of persecution look to Jesus see him in his faithfulness and in his majesty Jesus in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession he stood faithful to the end for us and Jesus will come again as the king of kings and lord of lords who alone has immortality who dwells in unapproachable light whom no one has ever seen or can see to him be honor and eternal dominion

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amen that's what Paul says or finally you might ask where can I get the humility to put aside my personal and cultural preferences for the sake of others once again look at Jesus Philippians 2 says have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God something to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in human likeness and being found in human form Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on the cross therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father let's pray Almighty God we confess that by our nature we are self-pleasers and people-pleasers we thank you for your son [27:37] Jesus Christ in whom you were well pleased who always lived a righteous life who always sought to please you above all else and we thank you that in Jesus through his death on the cross that we are made right with you that we belong to your family forever and we pray that by his strength and by his spirit living in us that we might live as your servants that we might fear and trust and love you that we might not fear other people's opinions that we might not be controlled by our own desires but that by the power of your spirit you would transform us that we might become more and more like you we thank you for that for the grace we thank you for the gospel thank you that it is good news in Jesus name amen please stand as we sing our closing song take my life and let it be

God's in great and poor to thee take my moments and my days let them flow in ceaseless ways let them flow in ceaseless ways take my hands and let it flow make with a promise to live

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