

The truth

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[0 : 0 0] Morning. I don't know how your week's been, but I want you to think about the guys this week who left their homes in the morning and didn't return to them in the evening. A 16-year-old lad in Aberdeen left for school in the morning and never got home. 224 people on an aeroplane over Egypt this weekend never made it home. We don't know where any of those 225 people stood with the Lord. We don't know whether the truth of their worship, the truth of where they stood with you had ever been shared with them and revealed to them. We have no idea.

I don't know where each of us in this room stands with the Lord today, this very hour. I don't know you well enough, and I'm sorry, but this series of Galatians that we're going to be coming to over the next six weeks, the theme of the series is facing the truth. I want you to imagine a man with a head stuck in the sand, okay? And what we're trying to do is just pull this person's head back out of the sand to face the truth. And that's what we're going to be looking at over the next six weeks as we just go through this little mini-series. Galatians is described as a mini-Romans, and I know Pastor Daniel is quite fond of Romans. And this is just a little condensed study, basically, of Romans here in Galatians. Galatians is Paul's letter where he's confronting the people of Galatia. Galatia at that time was a region of a number of places, and the churches that were in those regions. And he's confronting these people of Galatia with the truth of their worship and of their faith. I want you to think about Galatians, maybe just personally, if you were to imagine this morning that you placed a mirror in front of your face. That Galatians give you an opportunity to take a good, hard look at yourself. Now, you know what happens? Maybe some of us don't like looking in a mirror. Because you look in a mirror, and all of a sudden, you see the blemishes, the spots, all the other things that, oh my goodness, I haven't dealt with that, and crikey, do I really look like that? You know, you face the truth when you look in a mirror of how you look.

When you look in a mirror, sometimes it can be a bit uncomfortable. Unless you're beautifully blessed. And I just give thanks to God that you're blessed if you can look in a mirror and you don't see anything. But for the rest of us, I look in a mirror and it's a bit uncomfortable sometimes. And that's exactly how the book of Galatians is. It's an uncomfortable book at times. So I want you to brace yourselves a little bit. Because actually over the next six weeks, we're going to effectively going to gallop through Galatians to have a look at this book.

And we're going to try and discover the truth that the Apostle Paul is writing to them. But not just that. It's all very well studying the Word and understanding the context at that time.

But it was written for a purpose. It was written for people like us. And so what we want to understand too is how it applies to us. Now as Paul, he writes this letter because he's encountered some opposition. That there are a number of people who have attacked his apostleship.

[3 : 5 9] They've said that, these people in Galatia, that this Apostle Paul is no apostle at all. That they say that this Apostle Paul, he doesn't meet the criteria of Acts chapter 1.

Acts chapter 1 says that to be an apostle, you have to have accompanied with Jesus during his earthly ministry. That you need to have witnessed his resurrection. The Apostle Paul can't say that he did that. He wasn't there.

But Paul deals with this. He says in his opening to the letter that he received a direct call from Jesus Christ.

from God. And consequently, Paul addresses them. It opens here in this version I read earlier. Paul, an apostle. What an opener.

Now imagine the argument, all this arguing going on and he just deals with it. Bang! Paul, an apostle. He's directly just rebuking the criticism that he has received and the comments that are being made about him just so swiftly and just deals with it, moves on.

[5 : 14] And he doesn't dwell with this whatsoever in the opener. He wishes them grace. In effect, he's praying, may the beauty of the undeserved love of God be on you.

So it will make your life lovely too. And he grants them peace. Says that you'll have the sense of love and the care of God.

How lovely is that? A man who's being attacked by people who say that they're professing Christians and he just deals with things and then just shares grace and love with them.

But Paul is, he is clearly upset as he's put these words on a page. Really upset. In other letters, he greets his readers and then he prays for them or he praises or he thanks God.

But that's not what you get here in Galatians. Here in Galatians, he's just jumping straight into the theme of the letter. Straight away jumping in. And as you read or as we listen just earlier to this Galatians 1, it's like there is this great sense of urgency for his writing to them.

[6 : 34] The urgency is the truth. And that's the title for this morning, the truth. Because here in Galatians 1, we're getting to this crux of Galatians 1, which we're going to look at under three little headings.

The truth twisted, the truth restored, and the truth revealed. So what's happened? The truth twisted. The truth twisted. The truth twisted.

What has occurred? Well, you see, the Judaizers at this time, so the Judaizers, they were the Jews who accepted Christianity, but they believed that all of God's promises and all of God's gifts were for the Jews alone.

They weren't for the Gentiles. They weren't for the non-Jews. Therefore, when the Apostle Paul is standing up and he's preaching that the gospel is for everybody, every single person, you can imagine that the Judaizers are sitting there pretty uncomfortable.

They don't think that's right. The Judaizers, or as Paul kind of refers to them, the false teachers, have risen up in verse 7, and they're stirring up trouble.

[7 : 57] Now, they're teaching a false doctrine. And it's a false doctrine that has shaken these Galatian congregations that were established by Paul previously.

These teachers, they weren't just distorting the gospel. What they were actually doing is they were reversing, and they were corrupting the gospel to such an extent that the gospel was just being turned upside down and back to front.

These false teachers, they were messing about with the gospel. And they were messing about with a gospel that cannot be touched without it causing trouble for the church.

See, these Galatian people, these converts, they had received the gospel of grace. They had received it. The gospel of grace, the good news of God, who is gracious to undeserving sinners, people like you and me.

The grace that gave Jesus Christ to die for all. And the grace that God calls each person to himself. It's incredibly good news.

[9 : 13] But these people in Galatia, they have failed to live in the knowledge that salvation is due to the grace of God alone.

And it's nothing to do with effort, merit, or works. They can't earn the grace of God. It is a free gift. They did not deny that you must be a believer in Jesus Christ.

They didn't deny that. But what they were doing was a gospel plus. They were doing a gospel plus the law. So in essence, what they were saying is that what you need is Moses to come along to finish what Christ began.

Moses to finish, through the law, what Christ began. It's essentially what those Galatian converts were being led to believe. Really? Really?

Is that what God intended when by his grace he sent Jesus? Really? You can imagine Paul going, where on earth have you got this from? Where have you got this from?

[10 : 27] Because of course not. That is not what God intended. And so Paul is very swift to confront this situation. Relaxing the hold of the gospel.

So if you let go of the gospel and you go with anything else than just the gospel, is a reminder of how the devil disturbs the church. As much by error as by evil.

And when the devil can't entice Christians into sin, he'll find another way of affecting things. He'll seek to deceive them with false doctrine. Paul couldn't allow this.

Paul just could not allow this to happen in these churches that he'd been a part of found in. Not a chance. He couldn't allow the glory of God to be at stake. He wasn't going to allow the glory of God

to be at stake because of these false teachers.

Not a chance. He wasn't going to allow the souls of people to be at stake either. It's worth noting that the greatest troublemakers are not those outside the church, but those who are inside the church, who are trying to change the gospel and bring in other teaching.

[11 : 46] That is not the gospel. We've seen in this nation, haven't we, churches that have brought in a gospel that is not the true gospel. And what has happened to those churches?

Are they happy, joyous places? There is strife. There has been anger. There has been splits. It's been horrendous. There has been...

There is. The false teachers here in Galatians, perhaps they have dazzled the people, but anyone who rejects the gospel is to be rejected themselves.

Such people they may stand up and look all fantastic in robes maybe they're very good speakers really good orators but such people no matter how gifted or how they may appear as like an angel from heaven and speaking to them no matter how they speak with dignity and authority no matter whether they're preachers pastors bishops or archbishops if they bring anything other than the gospel that is founded by Christ and preached by the apostles as recorded for us in the New Testament they are to be rejected they are to be rejected no compromises should be allowed to enter the church no compromises to be allowed within the body of the believers on the Lord Jesus Christ and so in verse 6 I want you to hear the frustration that is in Paul's mind in verse 6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you I am astonished astonished that the people of Galatia have turned their allegiance from the grace of the living Christ that he had preached to them and have turned from that to another gospel I am astonished that you have done that I'm astonished that you have turned to a different way Paul is accusing them of being deserters he is accusing them of abandoning the true and living gospel Paul he just cannot believe that they have turned away from the gospel of Jesus Christ to a dead law he cannot believe it imagine if you were Paul and you've been instrumental in the founding of these churches and then you find out that these people have turned away from what you originally taught you are going to be pretty astonished too aren't you they turned away from the gospel of grace by which you can be saved and that is why he is so astonished so the truth had been twisted the truth had been had almost been torn up it had been twisted we get to the truth restored though see the work of Christ is a finished work the gospel of Christ is free grace salvation by grace alone see Paul doesn't just confront their theology their doctrine but the experience too so when he accuses them of deserting the gospel of grace he tells them also that they have deserted the one who called them in grace he tells them that they have turned from God Ouch imagine you're receiving that letter you were saved by grace but now you have turned away from the one who gave you the free gift of grace this also means that Christian faith and Christian life that they are they are utterly combined Christian life and Christian faith they are combined they cannot be separated they are intertwined and Paul was absolutely incensed that a corruption of the gospel could lead to the destruction of the way of salvation and allow souls to continue to ruin rather than being saved by the gospel to restore truth what does Paul do Paul calls for them to be accursed he calls for them to be accursed that is a divine ban or anathema this is strong stuff so what he's asking for is that the God's judgment would just rain down on these false teachers and

himself included if he is teaching anything other than the true gospel he is asking for the wrath of God his judgment to fall upon them Paul is he's facing the false teachers and their false teaching in the strongest way possible but his hope his hope is that these Galatian converts would reject and refuse to give any further time to the false teachers Paul is saying let those men be accursed may they get off the stage and and you stop listening to them so that you you true believers can return back to the gospel again that's my hope for you is what the apostle Paul is saying and this is as strong and as applicable today as it was in the time of this shocking unrest in the Galatian churches today there is still no place for false teachers without exception but this is actually a really well-considered condemnation from Paul it's not something that he said or written in the heat of the moment yeah there is anger there's frustration there's there's real passion in his words here but he's thought about what he's writing to them he's writing as a servant of Jesus Christ he's demonstrating his responsibility to God through Christ too isn't that a lesson for us as well in in the heat of the moment when we want to say something and deal with a situation just step back and take a considered approach how many times have we been in situations where we've been caught in a hot moment and we've said something that we've then immediately gone ground swallowed me

up i i i oh no what have i just said you know or is it just me okay it's just me um i've had way too many of them and said this was a great reminder to me that actually whoa kian just in those moments where where you want to say something and you're being hot-headed just take a pause and take a considered approach to it interestingly the the the warning that paul is giving is exactly the same warning that jesus himself gave in mark 9 42 if you remember what he says he says whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he was thrown into the sea jesus himself is saying the same thing considered words but massive implication i want to ask you do we care for the glory of christ and for the souls of all to not want for a moment the corruption of the gospel of grace do we want that is that on your mind that actually you want to live a life that is just of the gospel of grace and nothing else do we pray for our pastors do we pray for the other men who seek to share the gospel the message of god do we really pray for them week after week or do we just say that we do it because it just looks right and sounds right amongst the people we were with but do we really pray for them because they need it i need it i can't do this on my own pastor daniel can't do it on his own we need the prayer of the saints and then the apostle paul he's dealt with the truth twisted he's dealt with the truth restored and then we get to the truth revealed in verses 11 and 12 the gospel of god

[20 : 27] it is not of man it's not of his of his own invention it's not something he's just conjured up it is the revelation of jesus christ the gospel that the false teachers were questioning and the galatians were deserting was a revelation from christ again you can just sense a little bit of what paul is going through here you've abandoned you've abandoned the grace of god you're abandoning the gospel of jesus christ what are you thinking the gospel is god's gospel the words are not his own is what he's saying but they're god's they're god's words and they're to be followed see paul he knows that these false teachers have not just influenced but they have really polluted the minds of these galatian people and so he continues to prove to prove that the revelation is from god and it's from no other means no other means and he does this by sharing his own testimony that testimony can be really powerful and here the testimony is very powerful because it's proving proving that the revelation is from god see what paul does is he looks at his life before at and after his conversion see what you have here in just a few verses is a slightly more extended story see paul hasn't always been known as paul paul was saul that was his name pre-conversion he was the rising star in all of judaism judaism he was a pharisee of the strictest jewish sect he was a very learned man he excelled beyond all his contemporaries he was head and shoulders above the rest in terms of his mind and his knowledge of the scriptures at that time he was an apprentice of one of the leaders of the nation and that leader of the nation in Acts 4 is the one this is Gamaliel who put forward a policy of toleration towards the Christians see Gamaliel he understood that if God was in this this Christianity business that was rising up at that time then there was nothing they could they could do that it would be dangerous for them to oppose God but on the flip side

Gamaliel understood that actually if if God wasn't in this whole Christianity thing at that time then the whole Christianity thing it would just fizzle out and it would just be dealt with quite naturally Gamaliel was a wise person very wise often in the world for the apprentice to become the master they have to leapfrog and they have to challenge the master's thinking and that's exactly the situation that happens here Saul decides that rather than adopting that that policy of toleration that his his mentor is suggesting Saul he doesn't want to be the apprentice anymore he wants to be the top man so instead what Saul does is he pursues a policy of persecution in order to rise up in order to rid the nation of all these Christians what incredible pride what incredible pride and ambition from Saul he just wants to be better than everyone else just better than everyone else however that continued right up until the day that he met his match when he met Stephen in Acts 7 standing in in Saul's synagogue the synagogue in Saul's area and Stephen stands up a man of God Saul is utterly outmatched by Stephen on that day and how does Saul respond Saul responds by being the leader of those who martyr Stephen we often imagine that all these little minion people run off to stone Stephen and that Saul is just left standing in the background holding on to their coats but I don't think that was the case well I think actually what was happening is Saul is standing at their back and he's directing everything he's taking charge of this situation what Saul is doing is he's standing there and letting these other people get their hands literally dirty by stoning

Stephen Saul's pride has fuelled his absolute hatred for the Christians but at his highest point when it looks like Saul is going to be just going up there on that road to Damascus boom Jesus Christ meets with Saul Jesus meets and humbles proud fanatical bigoted Saul Saul named after the king of his tribe and soon after he becomes Paul what does Paul mean small how Saul's life had changed how Saul's life had changed so much in verses 13 and 14 it says about how you have heard of my former life I was advancing I was zealous it was all about I the focus was I pre-conversion but in verses 15 and 16

Paul is referring to how God got a hold of Paul an utterly transformed Paul and that's why he's so keen to share with these Galatian readers God has transformed my life Paul acknowledges that he had been fighting God that he'd been fighting Christ that he'd been fighting other people he acknowledges that he doesn't deserve the mercy of God he didn't ask for the mercy of God he didn't seek after it but God's mercy God's mercy had found him and by the grace of God he Paul had been saved you can imagine the emotion that Paul was feeling as he wrote this letter can you not imagine in those times where there's one of the lights like we've got in here a little candle maybe sitting at a little desk writing this out maybe tears streaming down his eyes as he's recalling what Christ has done for him recalling how how he he saw he had persecuted

[27 : 51] Christ and we heard from Daniel this morning about what is sin sin is saying no to God and every single one of us do it too and that's almost like a persecution on Christ from us and you don't like to hear that I don't like to hear that and that's why Galatians is uncomfortable but we're no different but Paul he's had his eyes open to the fact that Christ is the Messiah of the Jews he's had his eyes open to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God he's had his eyes opened to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the whole world Jews and Gentiles alike and so Paul writes that he has then been charged to preach Christ to preach Christ to the whole world and not the law of Moses as the Judeoans were teaching but to preach the gospel and he is desperate for the

Galatians again to just grasp this revealed truth Saul had been a fanatical opponent of the gospel but by the grace of God Paul had been called before he was even born it says here in the scriptures God knew what was going to happen to Paul and how his life would be God knew that he would be a preacher of the gospel that he had so vehemently opposed earlier in his life Paul continues to prove to the Galatians that following his conversion that the gospel had been revealed not by flesh and blood not from consulting other people not from being in Jerusalem with the apostles there but instead what does he say he says I went into Arabia he went into Arabia for three years and then from Arabia he went back to Damascus again why did he go to Arabia why was he there for three years that's his training ground it was there that he spent time meditating on the Old Testament scriptures that he had available to him it was there that he met with Jesus himself and spent time with Christ it was there that he was able to understand better the life and the death of Jesus to get a better hold on the gospel of grace that had been revealed to him he tells them that he didn't go up to Jerusalem until after three years and even when he went to Jerusalem he says he only visited for 15 days and there he met Cephas that is the apostle Peter spent 15 days with Peter and also with James the Lord's brother just 15 days and what Paul is saying here is it was just a brief visit it wasn't sufficient time for the full counsel of God to be revealed and to be taught and so from Paul's mind what he's saying to these people is just ridiculous it is ludicrous to suggest that he had obtained his gospel from the

Jerusalem apostles in that 15 days how much can you learn in 15 days there's a few nods there not much yeah I agree not a great deal certainly not the full counsel of God in 15 days and then in verse 21 he says I travelled to Syria and to Cilicia to churches who knew only of his reputation pre-conversion they must have been terrified they must have been terrified having Paul there but he says he preached faith to them the faith that he had previously opposed we didn't read it this morning but in Galatians 2 verse 1 it says then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem after 14 years after 14 years he returned to Jerusalem and by which time then his gospel had been fully developed without any reference to the other apostles the point then is that Paul was isolated from the

Jerusalem church leaders from the apostles based in Jerusalem the gospel message that he shared was the revealed truth from God and not from any man that his authority and views were from Christ the authority and views were independent of church leaders and not from the church friends we've made it through Galatians 1 but how does truth twisted truth restored and truth revealed help us how is it relevant to you and me today now this is probably the point in the

message where you start to shuffle a little bit because like what's he going to come out with this week perhaps you are even thinking I want to just get out of here now what teaching do we follow what teaching do we follow you say

[33 : 36] I read the bible commendable very good can I ask you what do you watch on telly what do I watch on television what soaps do I like to follow actually I don't but what things do you watch regularly what do you read what kind of books do you like what kind of magazines do you buy what kind of newspapers do you like to flick in an hour of what do you look at online what interests us and distracts us online how much does the way that others live as we see them on social media influence the way we live our lives but this isn't relevant yeah it is because all these things they are affecting how you approach life and how you live life you say

I read my bible I live by the bible friends the truth is we don't I allow other things to influence me I allow my mind to watch other things and it affects the way I think about things at times so join me in just being honest for a moment these things influence us we need to understand and truly get a hold of the fact that all these forms of information are distracting us they're influencing us they are moulding us they're shaping us they're shaping our character and our behaviour at the end of the day they're not of the gospel of Jesus Christ now I'm not saying go and abandon it go and sell your telly go and get rid of all your books that's not what I'm saying what I'm saying is to be aware of their influence to be aware of how they distract to be aware that actually it's the gospel of Jesus Christ that we need to live by that is the teaching that should shape our lives our absolute foundation for the way that we live must be the gospel of Jesus

Christ without all the trimmings otherwise we live a gospel plus and that is not what the gospel of grace is about friends let us strive to seek to live by faith the revealed truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ alone may God bless us as we wrestle with the truth for the next installment next week amen