

Sermon Transcript from 7th Sept' 2025 - The Gospel of Freedom

Reference: Galatians 1

Speaker: David Warren

Sermon Summary

The sermon explores Paul's letter to the Galatians, emphasising the **singular truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ** and the **freedom it offers**. The speaker highlights that Paul's authority as an apostle came directly from God, not from human appointment, and that he vehemently countered attempts to dilute or distort this foundational message. A central theme is the importance of **remaining steadfast in the true Gospel**, which provides grace and peace, rescues humanity from sin, and offers genuine liberty, rather than succumbing to "different gospels" that impose legalistic restrictions. Ultimately, the sermon calls listeners to be **servants of Christ rather than pleasers of people**, even if it means facing opposition, echoing Paul's own unwavering commitment to the truth, which cost him his life.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/dvPUPHs7Fkk?t=3511>

Sermon Transcript

Good morning to you. It's good to be with you.

We sung just a little while ago the song Goodness of God, at the end of June, my wife Eunice and myself celebrated our golden wedding, and we celebrated it through there in your hall with a party of about 60 people and each of us made a speech. We'd sort of [prepared] it independent of each other. It's a sort of secret for the occasion, but we each chose words from that song Goodness of God:

*"All my life you have been faithful.
All my life you have been so so good.
With every breath that I am able,
I will sing of the goodness of God."*

And we were encouraged earlier to speak of things of good. Wasn't this week, but it was back in June but we acknowledged on that occasion before God and before the people there that God had been with us, kept us through 50 years of marriage and the different situations of that.

So, this morning we come to Galatians chapter 1.

I think a series you're going to have through the book of Galatians. Galatians is different from Paul's others letters in two ways. Galatia was not a city like Philippi or Ephesus. It was an area which are a number of cities; Pacinian, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe are all mentioned in Acts chapters 13 and 14. So rather than being a letter to one church, this was a letter to a series of churches and it appears from the end of the letter that someone took the letter and took it to each church around that route.

The other thing about Galatians is it was probably the first letter that we have in the New Testament that Paul wrote. It was certainly one of the very early ones. And so, Paul is wanting to establish the truth of the gospel and to counter even in the very early days those things that were being said against it.

[Was] written probably about 50 AD around the time of the council of Jerusalem an early letter. It speaks about the gospel throughout the letter, but particularly in this first chapter because Paul is already under attack.

There were questions about why he changed sides, the persecutor of the church. Was it just a ploy to get into the centre, the leadership of the church to destroy it further? Why had he done it?

Then they questioned his apostleship. Was he really an apostle?

He'd not, as far as we know, seen Jesus or heard directly the words of Jesus.

Wasn't that a requirement of an apostle? So why was he calling himself an apostle? And most seriously, those who had been his friends and confederates in the past in Judaism were now furious that he had rejected them, rejected as they saw it their faith for this new faith in Jesus Christ.

And so, Paul is important to want to express the truth of what happened on the road to Damascus and what God is doing now for him.

One key theme from the letter is that of freedom.

I expect we most of us have been at some time to Runnymede and seen the memorials there. This one to commemorate Magna Carta signed there somewhere on the grounds of running meat in 1215 a symbol of freedom under the law.

And because of that many people have given book to Galatians the title the "Magna Carta of Christian freedom", but through it and through the gospel Paul speaks of the freedom that there is in Christ he speaks about Christ releasing from the old into the new, from the law as restrictive into a living that has the freedom of Christ's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, Paul speaks about in the first five verses his authority and the gospel. He says his authority as an apostle is not from human beings even the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, but from God himself. He's clearly speaking about that encounter he had with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. How it totally turned his life round and changed him completely.

So, he says he's sent from not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. His authority is in Jesus. Jesus who sends him. But he speaks also in verse two that he speaks from all the brothers and sisters who are with him. He's not a sort of lone ranger. But he has the authority also by the appointment of the churches.

He's been recognised that the call God had placed on his life was ratified by those that he served. And so his authority is primarily in God but also in others who have recognized that.

You may be aware that over the last few weeks there has been I think for us as a Baptist denomination the sad news of the closure of Spurgeon's College. The college which for 169 years have been training ministers for the gospel. I trained in that college and so the news of its closure saddened me. I think back to those years of training, the recognition through the Baptist Union and then in various churches in the years since. A call from God that I received through the preaching of Billy Graham. But a call that was recognized through the college, through the union, and through various churches.

Paul has authority because of God and because of the churches that recognize that. Then in verses three and four, he gives a summary of the gospel that he's talking about. "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of God our Father, to whom be glory forever. and ever."

If we were asked how will we define the gospel, surely it would have something like those words that Paul gave here. It's God's grace and God's peace.

The gospel is not deserved. It's not a right that we can demand. It is of God's grace.

It's a gospel that brings ultimate and eternal peace. Peace for this life because we know whose we are and peace for eternity because we know who we will be with. And it comes, Paul says, through Christ's death. Christ who gave himself for our sins and rescued us from the present evil age.

This is the gospel that Paul proclaimed.

This is the gospel that Paul received on the road to Damascus that changed his life.

This is the gospel that he speaks about in this letter.

But the book the letter quickly changes. Verse 6 comes almost like a bombshell, a clap of thunder. I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel, Paul's gospel from God, now a different gospel.

The Galatians are beginning to turn away from that gospel. They received it joyfully at first as life, as light, as truth. But others came and questioned what they'd done and what they'd received.

Imagine that you were concerned for a community and you recognized that within that community there were tensions and arguments, and you had some money that was available and you thought if you could build a kind of community centre that everyone was welcome in perhaps some of those tensions and difficult disagreements could be resolved as people actually met together.

So, you began the process. The foundations were laid for this community hall. But then you were called away on business and other reasons and you had to leave the area, and you began to hear that a very different building was being constructed on that foundation. It was a building of two parts with two entrances, two halls inside. And people were saying the divisions within our community need to stay. We cannot overcome them. We need to meet differently. And they were questions to why they weren't following the plan pattern and the plans of the original building.

They said he had some funny ideas. That chap he didn't really have permission to make that design, got a bit muzzled... we're the real authorities, this is how it's got to be.

That's if you like a parable almost of what happened to Paul. He had established a foundation for these churches in Galatia. But others have come and said, "No, we don't want to build what Paul wanted on that foundation. We want a different gospel, one that suits us better, one that is more open to others, one that is more acceptable in the current situation.

We want to construct something different on that foundation. And Paul away now from the area. He's horrified at what is happening.

The language is really strong in verse six. What he says concerning them to apostasy.

They are turning away from the truth to a false gospel according to people. A gospel that brings back all the restrictions and the chains of the old law, not love. A perverted gospel, he says. For the true gospel is one that sets free. There is only one true gospel, Paul says. Anything else, wherever it comes from, even if he spoke it, he says in verse eight, you need to test it against what God has said.

So, the gates of the Galatians gospel have been diluted and distorted. From verse 11, Paul speaks about the true gospel. The true gospel he speaks about firstly in his own experience and he gives his summary of his life up to this point against the Christian church, against those who follow Christ, against Jesus himself, persecuting to the extreme to take people into prison and even have them killed for following Jesus.

But divine revelation came. God's gospel broke into Paul's life.

And now he is sharing that experience. He's proclaiming that good news around so many places in the Eastern world with God with him. Change of life which was lived out as the great apostle, the great missionary.

So at the end of the chapter, he says those who not yet message me would have heard of him said this is a man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy, and they praised God because of me.

The gospel through which God is now working releasing people into the power of the Holy Spirit through God's grace and God's peace is with them. So, from Jerusalem to Syria and Cissia as Tarsus and Antioch through that map that you've perhaps seen some Bibles have in the back showing the missionary journeys of Paul.

He proclaims the good news of Jesus. And today if we're going to proclaim one gospel, the gospel of revealed by Jesus Christ. The gospel we find in the New Testament.

There are going to be those who will say to us, you need to compromise, you need to change it. You need to be different. And Paul's message would really echo down to us, I hope, to say, "No, there is only one gospel. It's the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." And Paul was prepared to pay the ultimate cost of following that. Eventually ended up in Rome and his life was taken from him because he followed in truth the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so for us today we have before us the gospel of truth and the gospel of freedom.

No other gospel, a gospel that sets us free because it's the true gospel to live free because it is of true freedom. We have the gift of God, a new for us this morning of his grace and his peace.

We can know the uniqueness of the Christian gospel, the truth of release. Not that we earn, not that we strive for, but is offered us in Christ.

But we need to be aware also that there are true and there are false teachers, and we need to come back to God's word.

Test what we hear, test what we are told.

Does it meet what God has said and revealed in his scripture? And we need to pay the price. for us probably not the ultimate price that Paul paid but Paul spoke about being servants of Christ or pleasing people.

Charles Spurgeon who founded the college I spoke about earlier was preaching at the Metropolitan Synagogue which is still there at the Elephant Castle in London. Just before he was to go and preach one of his deacons came up to him and said, "A very famous person is in the congregation today. They've just come in. We thought you want to be aware." And Spurgeon replies, "I hope they are blessed by what happens here today, but I'm not going to change one word of the sermon that I'm going to give."

Spurgeon paid the price at points for preaching a sermon, a go gospel that others didn't like. They criticized him. But he put himself to be a pleaser of God, a servant of God rather than a pleaser of people.

And perhaps for us each that will be a challenge this week in conversation, in what other people say, in opinions we have to give about situations, the way we live, the way we use our money.

As we heard earlier, the way that we use our time, are we servants of Christ or are we pleasers of people? Who sets the agenda for my life, our lives this week?

If we're going to follow the true one gospel, then we will receive that grace and peace God wants us to. We will glory and rejoice in the uniqueness of the Christian gospel. We'll embrace all those who will encourage us as true teachers of it, but we will reject those who are false teachers and as servants of Christ. We will please him. Worship that puts him above everything else.

And if that's costly in relationship, and people's opinion of us and we're not here to please people but to please God.

[David closes with a prayer]

Father, we thank you for that one gospel that you have revealed through Jesus Christ.

Thank you that he paid the ultimate price to bring that gospel about in his death on the cross.

Thank you for the good news we have, the forgiveness of sins, the freedom through the spirit.

May we hold firmly to the truth of the gospel that you have revealed through Christ and by the spirit.

Help us this week to live it out in our attitude to others, in the decisions that we make.

And when the pressure is on to please others, may we reject that and above all else be your servants pleasing you for your glory and for the blessing of our lives and through them the blessing of others.

Amen.