

Time to Reflect

- In what ways could we, in today's world, drift away from God's grace? How could this be avoided?
- Why is God's grace so important, not just for salvation but also in our daily living?

Last week we started our journey through Galatians by studying Paul's introductory remarks. We reflected on what the gospel message is and we discussed the dangers of false teachings. This week we move to consider some powerful and direct words from Paul. Having presented the gospel in his introduction, Paul then proceeded to highlight that there is only one gospel and any deviation away from it is actually no gospel at all. These are words of warning, issued in love, to help God's people remain faithful and obedient to Him.

"Paul struck while the iron was hot. God had called them (the Galatians) in His grace and saved them from their sins. Now they were moving from grace back into law. They were abandoning liberty for legalism."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians*, p23)

Specifics

- Our passage begins with Paul revealing that he was astonished (v6). We could, perhaps, also suggest that he was anxious about the Galatians and how they were spiritually drifting.
- Paul was worried that the Galatians were deserting the grace of God (v6). Interestingly, the verb that is used here indicates that they were in the process of deserting and had not fully turned away. As such, Paul moved decisively and with directness.
- What we encounter in these verses is, in general terms, a call to adhere to foundational Christian principles. Indeed, the grace of God is a prevailing theme in this letter to the Galatians.
- Paul was worried that the Galatians were turning away from God's grace and were embracing legalism.
- Warren Wiersbe reflects, **"The Galatian believers were not simply 'changing religions' or 'changing churches' but were actually abandoning the very grace of God! To make matters worse, they were deserting the very God of grace.¹"**
- Grace is God's favour, extended to us in love, even though we don't deserve it. It is the offer of His unconditional forgiveness so that we can be set free from the burden and consequence of sin.
- Having experienced God's grace, we are then called to live in that grace. God longs for us to have a personal and meaningful relationship with Him.
- Wiersbe develops this as he writes, **"We must never forget that the Christian life is a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ.²"**

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians* (David C Cook, 2009), p23.

² Ibid, p23.

- By moving away from God's grace and towards legalism, Paul suggested that the Galatians were "...turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all." (v6b-7a).
- Paul recognised the danger that this was. Even the slightest deviation away from God's truth is serious and can lead people into spiritual error. This is one reason why we need to be well grounded in God's Word and spend time each day reading our Bibles.
- Timothy Keller helpfully reminds us, "Another gospel is not another gospel. It is no gospel. To change the gospel the tiniest bit is to lose it so completely that the new teaching has no right to be called a 'gospel.'³"
- Paul was very aware of how this situation had emerged in Galatia. In (v7) we read, "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ."
- A group of false teachers known as 'the Judaisers' had started to try to lead the Galatians back into the Jewish religious system. They combined the Old Testament law with the gospel of God's grace. This was a mixture of grace and works, and Paul moved quickly to counteract this teaching.
- The word translated as 'pervert' in (v7) can also found in Acts 13:10 and it means 'to turn about, to change into an opposite character.' We could also translate this word as 'to reverse.'
- In other words, the Judaisers were trying to reverse the gospel message and its impact in Galatia. They wanted to promote a cheap form of grace that depended more on human thinking and less on the amazing love of God. This was contrary to the wonder of God's grace.
- Wiersbe suggests that "...God's grace involves something more than man's salvation. We not only are saved by grace, but we are to also live by grace (1 Cor. 15:10). We stand in grace; it is the foundation for the Christian life."⁴
- In (v8-10) Paul exposed his adversaries and demonstrated his own faithfulness to God. As a good overseer, he sought to protect the Galatians and offer wise instruction.
- He highlighted the severity of the situation that was emerging in Galatia (v8) and he repeated his warning (v9). Any teaching that is contrary to the Word of God is dangerous, deceptive and misleading.
- Wiersbe offers a practical insight. "The test of a...ministry is not popularity (Matt.24:11) or miraculous signs and wonders (v23-24), but...faithfulness to the Word of God."⁵
- Once again, let us never forget or ignore the importance of being biblically grounded. False teaching is not a trivial issue and God takes it very seriously – hence the double reference made by Paul to God's curse in (v8-9).
- Paul concluded his reflections by asking two questions that reveal he was not interested in seeking popularity. He was entirely focused on doing God's will and leading others to embrace faithfulness.
- Throughout these verses, Paul's tone is uncompromising. Keller suggests that Paul was right in adopting this attitude for three main reasons⁶:
 1. A different gospel means that we are deserting the One who called us (v6).
 2. A different gospel is no gospel at all (v6-7).
 3. A different gospel brings condemnation (v8-9).
- This week we are challenged to be faithful to God and His amazing grace. We are reminded that we need to be a biblical people who remain faithful to God at all times.

³ Timothy Keller, *Galatians For You* (The Good Book Company, 2013), p18.

⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians*, p24.

⁵ Ibid, p25.

⁶ Keller, *Galatians For You*, p22.