

“Paul’s Gospel”

November 21, 2010

Text: Galatians 1:10-12

How does one become saved?

If you ask any religion but Xnity, the answer will always be the same=> do some particular good works or religious deeds.

* E.g. A Muslim will quote you the Koran (4:13-14).

“Limits [are] set by Allah. Those who **obey** Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) and that will be the supreme achievement. But those who **disobey** Allah and His Messenger and **transgress** His limits will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.”

* A Hindu will quote the Vedas (4 books of Hindu scriptures).

The Vedas teach that salvation is liberation from the terrible cycle of death/reincarnation.

One is saved, not from sin, but from one's own existence.

The Hindu believes that as long as he exists, he will suffer, & his suffering will never end, because reincarnation will keep bringing him back to suffer some more.

Salvation for a Hindu is release from this vicious cycle, to attain the bliss of union with a god.

Hinduism teaches 3 ways to achieve salvation=>

- * Meticulous obedience to the Hindu scriptures.
- * Renouncing one’s own life to seek mystical knowledge.
- * Committing oneself totally to the worship of a particular god, spending one’s time meditating on him/her.

* A Buddhist will quote the Buddhavacana

This is a collection of original sayings by Buddha.

For a Buddhist, salvation is permanent cessation from the suffering/ignorance that inevitably comes with existence in this world.

The way to Buddhist salvation is called the Noble Eightfold Path, & includes wisdom, morality, and concentration.

Notice that in every one of these religions, a person must do certain prescribed acts in order to gain his salvation.

No matter what other false religion you might think of—

Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, Scientology, even legalistic Xnity—it always promises salvation in return for doing certain deeds=>

- * Wash in the Ganges River
- * Place a flower on the tomb of Buddha's tooth
- * Get baptized, go to confession, & say the Rosary
- * Sing "*I Surrender All,*" & look like you really mean it, as you leave your cigarettes at the front of the church, for the 3rd week in a row.

True Christianity alone proclaims salvation through the grace of God—plus nothing.

It says, "Not only do you don't need to add your own righteous acts to God's gracious gift of salvation; you must not do so, if you think that will in any way add to your salvation or the security of your salvation. "There's nothing for you to do. But God will do something wonderful for you that will transform you

your life & set you on the course to heaven rather than hell.”

You must simply repent/believe (or, as I prefer to say it, “believe with repentant faith”).

But God, by His grace, will even give you the faith & the repentant spirit you need, to do that!

You don’t even have to do that on your own.

Just look to Jesus, & He will save your soul from sin.

Why is the Xn plan of salvation so different from that of every other religion?

Ans: It came from God, while every other religion came from man.

* E.g. the Koran is a collection of Mohammed’s uninspired sayings—a man.

* The Hindu Vedas were written by men.

* The Buddhavacana is thought to be Buddha’s thoughts/sayings—another man.

* The Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith.

* The uninspired writings of Judge Rutherford and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society form the doctrinal basis of the Jehovah Witnesses—all men!

* The book *Scientology* was written by L. Ron Hubbard.

Satan loves these man-made religions because they capture people’s souls & block them from the truth of the gospel.

Paul’s gospel was different: It was revealed by God Himself.

In Rom 16:25, Paul called it “*my gospel.*” since he identified w/ it so closely, but it was revealed to him by God, which isn’t true of any other religions scriptures.

Satan sent false teachers to Galatia, telling the believers there to add their own good deeds to the pure gospel of God’s grace, in order to corrupt/nullify it.

He wanted to destroy the gospel God had revealed, by mixing some of man’s thoughts in with it.

That turned it into just another man-made religion.

These false teachers were supposed to be Jewish “Xns” from Jerusalem, but they weren’t really Xns, and the church at Jerusalem hadn’t sent them.

They told the Galatians that, in addition to repentant faith, circumcision and obedience to the Jewish Law were also necessary in order to become saved.

They decided that, in order to undermine Paul’s gospel, he himself had to be discredited, so they began a smear-campaign against Paul.

These “Judaizers” declared he wasn’t a real apostle (not being 1 of “The original 12”), but a self-appointed imposter, a wannabe-apostle.

They also attacked his character, saying he was only in the ministry for personal glory.

They implied that he had either stolen his gospel from the other apostles, or had just made it up himself.

They said he compromised the truth for the sake of popularity, throwing out all the Jewish laws/ceremonies, just to make the gospel seem more appealing to Gentiles.

I.e., that he was a compromising people-pleaser, and that God had nothing to do with him/his-ministry/gospel.

At the beginning of *Galatians*, Paul had defended his apostleship.

Now he'll also begin to defend the gospel he proclaimed.

In today's text, Paul will make 3 fundamental assertions=>

- * First, I am not a people-pleaser.
- * Second, I do not preach a people-pleasing gospel.
- * Third, My gospel is from Jesus Christ Himself.

*** First, I am not a people-pleaser.**

Any minister who is a people-pleaser, is likely to compromise the truth, sacrificing it for the sake of popularity.

He is determined to avoid conflict/persecution, so he refrains from teaching anything in the Bible that's controversial.

Or, he'll twist unpopular biblical doctrines to make them seem less-offensive/more-acceptable.

Inevitably there'll be gaping holes/inconsistencies in his teaching.

It's difficult for us pastors, when someone in our congregation makes a theological statement that's biblically incorrect.

If that person is walking in the flesh, we know our response is likely to wound his ego and hurt his feelings.

If you have really studied the subject/passage involved, & are confident in your understanding of what the Word says about it, you don't have a right to back down & compromise.

But you're tempted to, in order to pacify your Xn brother/sister, and keep from offending them .

That mentality has all but paralyzed many pastors today, & Scripture says it's just going to get worse.

2 Tim 4:3-4=> *“For the time will come when they [the Xns community] will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; / and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”*

A people-pleasing preacher will never say/do anything that might upset people or cost him popularity.

He knows that, if he breaks that rule, people will leave his church, & he's not willing to risk that.

He's a politician at heart, teaching whatever the winds of popular Xn opinion mandate, & he can safely teach.

Paul begins our text, defending himself against the Judaizers' accusation that he is an inconsistent people-pleaser.

They said he was watering down the divine standard to win popularity among the Gentiles, & support from those Jews who were tired of their legalistic version of Judaism.

In verse 9, Paul had just called for God to curse some false teachers.

Now he says in essence, Does that sound to you like something a people-pleaser would say?

[Galatians 1:10]=> *“For am I **now** seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were **still** trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”*

Paul hadn’t pronounced such a strong anathema against false teachers just to prove he wasn’t a people-pleaser.

He’d done it because he was truly a man of conviction and of holy passion.

* X’s glory was at stake because the Judaizers were saying His death was insufficient to completely atone for men’s sins.

A man of Xn character/conviction couldn’t stand for that.

* Men’s souls were also at stake, because the false teachers were misleading them, teaching them a false gospel.

X had said=> *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea”*

(Mk 9:42).

But Paul's outrage over the Judaizers' false teaching also proved that he wasn't a man-pleaser, but a man of sincere convictions/integrity.

Paul uses the word “*still*”, because there had been a time in his life when he had gotten caught up in trying to please people before he was saved.

He had been a status-seeking/man-pleasing rabbi.

In Gal 1:14, he says he was advancing in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries among his countrymen.

That's because he was so zealous for Jewish traditions.

He was a real standout among young Jewish legalists.

Acts 7:58 says that, when the Jewish fanatics stoned Stephen, they=> “*laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul*” (the same man later called “Paul”).

Even though he was young, Paul had already played some leading role in the execution of Stephen.

But the word “*now*” in verse 10 of our own text is emphatic=>

“*Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?*”

I.e., At one time I did seek men's favor, before I was saved, but are you really going to accuse me of that now?

Now I'm a slave of X, & anyone who ministers for Him these days will undoubtedly be hated by other men, just as Stephen was.

And we all know how that worked out for Stephen....

And any slave of X who withholds X's truth from men, just to avoid persecution, proves himself an unfaithful slave, & thus a failure, because of cowardice.

Does that sound like a compromising people-pleaser to you?

Paul prob. hated having to defend himself like this.

He wanted no unnecessary attention drawn to him.

He just wanted to preach X and Him crucified.

But he, like many ministers, was forced to defend himself, because preachers are often targets of the enemy's attack. If their reputation is destroyed, their character will be open to suspicion, and their credibility will be nullified.

Without credibility, a preacher has nothing to offer, because no one will listen to his message.

Take away his credibility, and you take away his voice.

Don't think for a moment that Satan doesn't realize that.

Which explains why faithful preachers are often under attack, and need their people's prayers and support.

So, although preachers dislike doing so, they must defend themselves when unfairly attacked, because there's too much riding on their credibility.

*** Second, I do not preach a people-pleasing gospel.**

The true gospel isn't the gospel as man would have it, and it's not measured according to human dimensions/desires;

It's the gospel as God would have it, and it's proportional to His own infinite grace, glory, and eternal purposes.

It's very counter-intuitive to man, because man/God think so differently.

So it's not pleasing/marketable from man's perspective;

But it pleases God, about whom Isa 53:10 says He was=>

“pleased To crush [His Son] putting Him to grief”

in order provide salvation through atonement of sins.

In verse 11 of our text, Paul communicates all this with the phrase “not according to man.”

[Verse 11]=> *“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is **not according to man.**”*

It's a “not-according-to-man” gospel in many different ways:

1) It was not devised by human intellect, so it doesn't conform to man's thoughts/standards.

1 Cor 2:9 calls it=> *“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN & EAR HAS NOT HEARD, & which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”*

None of the world's religions have devised anything like it.

Charles Spurgeon used to have his seminary students read chapters in the Koran just to discover for themselves its inferiority to the gospel.

Then he wrote=> *“A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of inspiration!”*

Nor did Gk philosophers ever imagine a religion by which God's wrath over His creatures' rebellion might be propitiated through His own Son's death—satisfying His justice, yet demonstrating His grace/love.

2) It's also not according to man since it doesn't pander to man's pride.

Other religions flatter/glorify man, telling him that although he may suffer because of his mistakes, or because he's a victim of bad luck, he's actually good/noble at heart.

The gospel lays man in the dust, sinful/condemned, and it explains that there's nothing he can do to save himself, & that if he gets saved, God must get the glory—not himself.

That God must choose him, because he is spiritually dead, and can't choose God.

This is so repugnant to man's pride that he can't/won't even consider it, unless/until the Spirit enables him to do so.

And the discovery that God doesn't enable every man to do so, leaves him indignant towards God, digging the hole of his own condemnation even deeper.

Rom 9:32 says that, because man's inclination is to pursue salvation by works, not faith, the gospel is by its very nature a stumbling stone to him.

3) It is also a gospel which offers great blessedness in the future, or the long run, but in this life X says—*“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, & take up his cross, & follow Me. / For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it”*
[Mt 16:25-26]

That’s certainly something you wouldn’t hear in a manmade gospel.

4) It’s a gospel that leaves no room for compromise with sin.

Other religions soft-sell man’s sin, making it a manageable problem—an-inconvenience, an-indiscretion, a-mistake, or at most a misdemeanor.

They portray it as readily resolved w/ a little human effort.

By contrast, the gospel causes men to feel the suffocating enormity of their sin by declaring that its wages are death, so there was no way for X to save men from it, but to die for them.

It portrays sin as a slavery from which man must be freed, but from which he cannot free himself.

It commands men to die to sin & become born again, by the washing of regeneration & renewal of the Spirit.

5) It’s also a gospel for the poor a/w/a the rich, the lowly a/w/a the exalted, the ignorant as well as the intelligent.

If anything, it favors the poor/down-trodden/humble.

In God’s Kingdom the last is first, & the first is last.

That's certainly not the way things should be
according to man, who feels that, if you work
hard for your salvation, you're entitled to it.
Man cannot enter the Kingdom through reason, no matter
how great his intellect.
But even a little child can enter it through simple
faith.

6) It's a gospel in which a person can safely rest his soul.

If it were man-made, like every other human religion, it
would be typical of everything else man touches=>
faulty, riddled with human flaws/weaknesses, and in
constant need of repair/replacement/updating.

Review: Paul has said he's not a people pleaser, nor is his gospel.

*** Third, My gospel is from Jesus Christ Himself.**

**The reason Paul's gospel was so different from all man-made
plans of salvation, was that he got it directly from God.**

And for this reason too, we can be absolutely confident of the
gospel message that Paul has passed on to us.

[Verse 12] (Paul)=> *"For I neither received it from man, nor
was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of
Jesus Christ."*

Not only did Jesus X reveal it to Paul;

It was about X Himself.

*** When we study the gospel as Paul presents it in Galatians;**

- * Or when we contemplate his treasury of deep theological insights recorded in Ephesian, Philippians, Colossians, his 2 letters to the Corinthians, & any of his other epistles;
- * Or when we study his profound insights into OT Scripture;

We wonder where he got this vast bank of knowledge he had;

The answer is=> he was individually tutored by the Second Person of the Godhead, X Himself.

Undoubtedly, Paul had heard things about his contemporary fellow Jew—Jesus—before he was saved;

And, after he was saved, Xns like Ananias, who were already in the church, must have told him even more;

But the doctrinal meaning of events like Jesus' virgin-birth, His sinless-life, His substitutionary atoning death, or His resurrection for our justification was revealed to Paul straight from the Lord Himself.

And all that we know about salvation by grace through faith in X's substitutionary/atoning death, is taught to us by Paul, to whom it was revealed, by Jesus X.

When did Jesus reveal the gospel to Paul?

The 1st lessons must have occurred at the time of his conversion.

He had been blinded by the glory of X, which had encircled/enveloped him on the road to Damascus.

He sat for 3 days, eating/drinking nothing, before Ananias found him, & laid his hands on him, so that Paul's sight would be restored & he'd be filled the H.S.

There were no Xns with Paul during those 3 days, to explain to him that he must believe in Jesus for his salvation;

So Jesus Himself must have revealed that to him.

Acts 22:16 says Ananias told Paul=> *"Why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."*

But since, in our own text, Paul says, *"I neither received [the gospel] from man, nor was I taught it,"* Jesus must have explained to him what "washing away your sins" actually meant.

In fact, even Ananias may not have fully understood that we are saved by grace through faith alone, because the man he was leading to X—Paul—hadn't written Eph 2:8-9 yet.

Then, for the next 3 years, Paul went to seminary in the desert.

In Gal 1:16-17, he writes=> *"I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, / nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia."*

Paul didn't seek out the Apostles to teach him the gospel.

And even though he'd spent several days in Damascus after his conversion, enjoying the fellowship of other Xns

there, and proclaiming in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God, he didn't consult w/ Damascus' believers to make sure he'd gotten the gospel right. He went to the deserts of Arabia, & spent the next 3 years receiving personal instruction from Jesus Himself.

“The Twelve” had been taught by X for 3 years before His death/resurrection, & now Paul was taught by X for 3 years after His resurrection.

That explains the theological depth of his writings. In some ways, Paul's instruction was superior to theirs.

In Jn 16:12, X told The Twelve=> *“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”*

He did say those things to Paul, who had an advantage because the crucifixion/resurrection had already taken place.

This is why Paul's gospel was so different from that of the Judaizers.

Their theological roots were in the OT, but by the 1st century, the scribes/rabbis had distorted/diluted it so much with their legalistic traditions, that it had become a contradiction of God's revealed will.

E.g. in Mt 15, X denounced them for depriving/dishonoring their parents by pretending to devote their money to

God, because the rabbis had said it was OK to do that.

I.e., tradition.

He said=> *“And thus you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition”* (Mt 15:6).

Paul himself had been trained in these Jewish traditions, but in Phil 3:8 he writes that he now considered them all rubbish.

The nature of revelation is important for us to study and understand today.

It's the word ἀποκάλυψις, which literally means an uncovering.

“Revelation” is God's unexpectedly uncovering truths that He has kept secret in ages past.

These were once mysteries, to both prophets/angels.

E.g. 1 Pet 1:10-11=> *“As to this salvation, the **prophets** who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry [into their own writings], / seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”*

God didn't reveal to them these secrets of X's Person/time.

But verse 12 adds=> *“These things which **now** have been **announced to you** through those who preached the gospel to you [apostles] by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which **angels** long to look.”*

Before X's incarnation/crucifixion, God hadn't even revealed the gospel to angels.

Revelation in its fullest sense is something God has reserved for prophets/apostles.

No one today can truthfully claim to receive revelations.

Not Mohammed, not Joseph Smith, not Ellen G. White, not the Watch Tower Society, not Jean Dixon, Edgar Casey, Catherine Kuhlman, Benny Hinn, nor anyone else.

If they actually could, their revelations should be written down and added to the 66 books of the Bible.

And Scripture itself strictly forbids our doing that.

Whenever someone tells you, “The Lord spoke to me,” ask what language He spoke—Gk/Heb/Aramaic/English?

Did you hear a voice?

Did it speak with a southern ,or a Bostonian accent?

Was it a man’s voice, or a womans’?

Was it the voice of an old person, or a child?

Most will say, “No, I just felt He was telling me something, more like an impression.”

That’s not revelation, because revelations were always given in the specific words of actual/specific languages, always/only to apostles.

That’s why Paul’s gospel is so clear to us today.

If he had only gotten impressions, we wouldn’t know what to believe.

But short of actual revelation, the H.S. does teach us, by illuminating God's Word to our hearts & making it very real to us.

1 Jn 2:27=> *“The **anointing** [the H.S.] which you received from Him [the Father] abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but... His **anointing teaches** you about all things.”*

It was the Spirit who taught us and opened our spiritual eyes to our sin, convicting us of it, prompting us to confess it and repent of it.

We may have read in the Bible that we sinned, but as the H.S. opened our eyes, we saw the horror of our sinfulness, and we repented.

And it was the Spirit who witnessed to our hearts about X.

Suddenly we had no doubts that Jesus could/would save us from our sin (Jn 15:26).

It wasn't actually a revelation, but it was the illumination of the truth of God's Word.

And it lead to our salvation.

Friends, let's praise God that He somehow brought home the true message of His gospel to us personally.

Let's thank Him for opening our eyes to our own need for its truth, & opening our hearts to believe in the Jesus it proclaims.

Let's worship Him for not leaving us blinded in the darkness and ignorance of some man-made religion.

And let's pray that He will save those who are.

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1. How does one become saved? If you ask any religion but Christianity, the answer will always be the same: [Do] some particular good works or religious deeds.
2. True Christianity alone proclaims salvation through the grace of God— [10 plus] nothing.

3. Satan loves man-made religions because they capture people's souls; Paul's gospel was different: It was [20 revealed] by God Himself.

Rom 16:25

4. The Judaizers said Paul compromised the truth for the sake of [24 popularity] throwing out all the Jewish laws and ceremonies just to make the gospel seem more appealing to Gentiles.

In today's text, Paul will make 3 fundamental assertions...

*** First, I am not a people-pleaser.**

II Tim 4:3-4

5. Paul begins our text defending himself against the Judaizers' accusation that he is an [24 inconsistent] people-pleaser.

Galatians 1:10—*“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”*

Mk 9:42

6. There had been a time when he had gotten caught up in trying to please people, [14 before] he was saved.

Gal 1:14; Acts 7:58

7. Paul, like many ministers, was forced to defend himself because preachers are often [16 targets] of the enemy's attack.

*** Second, I do not preach a people-pleasing gospel.**

Isa 53:10

Verse 11—*“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.”*

The true gospel is a “not-according-to-man” gospel in many different ways...

*8. It was not devised by [12 human] intellect.

I Cor 2:9; Rom 9:32; Mt 16:25-26

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*9. It is a gospel that leaves no room for [24 compromise] with sin.

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*** Third, My gospel is from Jesus Christ Himself.**

10. The reason Paul's gospel was so different from all man-made plans of salvation was that he got it [20 directly] from God.

Verse 12—*“For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

11. When did Jesus reveal the gospel to Paul? The first lessons must have occurred at the time of his [24 conversion].

Gal 1:16-17; Mt 15:6

12. Revelation is God's unexpectedly uncovering truths that He has kept [14 secret] in ages past.

I Pet 1:10-11, 12

13. Short of actual revelation, the Holy Spirit does teach us by illuminating God's Word to our hearts and making it very [10 real] to us.

I Jn 2:27

14. And it was the Spirit who witnessed to our hearts about Christ, that Jesus could and [12 would] save us from our sin.

Jn 15:26