

## Word Of Encouragement

### The Gospel According To Galatians Part IV

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Please note the use of the ESV text of Scripture.

Scripture Text: Galatians Chapters 1-2

#### Are You Ashamed Of The Gospel Of Christ?

In our last study we learned the hope we have in Christ of being sons and no longer slaves! The gospel is truly the good news of Christ's work *for us* apart from anything we do. We cannot add anything to the gospel for it to be truly by definition "gospel" or good news. Today's studies could be summarized by the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans (Can you say this enthusiastically with him? Rom. 1:16-17; 11:6):

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."- The Apostle Paul, Romans 1:16-17**

**Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

The problem that the Apostle Paul was confronting at Galatia was that the Judaizers required that the new Gentile-Greek Christians to become Jews through circumcision required in the Law of Moses, BEFORE they could be considered full citizens of Zion and heirs of the covenant promises.

**Essentially this amounted to Christ 'plus' cooperation with Law** which was contrary to the gospel Paul had received and proclaimed to the Churches of Galatia. Paul was writing to pronounce a curse or an anathema on this kind of gospel that was no gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-9).

**It is important to state up front that the Judaizers did not believe in “salvation by works,” but rather in “salvation by grace plus works.” “Salvation by grace plus works” is much more dangerous and subtle. If the Judaizers were teaching “salvation by works” not many within the congregation would have bought it. It was the half-truth with the lie that being preached as good news, which was no gospel at all!**

The Apostle Paul’s authority was being undermined by the Judaizers and they were discrediting his reputation as an apostle and as Jew who should be persecuted because he was denying circumcision for new Greek converts (including the Gentiles from the Galatian churches and Titus, cf. Gal. 2:4).

Additionally, Paul had claimed authority from the Jerusalem Apostles, but in fact the Judaizers were the “true authorities sent from Jerusalem- -not Paul” (this was the Judaizers’ deceptive argument).

### **Divine Origin of God’s Gospel Revealed to Paul**

The Judaizers were saying that Paul had preached the full gospel originally, but under pressure to conform and to make the gospel “easy” to Gentiles he had compromised the Jewish-Mosaic Law. The Judaizers lied and told the Churches at Galatia that they had come to set the gospel record straight.

In response to the false allegations, the Apostle Paul begins his powerful retort by making sure the congregations at the churches of Galatia understood that his gospel, the gospel he was faithfully preaching was of divine origin- -it was not from man- -but rather, *for man- -all who believe!*

**Paul said my gospel is from God to man, not “man’s gospel”- The origin of God’s gospel is with God himself- -not man, but it is for man.**

Paul’s gospel was received revelation from Jesus Christ himself. It was not from man. It was a gospel “for man” and the only hope for man to be saved by grace. As an apostle, Paul wanted it clear that he had been uniquely called to make this gospel of Jesus known to all who believe, even though he was the last to be called (1 Cor. 15:1-11). Paul wrote:

**Galatians 1:9** 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.

**Galatians 1:12** For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notice how the gospel is received. That is, its origin is divine and man receives it, no man would naturally come up with nor invent a gospel of grace that was truly “all of grace.”

The Gospel is a revelation **from Jesus Christ** (the “of Jesus Christ” is an objective revelation that Jesus Christ gave to Paul). The gospel’s origin is not from man, but from the resurrected-ascended Prophet, Priest and King who sits at God’s right hand! Paul did not receive it, nor was taught it by man to indicate his unique status to preach the only gospel of Christ to the Gentiles thus fulfilling Isaiah 49:1ff:

**Paul was a “slave” or “bond servant” of Jesus Christ** *not a man-pleaser* (Gal. 1:10). Paul makes it clear that if he were a man-pleaser, he would not be preaching a gospel of divine origin, but would be preaching the gospel that the Judaizers were preaching in reality! Paul’s point in saying he is a “slave” or “bond-servant” of Christ is that he obeys his master in his message. As a slave, he only serves to make his Master and His Master’s message known to the world.

### **Paul’s Calling and Election**

**Paul was a man “set apart” and gifted for the task of preaching this Divine Gospel.** Paul gives an autobiographical testimony to describe his unique calling and how his gospel was received from Jesus Christ, and not from man. Paul is not merely giving a testimony of God’s grace, but his testimony is part of his argumentation to convince these churches that a gospel all of grace was something he would NOT have made up (no matter how much a man-pleaser he might have been - -although he wasn’t).

Paul could not have invented a gospel that was all of grace, because Paul knew that before he was regenerated and saved, he was bent on destroying with fury the Church of God. Paul, with blood on his hands was seeking more blood to stamp out this gospel of grace. Paul testified to King Agrippa later in his ministry:

**"I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.** <sup>10</sup> And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> **And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.** (Acts 26:9-11).

However, God’s eternal election (God’s good pleasure, or *eudokia* (Gk.)), set Paul apart before he was born, from his mother’s womb, and called him, in order to make himself know in him (Gal. 1:15-16).

**Galatians 1:15-16: But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,** <sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in **order that I might preach him among the Gentiles**, I did not immediately consult with anyone...

A unique election and call of the Apostle Paul similar to the Prophet Jeremiah; recall from Jeremiah the Prophet's call:

**Jeremiah 1:5-9:** Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup> **"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."** <sup>6</sup> Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. <sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD." <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, **"Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."**

**Isaiah 49:1, 5-6:** Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. **The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name....** <sup>5</sup> **And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him;** and that Israel might be gathered to him- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength- <sup>6</sup> he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; **I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**

The Apostle Paul was called like the prophets to be the voice of God's gospel, and in Christ as a unique Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was made a "light for the nations," that God's good news or gospel might reach the end of the earth where the Gentiles lived!

Paul's election and being set apart because of God's good pleasure and grace is for us to glorify God in Paul's testimony (Gal. 1:23-24), but it is also to remind us of the origin of his gospel. Paul was not looking for Christ. Paul was not seeking to understand this gospel of grace. Rather, Paul was looking to destroy with fury the gospel, because in himself as a sinner he would never have believed in grace alone in Christ alone, and certainly not a crucified Messiah (which is "no Messiah at all" in an unregenerate Jew's estimation!).

Paul's election is instructive of our own election, calling and grace:

**"From eternity rooted, in time to be revealed by the Holy Spirit."**

Paul's election and call show that it is all of grace and NOT of works. In our own lives, the only reason we ever believed in Jesus Christ, and a gospel that was all of grace, was because God in his *eudokia* (*Gk*), or good pleasure made it known to us. In other words, God's will *for us* is more important and life-giving than our will *for him*. Our hope in our salvation is not dependent on our decision or will, but it is utterly rooted in God's good pleasure from the foundation of the world, in his electing mercies in Christ Jesus (see Ephesians 1:3-14).

Think about who Paul was when he was trying to destroy Christ, His Church, and His Gospel the Church was proclaiming! Paul was an unregenerate Jew who persecuted Christ's Church violently and tried to destroy it; he was advancing in his knowledge and practice of Judaism. He was not looking or seeking after salvation in Christ. As he writes in Galatians 1:13-14:

**Galatians 1:13-14:** For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

**Paul was violently opposed to a gospel revealed by God and that was all of grace** (and so are all of those who are perishing apart from the gospel of grace).

Don't miss this! Saul the Pharisee, raised in the Judaism(s) of his day would have violently stamped out any **grace alone revealed from God**. The aversion of natural man to God's gospel revealed in Jesus Christ is hatred of the deepest kind! Paul as an unregenerate Jew violently hated the gospel revealed in Christ...

**BUT, because of God's will and the powerful working of His Spirit, Paul was changed, regenerated to serve as a slave of Jesus Christ!** Why did God save Paul (or any of us)?

**God saved Paul simply because of His good pleasure (eudokia-Gk.); this violent persecutor was saved to preach!**

**God made Paul alive while he was dead in trespasses and sins...walking according to the will of the prince of the power of the air (violently persecuting the Church of Christ).**

**Galatians 1:15-16a:** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup> **was pleased to reveal his Son to me**, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...

This passage of Paul reminds me of the words of Jesus when some of the Jews come to believe in him as Messiah, but many are perishing, and turn away from the truth. Jesus says:

**Matthew 11:25-27:** At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;<sup>26</sup> **yes, Father, for such was your gracious will (eudokia-Greek).** <sup>27</sup> **All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

Paul in no way deserved salvation- -this is his point in Galatians 1:15-16 (If salvation was to be had, it would have to be God's initiative, not his own)! Furthermore, Paul knew that he did not deserve anything but wrath from God as one "untimely born" and as the "foremost of sinners" (1 Cor. 15:1-11; 1 Tim. 1:15). In 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul further describes the grace revealed to him in Jesus:

**1 Timothy 1:12-16:** I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, **appointing me to his service,** <sup>13</sup> **though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,** <sup>14</sup> **and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.** <sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ **Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.** <sup>16</sup> But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Paul's works and labors for Christ after he was saved were acts of obedience *because of God's grace to an undeserving sinner*, and these works did not contribute one wit to his election and calling. Rather, Paul's obedience flows out of his eternal election, calling and being set apart. It should be remembered that...

**Paul worked because he had been called; he was not called because he worked or cooperated with God's grace in Christ!**

This is why the brothers glorified God when they heard Paul, the former persecutor of the Church had been saved and called to proclaim the good news (Gal. 1:23-24).

**Judaism and Christianity: Pelagianism, Augustinianism, and Semi-Pelagianism**

Let us now look in our study at how Paul contrasts his old religion of Judaism with the gospel of Christianity in his autobiographical testimony and in his lucid argumentation to prove the divine origin of the gospel that would never have been- -never could have been conceived in the mind of man (cf. Eph. 3:20-21).

**Paul understood that there was a stark contrast between the old Pharisaical Religion of Judaism and Christianity!** This was a true antithesis. Judaism was a false gospel; Christianity was a true gospel of divine origin from Christ himself!

**Galatians 1:11** For I would have you know, brothers, **that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.**

### **WHAT WOULD “MAN’S GOSPEL” BE LIKE?**

We should remember the biblical advice of the Reformers during the Reformation as we proceed in our study:

**The Reformers charged the Church during the Reformation that all expressions of Christianity are on the path to one of two destinations, Rome or Geneva.**

What the Reformers meant by this statement (although it is a bit anachronistic) was that all expressions of Christianity are headed for Rome (grace + something else = salvation) or Geneva (“by grace alone in Christ alone one is saved”). All expressions of Christianity are either cooperating with God’s grace (Rome), or relying on grace alone (Geneva).

Before we consider Paul’s teaching on Judaism or the traditions of the fathers, let us learn three important theological terms for our study. These terms are anachronistic when applying them to 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Judaism, but they are useful for any study of sin and grace.

Since the fall of man, there have only been three views of sin and grace. These three views can exalt as well as humble man. Two of the views are “from man” and one of the views is “from God alone”. What are the names of these three views of sin and grace?

Make this personal, and not merely theological (What you believe is truly a matter of life or death). Ask yourself which of these three terms best describe your own standing before God (I will ask you a specific question after each term’s description).

### **Pelagianism, Augustinianism, and Semi-Pelagianism**

**Pelagianism (simply put): Man is born without a sinful nature, thus he is able to achieve salvation through obedience to God's commandments. Pelagianism would believe one can be saved by his good works.** The name of this term comes from a British monk named Pelagius who lived and taught error concerning sin and salvation in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**Is your confession: "I am a good person and I try hard to be obedient to what I know about God, and I know that God will understand on judgment day and cut me some slack regarding his commandments. I've lived a good life and have never done as bad as the next guy. Nobody's perfect, you know!"**

If this is your confession, you are a Pelagian and damned according to Scripture.

**Augustinianism (simply put): Man is born dead in sin, thus he is unable to cooperate with God for salvation and is utterly dependent upon God and his initiative to save him - -and this is completely apart from obedience to God's commandments. We are saved by grace alone.** St. Augustine (Aurelius Augustine d. 430 AD confronted the errors of Pelagianism as a man-made system of works righteousness that will damn a person before God's holy tribunal).

**Is your confession: "Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul! I am a sinner who has been saved by the power and initiative of God in my regeneration. God gave me the gift of faith and I believe Christ, and am trusting in his righteousness alone for my right standing before God- - apart from my own works."**

If this is your confession, you are Augustinian.

**Semi-Pelagianism (simply put): Man is born sick in sin (but not completely dead), so if he has a bit of grace given to him, he is able to achieve salvation through cooperative obedience to God's commandments.** Semi-Pelagianism (also semi-named after Pelagius!) was a compromise between Pelagianism and Augustinianism. It is the most dangerous, because it is the most subtle.

**Is your confession?: "God gives all men the ability to decide, or to believe upon Jesus, or reject him. I cooperated with the grace that God gave to me and I believed in him. I was sick in my unbelief, but when the healing power of the gospel was given to me and I took it, I was saved from my sins."**

If this is your confession, you are Semi-Pelagian.

What we want to notice first is that Pelagianism is a “religion of man” or “the flesh” in contrast to Paul’s gospel “not from man” but *for man!*

In fact, all other man-made religions apart from Christianity, in one way or another teach that we can somehow work hard and save ourselves- - thus they are “Pelagian” (again sometimes a theological term is helpful even if used anachronistically). Christianity alone says don’t try to get to God by your own works, you will only get so far as idolatry (see Romans 1:18-25).

Paul argues in Galatians 1 that he formally was a teacher and professor of a religion that was “from man”, that is, it had its origins in sinful man, and was not received as a revelation from God. Paul’s autobiographical testimony is to help the Churches of Galatia and us today ***to understand that the gospel, in order for it truly to be the gospel must be revealed to us—it must be received by us!***

***The Gospel must be revealed to us by God’s grace! Paul contrasts a gospel of man’s making with a revealed gospel of grace in Galatians 1:13-15:***

**Galatians 1:13-15:** For you have heard of ***my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.***

<sup>14</sup> And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for ***the traditions of my fathers.***

<sup>15</sup> But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace...

**Judaism(s) (Gal. 1:13-15)-** Judaism(s) of Paul’s time is known today in scholarly circles as “Second Temple Judaism” (This is the Judaism(s) after the exile, circa 490 BC to 70 AD). Paul here in Galatians contrasts Judaism with the Church of God. He uses Judaism in this passage rather than Israel, because Paul knows that all of the True Israel are part of the Church of God, both Jew and Gentile. True Israel both Jew and Gentile believed God’s promises by faith over their best performances for God.

**Promise rather than performance!**

**Paul contrasts his performance of advancing in Judaism (1:14) with his called by God’s grace which was based on God’s promise (1:15)!**

**Judaism(s) was not “God’s Gospel”.** It is important to say that “Judaism” is often called “Judaisms” (plural) because there were many different kinds of teachings in 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Judaism (or “Second Temple Judaism”, think about Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, etc.).

**Judaism, to speak anachronistically again, was not Pelagian, but it was Semi-Pelagian.**

Judaism(s) was a works-oriented religion of the first century as the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century taught faithfully (Note for those familiar with the NPP: In light of the scholarship of the New Perspective on Paul that Judaism(s) was not full blown Pelagianism we can agree, yet contrary to what E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright propose, Judaism was essentially a “grace + works = righteousness religion”, which is still synergistic and best described theologically as Semi-Pelagianism, and therefore the Apostle Paul was well understood by the teachers of the Reformation).

**E. P. Sanders in his *magnum opus* “Paul and Palestinian Judaism describes Judaism’s view of man’s sin nature by quoting the teachers of the day:**

“Men have, apparently the inborn drive towards rebellion and disobedience. But this is not the same as being born in a state of sinfulness from which liberation is necessary. Sin comes only when man actually disobeys; if he were not to disobey he would not be a sinner. The possibility exists that one might not sin. Despite the tendency to disobey, man is free to obey or disobey.” (pgs. 114-115- This is Pelagianism at worst, or Semi-Pelagianism at best, if followed consistently and logically, I might add!).

One Rabbi from this time period is quoted in Sanders’ book, and says this:

“If he that commits one transgression thereby forfeits his soul, how much more, if he performs one religious duty (*mitzvah*), shall his soul be restored to him.” (pg. 133 –sounds a lot like evangelicalism today—yet it is Judaism!).

**Guy Prentiss Waters** in his stimulating and outstanding analysis and critique of the New Perspective on Paul, writes summarizing Judaism, and later Rabbinic Judaism that was different than, and in contrast with Christianity:

...**Ancient Rabbinic Judaism is a semi-Pelagian religion.** In this religion...the language of the grace of God is not absent...yet it is ultimately a synergistic religion. Works occupy a fundamental or essential place in this religion. We quote the paradoxical statement attributed to Rabbi Akiba: the world is judged by grace, and yet all is according to the amount of work. - *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul*, pg. 152.

Judaism of Paul’s day was Semi-Pelagian. Judaism taught that the soul of man was a bit sick and needed grace from God to cooperate within the covenant to be saved. Contrary to popular caricatures of Judaism(s) of Jesus’ and Paul’s time, it

was not a religion of full-blown Pelagianism, but rather more subtly dangerous because it was Semi-Pelagianism.

Paul calls Judaism in contrast to the gospel: **“the traditions of my fathers.”**

See also “tradition of the elders” in Matthew 15 which were using different terms to describe the same thinking:

**Matthew 15:1-14:** Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup> **“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?”** For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” <sup>3</sup> He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ <sup>5</sup> But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God,’ <sup>6</sup> he need not honor his father.’ **So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.** <sup>7</sup> **You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:** <sup>8</sup> **“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>9</sup> in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”** <sup>10</sup> And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: <sup>11</sup> it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” <sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” <sup>13</sup> He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. <sup>14</sup> **Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”**

Notice how in this passage from Jesus, the tradition of the elders (or “fathers”) was contrary to the Word of God, and in fact made the Word of God void. Jesus calls the teachers of Judaism, this Semi-Pelagian religion, “hypocrites,” “false prophets,” and “blind guides.”

**Judaism(s) was another name for what we might call a “Semi-Pelagian-Pharisaical” Religion. This false religion emphasized:**

**“Performance over Promise”**

For the Apostle Paul, Judaism’s cooperating with God’s grace in order to be saved (Semi-Pelagianism) and Christianity, the divinely revealed gospel of righteousness in Christ alone (Augustinianism), were mutually exclusive ways of being saved.

This is why Paul is vehemently upset under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit here in Galatians 1. Paul had lived and tried to cooperate with God’s grace in order to

achieve his right standing before God! Paul had “been there and done that” kind of salvation! Paul had lived, no, slaved under the heavy burden of performance over promise, never knowing if he was truly working hard enough!

Paul smells a rat at Galatia- -and it is Judaism in all its Semi-Pelagianism that he smells! He is saying to the Galatian Churches: “I was formally one of the greatest professors and teachers of what the Judaizers are trying to teach you. I formerly taught that grace in the covenant could be cooperated with and one could achieve salvation through “works of the law”!”

### **Grace versus “Works of the Law”**

We must understand that for Paul “works of the Law” were performed cooperating with God’s grace in the covenant. Paul was not a Pelagian in Judaism and the traditions of his fathers, but rather he was a Semi-Pelagian, and this is what the Judaizers were teaching to the Churches of Galatia.

From the Book of Romans, notice carefully Paul’s use of “works of the Law” and how radically opposed they are to grace alone that God reveals and makes known in Christ Jesus (Read these contrasts carefully; grace and works of any kind are mutually exclusive for Paul):

**Romans 11:5-6:** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> **But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

**Romans 3:20** For **by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight**, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

**Romans 4:4** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> **And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...**

**Romans 9:30-33:** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? **Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,** <sup>33</sup> as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

**Romans 10:1-3:** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> **For, being ignorant of the**

**righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.**

**There were elements of truth in Judaism mixed with “traditional lies”** (oral and written Law). This was the Pharisaic religion (in contrast to the True religion of Israel revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ):

### **Judaistic-Semi-Pelagian-Pharisaic Religion and the “Seven Woes” of Jesus- Matthew 23**

Not only Paul as we have seen taught against the Judaistic-Semi-Pelagian-Pharisaic Religion, but Jesus in his most scathing comments found in Holy Writ, opposed this teaching and rebuked vehemently those who taught it. Jesus says (and I have inserted a comment after what Jesus says in Matthew 23):

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat,<sup>3</sup> so practice and observe whatever they tell you- but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice.

**The Sanhedrin has authority (they sit in Moses' seat) and when they preach or proclaim Moses' writings listen to them!**

<sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. <sup>5</sup> They do all their deeds to be seen by others....

**Yet they are hypocrites who lay unnecessary Law-burdens on the people for they misinterpret the purpose of Moses' Law to point them to Christ!**

<sup>13</sup> "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in...<sup>15</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves....

**They evangelize but then make slaves of the people and shut the kingdom of heaven revealed by promise in people's faces- - they make the twice as much a child of hell as yourself, Jesus says.**

<sup>23</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup> You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! <sup>25</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full

of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. <sup>27</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

**They deny justice, mercy, and faithfulness that is borne out of grace and promise and by doing so they strain out the gnat in God's gospel ointment for the healing of sinners, and allow a camel of Law to be swallowed.**

**They are outwardly religious, but inside they are unclean, rotting sinners who are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

<sup>29</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' <sup>31</sup> Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. <sup>33</sup> You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

**Jesus asks the Pharisees to consider whether they are sons of Abraham, or sons of those who murdered the prophets!**

Jesus and Paul both make stark contrast between the faith of Abraham, the true religion of God's promise and grace in Israel with Judaism, or "man's gospel" which is of works. Remember that the prophets were constantly sent to Israel to preach to them to turn from "Judaism" or the works of their own religion, to the religion of YHWH that is revealed by faith alone.

**Jesus says in Matthew 23:34ff (in his woes against Judaism or the Pharisaical Religion that is opposed to the gospel:**

Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, <sup>35</sup> so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

**There is a radical and mutually exclusive contrast between Judaism and Christianity (Gal. 1:14-15).**

In Galatians 1:13-14 there is a parallel construction in the Greek so as to emphasize the stark contrast between the True religion found in the Church, and the false religion in Judaism. It reads literally (R. K. Fung, pg. 57):

...Beyond measure/I persecuted/the church of God.

...More exceedingly/being zealous for/the traditions of my fathers.

It is important again to note in detail that Paul uses the term “Judaism”, not Israel because the Church made up of Jew and Gentile **is the Israel of God** (Gal. 3:26ff; 6:16).

In Galatians 6:16, Paul calls both Jews and Gentiles the “Israel of God”.

### **The Church is called the “Israel of God”**

**Galatians 6:14-16:** But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

### **The Church is called “the Circumcision”**

**Romans 2:25-29:** For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. <sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**Philippians 3:3-4:** For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh-<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

### **Israel in the Old Testament is called “the Church”**

**Acts 7:38** This is the one who was in the congregation (*ecclesia*) in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.

## **WHAT IS “GOD’S GOSPEL” IN CONTRAST TO JUDAISM? WHAT IS “GOD’S GOSPEL” THAT IS DIVINE IN ORIGIN, RECEIVED BY SINFUL MAN, AND IS THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CONTRAST TO JUDAISM(S)?**

The gospel is gloriously summarized by Paul in three passages. Note Paul’s emphasis on works versus grace. What we would emphasize would be ‘grace alone’ apart from any works at all as what is needed for salvation:

**Titus 3:4-5:** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> **he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...

It is because of God’s mercy, through a righteousness that is alien to us, not our own that is given to us. We are saved NOT because of works done by us (this opposes Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism!).

**2 Timothy 1:8-9;** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, <sup>9</sup> **who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace**, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...

God saved us and called us in time because of his “good pleasure” or *eudokia* (Gk.). The gospel demonstrates God’s power to save sinners NOT because of our works, but because of God’s purpose and grace (this opposes Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism).

**Ephesians 2:8-9:** For by grace you have been saved through faith. **And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

“It is NOT your own doing...it is the gift of God...NOT a result of your works.” In other words, to say one is “saved by grace”, you must believe that it is a gift of God apart from anything you can do or try and attempt to do (Eph. 2:1-4). No one can boast! If Pelagianism is correct, we don’t need God’s grace! If Semi-Pelagianism is correct we need God’s grace to cooperate with, but we have every reason to boast.

If man is merely sick as Semi-Pelagianism teaches, and grace is made available to all, then if you have cooperated with God’s grace and were saved and others have not, you have every right to boast in what you have done- -your decision, your joining a church, your raised hand, your prayer- -your whatever!

Paul says you will know the true gospel because you will not be able to boast about anything in yourself! You will only be able rightly and gloriously boast in

the LORD! Paul was not able to cooperate with God's grace in the covenant after many years of trying. Although he advanced in Judaism beyond his peers, it only caused him to be a murdering sinner that was trying to stamp out any idea of grace alone!

**1 Corinthians 1:30-31: He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."**

God's true gospel of grace alone is about a crucified Messiah for sinners, both Jew and Gentile who believe! As we consider the true Gospel of the Apostle Paul, let us also consider why so many during his time and in our own dismiss it, hate and vehemently oppose it, and do not ultimately receive it as the good news it truly is! Let us consider Paul's doctrine in his writings of the "Apollumi".

### **Paul's Doctrine of the "Apollumi" both Jew and Gentile**

Paul mentions the "Apollumi" in several places in his writings. The "Apollumi" are "those who are perishing" [the *apollumi* in Greek] (including both Jews and Gentiles who reject Christ and His gospel):

**1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing [Apollumi], but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." <sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> **For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. <sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> **He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."**

**2 Corinthians 2:15-16:** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among **those who are perishing [Apollumi]**,<sup>16</sup> to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

**2 Corinthians 4:3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to **those who are perishing [Apollumi]**.

**2 Thessalonians 2:10** and with all wicked deception for **those who are perishing [Apollumi]**, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Unless God takes the initiative and makes us willing and able to believe in the gospel, we are only the “Apollumi,” or “**those who are perishing.**” We must have God removed the veil over our hearts, minds and eyes in order for us to see the good news that is truly good news in the Gospel of grace alone.

The only true and biblical teaching of sin and grace then is found in Augustinianism. Paul not only opposes Pelagianism, but any form of Pelagianism, including Semi-Pelagianism! To say it starkly albeit anachronistically, Paul was Augustinian in his understanding of sin and grace, and thus why he fought so hard to teach and defend the gospel of grace alone, that was not from man - -but for man!

The Apostle Paul teaches that we are not merely sick, but dead in trespasses and sins, walking blinding under the authority of the Prince of the Power of the Air, as “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-4). Like the Apostle Paul, we must have Christ revealed to us by his grace, otherwise we will not, and cannot believe!

Humanly speaking, why does Judaism reject the gospel of grace alone in Jesus Christ?

**To Judaism, a crucified Messiah for sinners is “a stumbling block”** or an “incomprehensible absurdity” to those in Judaism (read: Isaiah 11:2; Dt. 21:23). In Isaiah 11, Isaiah tells the people that the Spirit of YHWH will rest on Messiah:

**Isaiah 11:1-2:** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. <sup>2</sup> **And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.**

**The Jews ask if the Spirit of YHWH shall rest on him, then how could YHWH allow Messiah truly to be sentenced as a blasphemer and crucified on a heinous Roman cross?**

Moses taught the people in Deuteronomy 21 that a hanged man was cursed by God. Jews living under Roman rule in the 1<sup>st</sup> century had seen and some experienced what this means and looks like in horrendous Roman crucifixions.

**Deuteronomy 21:22-23:** "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, **for a hanged man is cursed by God.** You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

**If Jesus was Messiah then how could he be a cursed man hanged on a cross?**

The Apostle Paul makes clear this quandary in Galatians 3:10-14. Paul makes it known to both Jews and Gentiles that it is just in Christ-Messiah being crucified as a law-breaker on your behalf, taking upon himself the wrath of God, that you find your hope of salvation in him alone. Christ was made a curse for all who believe - -for both Jew and Gentile! Paul writes:

**Galatians 3:10-14:** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." <sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." <sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." <sup>13</sup> **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"- <sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.**

**God cursed his Christ-Messiah for all those who believed, redeeming us from the curse of the Law (that is, from our attempted "works of the law" and law-keeping in cooperation with God's grace that proved time after time to be failure, and that was storing up for ourselves the wrath of God to be revealed against us on the Day of Wrath (cf. Romans 2).**

**In the only Gospel revealed by God, God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might be the righteousness of God- -this is a stumbling block to those who are perishing:**

As Paul writes in Romans 4:25:

**Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**

And in,

**Romans 3:23-26:** ...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,<sup>25</sup> **whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.<sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

To the Jews, Jesus is a “stumbling block” and to the Gentiles his life, death, resurrection and ascension are folly, or foolishness!

**To Gentiles: “folly”-** We hear people say things like this in response to the preaching of the gospel:

“The gospel of Christ crucified makes no sense!”

“The gospel of Christ is too bloody and against my modern sensibilities.”

“I’m a pretty good person with morals; I don’t like talk of sin and God’s wrath.”

Saul the Pharisee was “stumbling over the cross of Jesus” when he was regenerated and saw the risen, resurrected Messiah, and commissioned as the Apostle Paul to make this good news known to the Gentiles! Paul was sent by Jesus with a gospel of divine origin to make the “good news” or gospel known that Messiah had come to the ends of the earth.

In contrast to inventing our own gospel, or trying in our unregenerate self to make sense of the gospel, or to make it less offensive to us, believers are to “receive” (*paralambano*) the truth of God’s revelation as it is given in the preaching and teaching of God’s Holy Word:

**1 Corinthians 15:1-3:** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,<sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you- unless you believed in vain.<sup>3</sup> **For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:** that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures...

**We are all revelation-receivers from the Scriptures!** We dare not try to invent our own religion, or try to understand Christianity beginning with us, we will come up with Pelagianism at our worst, or at our best perhaps Semi-Pelagianism- -but never Augustinianism that teaches grace alone in Christ alone!

There is still an offense to the cross for Gentiles and Jews. The cross is and should be highly offensive (some might even say an “insult to their intelligence”),

but once God effectually calls one, and regenerates the sinner by his powerful Spirit, one can see, hear, believe, and understand!

We today still receive the clear revelation of the Gospel from God from his most Holy Word, and yet we must understand that the gospel can be misunderstood and confused by unregenerate man as:

**“Folly”  
“Offensive”  
“A Stumbling block”**

In light of our study on a divinely revealed gospel that is contrary to man’s natural thinking and hoping for grace, we must remember that there is no such thing as a “pleasing, non-offensive, seeker-friendly gospel”.

**A seeker-friendly gospel is an oxymoron. Only by God’s grace can one be saved!**

Show me a gospel that does not offend and that somehow pleases man, and I will show you a false gospel!

No cooperation with God and his grace to achieve our salvation in Christ should ever be taught in the Church of God!

**Christianity is not a synergistic-cooperative-Judaistic-Pharasaic-Semi-Pelagian religion of man’s making and devising...**

**...but Christianity is a monergistic religion of divine origin revealed to man through God’s grace alone.**

Be warned of any systems of religion or “gospels” which are no gospels at all that place the emphasis on God *and man cooperating to achieve salvation!*

**Judaism(s)** today is still a false religion (perhaps even more so than in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) and even if we are heard as being “anti-Semitic” because we preach Christ, we must still preach Christ to the Jews –Jesus is their only hope!! God’s gospel is a divinely revealed Gospel not from man- -but for man!

[Note: preachers after World War II and the treacherous Holocaust have been hesitant to preach to Jews and to call Judaism(s) a false religion opposed to Christianity because they were frightened that some might think they were anti-Semitic. However, I would point out that Jesus Christ crucified is the only hope of the Jews and of Judaism. The gospel of grace is “pro-Semitic” not “anti-Semitic” in any way! The Apostle Paul, as well as the other Apostles were Jews saved by grace. Additionally, Judaism is a false religion of man’s making that denies Jesus Christ as the only Savior, and the revelation of the Holy Trinity in

Scripture. Jews must be called to repentance and to turn from Judaism to serve the living and true God in Christ alone by his grace alone!]

**Roman Catholicism is a religion that stresses man's cooperation with God's grace.** This is why the Reformers thought of the system of Medieval Roman Catholic theology as being "Jewish". Rome still teaches grace + sacraments in the Church = salvation.

**Evangelicalism** stresses man's cooperation with God's grace to achieve salvation. Grace + works of piety = salvation. Overall, modern evangelicalism is a movement of Semi-Pelagianism. It is interesting that often the evangelical caricature of both Judaism of the 1<sup>st</sup> century as well as Roman Catholicism (ancient, medieval, and modern) is works-righteous religions (or "Pelagianism", though they might not use this term!).

However, Judaism and Roman Catholicism have always been "Semi-Pelagian" in their understanding of sin and salvation. Neither Judaism(s) nor Roman Catholicism has taught that salvation is by works alone, but rather works **cooperating with grace**. Perhaps this is why evangelicals today can so quickly embrace some aspects of Judaistic teaching, and join with Roman Catholics in fellowship one with another (e.g. 'ECT: Evangelicals and Catholics Together').

Your average evangelical has been taught that Roman Catholicism teaches "salvation by works", so when your average evangelical meets a knowledgeable Roman Catholic, and the Roman Catholic says "I believe a person is saved by grace in Christ," they are quick to form a fellowship and bond together. However, the truth is not that they teach "salvation by works" but rather (and perhaps more dangerously) "salvation by grace and works." Perhaps the reason this does not distress more evangelicals today is because most evangelicals are as Semi-Pelagian as Jews and Roman Catholics in their understanding of sin and grace.

In saying that Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism errs in their understanding of sin and grace, and that they are Semi-Pelagians, this does not mean that they are not saved. If they are relying on Christ plus something else of their own works they cannot be saved, but if God has regenerated them by his sovereign grace and they believe in Jesus Christ, then they can still be saved and also Semi-Pelagian (although I don't believe they have thought through their system of belief and would encourage them to do so!).

Are you one of the "Apollumi" or "Those who are perishing"? Or do you understand that grace is to be found in Christ alone with nothing you do, add, or exert?! Or as John says in chapter one of his Gospel:

**John 1:11-13: He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were**

**born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

Kim Riddlebarger wrote: "It is [Paul's] gospel through which we have been set apart and called by God's grace. And it is this gospel which alone can set us free from the guilt and power of sin and the deception of Satan and his henchmen. For when this gospel is before our eyes in Word and Sacrament, Jesus Christ himself sets us free from all of those things which had enslaved us.

Let no one dare attempt to undo what the blood of Christ has purchased for us (nullify the cross). By the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, let us, like Paul, stand firm and resist every attempt of those who seek to enslave us when Christ has died to set us free!"- from an essay 'Set Apart and Called by Grace'- from "Riddleblog" online.

Some are ashamed of the Gospel of God's grace alone! Are you ashamed? Or can you with the Apostle Paul confidently say:

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."- The Apostle Paul, Romans 1:16-17**

**Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

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