

Good News From God

Galatians 1:1 – 2.10

SLIDE 1 – RELIGION MAN MADE

There's an atheist site on the internet. A blogspot if you're up with the terminology. And it's titled.

RELIGION IS MAN MADE.

Sub-heading. All the Gods. All religions are man made.

in theory It's the place to go to if you want to have a go at religion. But in practicality. In reality. It's where you blow off steam about Jesus and Christians.

And there's what I think is quite an amusing little saying they've got on the front page. So, I'm saying you're allowed to smile at this if you think it is too....you might even be able to read it over there on the right. It says.

Give a man a fish, and you'll feed him for a day. Give him a RELIGION..., and he'll starve to death while praying for a fish.

Now in a disturbing kind of way I find that quite amusing.

And if religion does happen to be man made. Then they make a very good point.

There's NO POINT. In religion. If it's man made.

And they might be surprised to find. They're in complete agreement with the apostle Paul in saying that.

Because he's writing to the churches in the area of Galatia in southern Turkey. And he's saying a man made gospel. Is no gospel at all. And if there's one point he's trying to make in the start of this letter. Apart from the content of the Gospel. It's that his gospel is NOT MAN MADE. Right from the get go. There it is verse 1.

Galatians 1:1-2 1:1 Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father,

And jump down to verse 11

Galatians 1:11-12 ¹¹ I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

And there again. Verse 15 to 17. Paul says in verse 15,

But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I **did not consult any man...**

Now of course there have been plenty of religious movements created by men. people. Like L. Ron Hubbard who invented Scientology. A religion proudly 100% man made.

But Paul's saying. It's God, not man who sent me. It's God, not man who gave it to me. Paul can say of the gospel something you and I can never say. He can say. I got it from Jesus.

Verse 17, Paul says I didn't consult with **any man**. I didn't even go up to Jerusalem to double check it with the head guys like Peter.

And he's going to go on to give some compelling reasons for believing that's true. Which we'll have a look at shortly.

But I wonder. How many of us follow a man made religion? I mean if you ever ask someone about what they believe. And they start their answer with. "Well I think....." Then you've got to wonder don't you. And more often than not what I think about God and the world just happens to fit neatly with the way I'm inclined to live my life.

That's convenient. And so the god in my head, the god of my construction, my man made god accepts everybody, as long as they're reasonably nice. And I'm reasonably nice. And he doesn't ask much of me. And he certainly doesn't judge people.

He's a very user friendly kind of god really. He's the get me out of trouble god. Plenty of people think that way. About the god they've made up in their head.

But the problem that comes up here in Galatians. And you'll see it right through the New Testament. Is the opposite. And you see this sort of thing a bit less often. But it's still around. It's the sort of man made religion that wants to take what

Paul's saying. And add things to it. Add more rules. Pile up the regulations. More stipulations. Because they think it's not enough.

And in a way you can understand why. Because if you're a Jew. Then Moses gave you God's law to live by.

And here's Paul the Jew, travelling all over the countryside. You can read about it in the book of Acts. There he is. Telling people to turn to Jesus. But he's not signing them up to the law of Moses.

Paul's saying this. He's saying this man Jesus is God's promised Christ. He died. And God raised him from death. And because of that. He's Christ ...the Lord over all.

And here's the purpose of his death -and there's the reminder at the start of the letter.

Verse 1 "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 our God and Father."

And I wonder if that term jars with you just a little. Because a PRESENT EVIL AGE.. may not be the way you think of the world we live in. Makes me think of a mad max movie.

But we live in a world of better homes and gardens. And mortgages and family get together...

And sure you're aware of the fact that there are some pretty awful things like bushfires and earthquakes, and those people who are pretty rotten and want to take advantage of pensioners, who prey on young girls. Who rip off investors. But if I'm measuring myself. I'm not too bad. By my own standards. Don't really need God to improve things. And when things are good God gets cut out all together.

Things are beautiful one day.... and perfect the next. In my world.

And I remember one wise old evangelist – John Chapman who said to a group of us over dinner one time – he said. I think Aussies are the hardest bunch of people to reach with the Good News of Jesus. And he said. We've got it so good, we think we're in heaven already. And if heaven's any better than this..then it's only marginal.

But Paul's peeling back the veneer. And he's exposing the truth according to God. And he says it's a present evil age. And we need to be rescued. And it's more than just words, because **the Lord Jesus Christ**, these are his words again in verse 3, the **Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins** to rescue us.

Here's the bad news that means we need good news. We're in a world under the curse of sin. And here's the King who takes God's wrath the punishment for sin. To come to the rescue. To deliver us...from this present evil age.

And if you've got a problem with that then you maybe you'd prefer to make up something else instead. Because that's how it works. If you're not prepared to accept God's viewpoint.

And you'll need to find some other reason why Jesus had to die such an awful death, if we're all basically Okay.

But Paul's so convinced. That he's SPENDING HIMSELF. To tell people God's Good News. From place to place to place in the middle east. Opposed pretty much everywhere. Stoned. Imprisoned. Flogged.

Because he's heard the word directly from Jesus himself.

I used to hate **Christians Paul says. Now I am one.** Paul used to be a **super Jew** who'd go from town to town persecuting Christians. Now he's a **preacher.** And that was the message he'd preached to the Galatians. To Jew and Non-Jew. **turn to Jesus.** That's **all you have to do.**

Apparently, though, there are just one or two things he's forgotten.

And so where ever he goes, it seems there's a trail of **Jewish teachers** following him. And they're ok with believing in Jesus. But if you want to be **right with God** you've got to **take on the Jewish laws.** And the Jewish sabbaths. And the Jewish **circumcision as well.**

And look, if you were Jewish already and you've come to faith in Jesus - **don't defile yourself** by mixing with the **Gentiles. Keep your distance...** to which Paul says... "**I am astonished,**" verse 6.

I mean, here's why he's writing the letter. **I am astonished.**

I can hardly believe that **you are so quickly deserting the one who called you** by the **grace of Christ** and are turning to a **different gospel** - which is really **no gospel at all**. Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion, and are **trying to pervert the gospel of Christ**.

How could you... let go of the **gospel that saved you**. And be sucked in by teaching like that. That's pushing **Jewish rules**. And regulations. And religious rituals.

Verse 8; Paul says, there are people who are trying to throw you into confusion about the gospel of Christ. But verse 8, he says, "even if **we...** or **an angel from heaven...** should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, **let him be eternally condemned.**"

Which is the slightly more polite way of saying, if an angel lands in the middle of church saying anything other than **turn to Jesus**, even if it's me, says Paul, even if I come back and say I've changed my mind, tell me to "**go to hell**" - let him be eternally condemned.

It's hard to think of stronger words.

And of course there are people who'll say. I heard it from an angel. And it's hard to know what to do with that. But Paul says.

Even if an angel turns up while we're at morning tea. And says here's a new gospel and it's about ...whatever....

Paul says, if an angel like that comes, just say **go to hell**, and keep going with exactly what you're doing.

Because the message we've **got already...** is **the message from God himself**. And so Paul says it again, verse 9... as I've already said, I'll say it again... if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, the gospel I preached in the first place, let him be eternally **condemned**.

Pick up in chapter 2 - because it's getting more specific. Paul's finally been back to Jerusalem, where the other apostles were based, to set before them his **gospel he's been preaching**. Head Office. Peter. James. John.

Verse 4, he says, this matter arose because **some false brothers** had infiltrated our ranks... to spy on the **freedom** we have in Christ Jesus and to make us **slaves again**.

These **false brothers...** who want to turn the **Galatians into Jews** before they can be **proper Christians** who want to **spy on the freedom there is** in just trusting in Jesus as Lord. Paul says they want to make us slaves again. To the old Jewish Laws.

And Paul's going to go into more detail over the next few weeks. And we'll see exactly what he means. What the **freedom is** that comes from trusting Jesus. How

in spite of all appearances sometimes, **Christianity is not just a bunch of religious rules....**

Paul says we **went up to Jerusalem**, we worked it through with the guys who were important, like James and Peter and John – we shook hands. They slapped me on the back he says. And they absolutely agreed.

Chapter 2 verse 6. As for those who seemed to be important at head office, he says, those men **added nothing to my message**. On the contrary, they saw it was **my job...** to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. And keep telling them exactly what I'd been telling them. Plus..... **nothing**.

Now, if there's anything you take away from our series on Galatians over these next few weeks, make it that. Jesus Christ - **plus nothing**. You've trusted in him, you've been rescued through his **death for you**; live with him as your **Lord; plus nothing**. No rituals. No Jewish laws. No special extra blessings. No new revelations. No angel messages. No **holy days**. You name it... **don't add it**. The apostles – the ones who got it from Jesus himself.... added nothing. And we shouldn't either. Which means you need to be **suspicious** of anyone who comes along and offers the **next new thing**.

The **gospel is all here already**. Just add nothing. Because **adding is subtracting**.

It's a bit like the butcher who adds a little sulphur dioxide to your meat..so it looks good in the display cabinet for a bit longer. And the health department steps in.

And Paul says, it's like that with the **gospel**. Anything that **adds to Jesus**, subtracts. And says his death on the cross wasn't enough. That his rescue from this present evil age wasn't quite complete. Be careful... of anyone who's putting a little something extra in with your gospel. **stand your ground**. And most especially, don't let them **take away the freedom** that comes from **faith in Jesus**. By adding something to it. Paul's going to fight that issue to his last breath. Because for the **Jews** who are opposing him, their rules are a matter of supreme importance. And they'll happily **kill him over it**.

Paul says, I didn't give into them for a **minute**. Chapter 2 verse 5. And this needs to be our position as well. Some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the Freedom we have in Christ Jesus and make us slaves. **we did not give into them for a moment...** so that **the truth of the gospel** might remain with you.

Now if you're a Christian, is that what's happened... for you? Has the **truth of the gospel**, has the **freedom we have in Christ...** has it **remained with you**? Or not.

To answer that, you'll need to examine your heart and your life and also your expectations of everyone else. And ask yourself if you're a Christian if in coming to Jesus you've actually **found freedom...** or you've just come to a whole bunch of **man made rules**?

Because there are still all sorts of people who want to add all sorts of **stuff** to the God's simple gospel message. By making you think that to be right with God you've got to keep sabbath days or observe special rituals or make sure you don't

eat meat or not hang your washing out on a Sunday. And we Presbyterians have been **right at the head of the pack** when it comes to stuff like that.

Over these next few weeks as we think through Galatians, we need to make sure that we're holding on to the **God-made message**. And to the freedom that comes from trusting in Jesus **who gave himself for our sins**, to rescue us from this present evil age. When you do that, God's going to do some **major renovating in your life**. But it's going to be **by his spirit**. And not **by laws** and **rules** and **rituals**. You'll be a different person. But not by getting all **religious**.