

Galatians #1 - Jesus' Grace + Nothing = Salvation

- All right, I'm really excited, I'm not gonna lie to you. We're starting a brand new book of the Bible today called Galatians, and two things I love, preaching books of the Bible and eating carne asada. What day is it? Cinco de Mayo and I'm starting a brand new book of the Bible. This is my happy day. All the forces of good have converged to a magical moment for yours truly. Woo! I'm gonna preach the Bible and I'm gonna eat carne asada. Oh Jesus, you can come back anytime after that, 'cause I will have checked off everything on my bucket list. What a great day. All right, so here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna spend 13 sermons going through a great book of the Bible called Galatians. It's 149 verses. You can read it all in about 20 minutes. I've given you an introduction and an overview. It's on the newsletter, on the app, on the website to help you read this book, study this book, enjoy this book, examine this book, and it is one of the most significant books written in the history of the world. Our church is part of something called Protestantism. It was a correction of some things that were added to the simplicity of the person and work of Jesus to get back to the pure teaching of God's Word, and paramount in the Reformation of Protestantism were two books, Romans and Galatians, both written by the apostle Paul that you'll get to know more about today. Romans is about what the gospel is. Galatians is about what the gospel is not. And by gospel, I mean the good news that our sin can be forgiven, that our relationship with God can be reconciled, that our eternal life can be granted, the good news of the finished person and work of Jesus Christ. And so if you think of it in terms of sports, Romans is like offense, Galatians is like defense. Romans is pushing the gospel forward, and then Galatians is defending against counterfeits, false gospels, those that are seeking to undermine and undo what God is doing in Christ. And it is such a significant book that Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, said, quote, "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. I have betrothed it to myself, it is my wife." You know you're a Bible nerd when you're like, "I like that book so much, I wanna marry it." That's what Martin Luther said. In addition, others have called it, quote, "The battle cry of the reformation" and quote, "The Christian Declaration of Independence." And the big overarching theme that I've got for the book of Galatians is that God creates and Satan counterfeits, that everything God makes is good and everything that God makes Satan tries to counterfeit, to corrupt it, to co-opt it, to do evil. Satan doesn't make anyone or anything. All he seeks to do is counterfeit what God has made. And everything that is valuable is eventually counterfeited. This is from fake celebrity or athletic autographs to knockoff vintage retro Jordans to fake Gucci handbags. I saw this in high school. I was the high school editor of our newspaper and we got a brand new, really high-end printer. And I came in early one day to find some guys on my staff, trying to counterfeit \$20 bills on the school printer. I was like, "What are you guys doing?" They're like, "Oh, we're just checking out the printer and make sure everything's all right." I open the lid, there's all \$20 bills down. They're running different paper. They're trying to cut that paper clearly, trying to crumble it up, right? So were you asking, was I homeschooled? No. Did I go to a Christian school? No. Big shocker, this was at a public high school, amen? But these kids were trying to figure out how to forge, how to counterfeit. You know why? Because if something is valuable and you can counterfeit it, that is a benefit to you and a detriment to others. Satan is a counterfeiter, God is a creator. The most

valuable, the most precious thing that you have is your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And because it is of preeminent value, it is not shocking that Satan tries to counterfeit that. So just a few examples as you are reading through Galatians, please read through Galatians this week, you'll find this in addition to other things, there is the gospel of Jesus Christ and false gospels. There is God-given redemption, there is manmade religion. There is truth, there are lies. There are shepherds who love God's sheep, there are wolves who seek to devour and destroy them. There is the church of Jesus Christ, there is false spirituality. There is the kingdom of God, there is this fallen world. There is God's grace, there is man's works. There are angels, there are demons. There is the spirit, there is the flesh. There is love, there is hate. And all of this culminates in eternal life or eternal death. There are more themes, but those are some of the examples of what we find in Galatians. And what I want to do is I want to begin by focusing on what God created, the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want you to become so familiar with the real thing that counterfeits are readily acknowledged by you, and you're not fooled by them. One of my first jobs I got as a clerk working at a store and the older woman who trained me said, "You know, we're in a very poor neighborhood." This is where I lived, it was a poor neighborhood, adult entertainment centers, airports, low-income housing, massive drug problem. It was a very poor area. And this woman taught me and she said, "A lot of people are gonna come in and they're gonna have counterfeit fake money. And they're gonna try and hand you counterfeit bills so that they can get things that they didn't pay for." And I was immediately worried. I was a teenager. I was like, "Well, how do I know what all the counterfeits are?" She said, "Don't worry about that." She said, "Get so familiar with the genuine that the counterfeits become very easy for you to distinguish." She says, "As you handle real money, as you look at real money, as you deal with real money, when somebody brings a counterfeit, you'll just understand, you'll just simply know that doesn't look right, that doesn't feel right, something here is wrong." What I want you to do is be so familiar with the real Jesus, the real Christianity, the real good news of salvation, the real grace of God, that when a counterfeit shows up you say, "That's not it, that's not it." And that's where Paul, the author of Galatians, starts. And he starts talking not about us, but about Jesus, because Jesus is genuine. Jesus is real. Jesus is everything, amen? And so here's where he begins. He tells us three ways that Jesus works, three ways that Jesus works. Now I just feel inclined to say this. God is holy, God is in heaven. We are sinful, we are on the earth, okay? That relationship with God has been severed. So, what invariably happens is people say, "Someone needs to do something." The real thing is Jesus is the someone and his work is the something. All other other counterfeits, you are the someone and you need to do something. So he starts with the genuine, and then he's gonna get into the counterfeit. Someone does need to do something, his name is Jesus, and there are three ways that he works. Galatians 1:1-5, Paul, this is our author, an apostle. Let me just hit this quickly. When it comes to church leadership, let me hit the issue of governance. There is local leadership and translocal leadership. Translocal leadership works across multiple churches, pastors, denominations, groups, networks. What's happening here is Paul planted the church. He was working locally. He handed it over to local leadership and then he left to go start other churches, and the local leadership somehow was losing the war with false teachers. So he is translocal and he writes a letter 'cause he's not physically present to protect, to defend the church, and to inform the local leaders what to do. Churches need both local leadership and

translocal leadership. The whole New Testament is written to churches that are losing some local war, and so it is translocal leadership that is helping the local church stay or become healthy. There are two kinds of apostles in the Bible. Capital A Apostles are chosen by Jesus Christ, they are limited to the number of 12, they're eyewitnesses to his resurrection. They are a finished closed group. In that sense, we do not have in our present day apostles. In addition, there is a lower case a apostle that is a gift that God gives. These are missionaries, church planters, movement leaders, writers, speakers, pastors of pastors. That is Paul is doing here. My ministry with you locally and I love you is as a pastor, and then I do translocal ministry. So last week, pray for them, I got the honor, I preached to 8,000 men in a stadium, which was awesome, and I got to preach at a church. And today I'm gonna fly out and go train a couple thousand pastors. That's translocal, pastoring pastors, loving leaders, helping churches, and locally, I get to do pastoral ministry. So I'm blessed that I get to do both. Paul was single, had no wife or kids, so he would often move. Once you get a wife, five kids, and a mortgage, let me just tell you this, you're settling down, okay? So that's where I'm at. We've dropped anchor here in Arizona. I love you, we're super happy. I have the top off the Jeep so that every day Jesus can hear me say, "Thank you for moving me here." And we're really glad to be here. But what Paul is doing here, he's concerned about a local church and he has his eye on and his heart for lots of local churches. That's the heart of an apostle. Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father. What he's saying is that genuine leaders are called by God and confirmed by other leaders, right? Human beings don't call other human beings into ministry, God does. Human beings confirm those that God has called. So what Paul is saying is that he was called by God, and we'll read elsewhere, that he was actually confirmed by human leaders through Jesus Christ, God the Father who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who were with me, to the churches of Galatia. He writes one letter to one church that is meeting as multiple churches in one region. There is a thing in our day called multi-site where a church meets in multiple locations, and let me say, it's nothing new, that many of God's churches from the very beginning have been multi-site, one church meeting in multiple locations, under one leader. Paul here is the leader, multiple churches. They are functioning as a multi-site church, one church in multiple locations. Some of you have asked, "Are we gonna do that?" I don't know, we might, probably, we'll see. I don't know, pray about it. Okay, there, that's my clear answer. Okay, so to the churches of Galatia, grace and peace, oh, that's awesome, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age. You need to know that this world is evil. According to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever. So number one, Jesus works for you. Jesus works for you. And sometimes people will say, "We're not saved by works. We're saved by grace." But the truth is we're saved by Jesus' works, not our own. So Jesus does all the work, and then he gives the benefits to us, that's grace. But he did need to do something, amen? And so he tells us early on, number one, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, that God became a man, his name is Jesus Christ, he lived without sin, and he's talking there about the cross, that Jesus went to the cross and he substituted himself in your place for your sins as your Savior, that Jesus died so you can live, that Jesus paid a price so that you don't need to have a debt unpaid to God. Not only did Jesus do that, he also rose from death. Paul says Jesus Christ raised from the dead. He's talking there

about the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday, which is why we're meeting on a Sunday. And so Jesus worked for you. He lived the life you have not lived. He died the death you should have died. He conquered the enemies of Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God that you could not defeat. And he gives the gift you cannot earn, salvation, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, all done by one guy whose name is?

- Jesus.

- Jesus, yeah. And so, somebody needs to do something. Jesus is the one person who did everything so that we could be saved, and we receive that by grace. We receive that by grace. We trust him by faith. And what happens is grace, grace, grace is the heart of the Christian message. That's why he says grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And the good news of God's grace is when Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," all the work was done. Just trust Jesus and you get to be saved. Now I tell you this because some of you are going to struggle with this. Some of you will have a tender conscience. Some of you will wonder if you really are living as a chosen one of God. I had this encounter some years ago. I became a Christian in college. My first ministry on staff at a church was as a college director. We did a retreat with a number of other college ministries, and the guy who led worship was very musically talented, really likable guy. I really enjoyed him personally. He led worship, he was on staff at a large church, he often led on Sundays. And late one night, he and I were just having a conversation and after a few hours, it dawned on me. He hadn't talked about Jesus. He talked about all the stuff that he was doing for Jesus, didn't talk about anything that Jesus did for him. And I said, "Look, I don't mean to be offensive, though that is my spiritual gift. I do love you," and I said, "but can I just ask you a simple question?" I said, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "How do you know?" He said, "Well, I was born in a Christian family." I gave him... Any of you, somebody asked a question, you gave an answer, and you looked at their face and you could tell, that's not the right answer. That was me. I was like, "Huh?" He said, "Well, I'm in full-time ministry." He said, "Well, I serve God every day." He said, "I'm a good person." What's the problem? No Jesus, just you. I looked at him and I said, "You're telling me everything you're doing for Jesus. You're not telling me anything Jesus did for you." I said, "None of these things are bad, but none of these things save." I said, "Are you sure that you're a sinner, that Jesus is God, lived without sin, died on the cross for your sin, rose from the dead, that you were saved fully, totally, completely, eternally, solely by the grace of God?" He said, "I'm not sure." I said, "Well, we need to talk about that." I said, "Because I would hate for you to lead worship every week when you're not even worshiping, 'cause you don't know the God you're worshiping." I said, "Man, do you understand that Jesus loves you? Do you understand that Jesus forgives you? Do you understand that Jesus took care of everything?" And he's like, "Ah, I struggle with that." See, it's the grace of God. What the grace of God produces, he says grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace from God, grace from God produces peace. Peace, peace. Because you know why? If I didn't earn it, I can't lose it. If I didn't do it, I can't undo it. It's peace. Some of you wonder, some of you love Jesus and you know that Jesus loves you and you believe that he died and rose for you. But some of you still have anxiety. I'm not sure I'm saved, I'm not sure I'm in. Some of you you're worried about

dying. I'm not sure what's gonna happen. I want that burden lifted from you. I want you to live in peace. I'll never forget, I was in college and I was part of a college ministry. I was a brand new Christian and every week they would tell you about Jesus and your sin and his death, burial, and resurrection. And they'd say, "If you wanna get saved and give your life to Jesus, come forward." Every week, week after week, month after month, the same gal came forward, crying, very emotional. She's like, "I wanna be saved." And I'm like, "What the heck?" She keeps coming, same gal. She was in a sorority. So I went up to her, I said, "Why do you come forward every week? She says, "I just don't know. I don't know if I'm really forgiven. I don't know if Jesus really loves me. I don't know if I'm really saved. I'm worried about going to hell. Sometimes I do bad things during the week, and I wonder if maybe God's just gonna change his mind." I was a brand new Christian. I'm like, "I'm pretty sure it doesn't work like that." She's like, "Don't you worry about going to hell?" "Ah, no, I don't." Before I met Jesus, I'm sure that's exactly where I was going. In fact, I had a first class, one-way ticket. And then I met Jesus, and I said, "Honestly, I don't worry about it." I said, "I don't even think about going to hell." She said, "Why?" I said, "Jesus has got me." A little secret, what do you think eternal life is? Eternal. You know how long that is? It's a long time, right? Jesus has got you taken care of. The work that Jesus did for you is sufficient for you, and we trust him by faith, we receive his work by grace. And some people will say, "Grace is too easy. All you gotta do is just believe, that's too easy." How many of you have found it's really hard to receive a gift? How many of you have found it's really hard to say, "I'm the problem, not the solution." That's hard, amen? If you're married, I just healed your marriage by the way. I'm the problem, not the solution, because we live in a world that is not grace-based, it's performance-based, right? In school, you have to work really hard to earn your grade point average. To graduate and go to the next grade, you gotta pass your test. If you wanna get your allowance, you need to what as a little kid? Do all your chores. If you want your dessert, you need to eat your dinner first, you gotta earn it, you gotta earn it. What about in sports? Well, we're keeping score, and unless you perform, you lose, you don't win. And then we go to work, you get what you earn. You've got to produce results. You're working on the margins and the numbers. And we have these colloquialisms that dominate our culture, things like there's no such thing as a free lunch. There is in heaven, by the way. There's no such thing as a free ride. There is with Jesus, by the way. You get what you pay for. You get what you earn. You get what you deserve. You know what you need to do, you should just do it. And Jesus comes along and says, "Actually, I pay for everybody, I pay for everything, I do everything to save anybody." That's amazing. And what this requires is humility because you receive it. Let me just tell you this. You can be forgiven of anything. There is no one that is beyond the grace of God. There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more or love you any less. Jesus Christ did a work for you, and here's what's amazing. He didn't stop there. He then proceeded forward to do a work in you if you're a Christian. how many of you experienced this? You met Jesus and some stuff changed and is changing at the deepest level of your being. Your nature changes, your desires change. You're just different. Here's how Paul says it. Now the guy writing this is the apostle Paul. The center of his life before meeting Jesus was Paul, not Jesus. The center of his life was manmade religion, what Jesus called the traditions of men, not the grace of God. So the center of his life is Paul and his religious duty. And then he meets Jesus, and the new center of his life is Jesus Christ and the grace of God. And here's how he explains

the transformation in him in another book called Philippians 3:4-9. If anyone thinks he has reason for competence in the flesh, this is self-discipline, this is performance. This is one who has tremendous ability to execute according to task and do the right thing. How many of you are very high control, performance-oriented, self-disciplined, raise your hand. I know you like to do things like that when you're commanded, okay? So do that. How many of you are like that? Paul says, "That was me, I was all in, a very serious, intense religious person." I have more, circumcised on the eighth day. That is according to Hebrew custom. Of the people of Israel, I come from Abraham. He's giving us his resume. Of the tribe of Benjamin, not just Abraham's descendants, but the right side of the family, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, obeying the rules, performing, doing the right thing, staying on track, staying on task, disciplined like an athlete or a soldier, a Pharisee, that's as intense as it gets. As to zeal, passionate, devoted, committed. He said, "A persecutor of the church, I killed Christians. As to righteousness under the law, blameless." Everybody looked up to him and said, "He's the best of the best. He is the most serious of the serious. His performance is off the charts. He is the pinnacle of human religious achievement." But whatever gain I had, I count as loss for the sake of Christ. What he says is, "And then I met Jesus and something changed in me, and it wasn't about me, it about Jesus. It was not about what I do, it's about what he's done. And it's not about working for God's love, it's about working from God's love. It's not doing things so that God will love me, it's doing things because God in Christ has already loved me. It's not working for a relationship with God, it's working from a relationship with God. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish." That's a strong word in the Greek. Some of you say, "I'm very religious. I'm very devout. I do a lot of good things. I'm a really good person." Paul says, "You know what? Next time you take the trash out, remind yourself it's garbage." This word is so strong, next time you flush the toilet, and do, remind yourself that's how God sees manmade religious performance. It's that, so flush it. Some you will be like, "I've worked so hard." Flush it. It's nothing. It's actually offensive to God. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness on my own, that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God, that depends on faith. Now here's the issue. What Paul is saying is, "I was all about me and what I'm doing, and then I realized it's all about Jesus and what he's done and doing. I am not saved by what I do. I'm saved by what he does. It is a grace. I didn't earn it, merit it, deserve it. I receive it. It changed me at the deepest level. I don't wanna kill Christians, I wanna be a Christian. I don't wanna be a religious terrorist anymore. I wanna worship God, I wanna love people, I wanna unburden people. I want them to know that God forgives and God unburdens and God heals and God loves and God blesses and God is good and God is there for you and God is the solution to all your problems. And his name is Jesus." And he planted this church with this passion for Jesus, and he taught them all about Jesus and then he left. And then false teachers come in, and the false teachers are trying to get the new Christians to be exactly like he was before he met Jesus. That's why he's so passionate. How many of you, there's something in your family history that's wrecked generation after generation, and then you met Jesus and you got delivered from that, and now your kids are going back to that which killed you and your family? That's Paul's passion. He loves with the Father's heart and he doesn't want them to go back to religion, but to go forward to Jesus. That's why he has

such a sense of urgency. In some of his letters, he'll start with an introduction, a little prayer. Here it's just like he drops the clutch and here we go, thrown back in the seat. Everything is urgent. There's no time to waste. Think of it this way. There's some beautiful kids in the room today. Children are largely the product of their diet, right? When the kids were little, we've got five, Grace fed them healthy, nutritious food and introduced certain things at certain ages. If she would have just fed them poison and garbage, the children would not have been physically healthy. Let me say this. Not only does your body needs sustenance and nourishment, so does your soul. Jesus says that man does not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And so Paul here is thinking like a parent. What he's saying is, "These are like my kids. They're new Christians, new church, and I fed them and they were healthy. And then I left, and now somebody is coming in and they're poisoning my kids. They're feeding them garbage. The kids are gonna get sick in their soul and they're gonna die." That's why he's so passionate. Just because someone is yelling doesn't mean they're angry. It may mean that they really love you and they're worried. That's Paul, that's Paul. So Jesus does the work for you through his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus does the work in you by the presence and the power and the person of the Holy Spirit to give you a love for Jesus and a celebration of the grace of God. And then God the Lord Jesus Christ does a work through you. So he talks about God the Father to whom be glory forever and ever. living for the glory of God is saying, "You know what? I wanna do whatever God wants me to do. Again, not so that he'll love me, but because he does. Not so that it'll upset me, because in Christ he already has. Not so that we can have a relationship, but so that we can walk closely together. We already have a relationship." And so what happens is after Paul meets Jesus, does he still get things done? Oh, yeah. He walks, if you read, upwards of 20 miles a day telling people about the grace of God. In addition, there are 27 books in the New Testament. He writes at least 13 of them. There's a 14th called Hebrews. There is a debate as to who the author is, it may be him. If so he writes roughly the majority of books in the New Testament. By sheer content, the number one contributor to the New Testament is a man named Luke. He's the historian that writes Luke and Acts. He is traveling companions with Paul. He is friends with Paul, co-laborers with Paul. Paul is his pastor, he is Paul's doctor. Furthermore, Acts, the history book of the New Testament, from chapter 13 to 28, primarily focuses on Paul. Here's what I'm telling you. After Jesus, the biggest personality in Christianity is the apostle Paul. This guy, he's fluent in three languages, maybe four. We know that he's fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek. He's possibly also fluent in Latin. He's one of the most towering figures in human history. But these are not works that he did for God. These are works that God did through him by grace. Grace doesn't make you weak, it makes you strong. Grace doesn't make you lazy, it actually makes you productive, because once you meet Jesus and you hang out with Jesus, you get excited about doing the things that Jesus is doing and doing them with Jesus. Some of you would wonder, "How do I stay away from sin?" Stay with Jesus. "How do I live the life that God intends for me?" Stay with Jesus. It's all relational, it's practical, it's personal. Paul Barnett, he's a theologian, he says that Paul is, quote, "the first theologian in the early church and arguably the greatest in the history of Christianity." John Chrysostom, an early church father, uses the analogy of weighted scales, and he says, and I quote, "Put the whole world on one side of the scale, and you will see that the soul of Paul outweighs it." Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, called him the wisest man after Christ.

Here's what I'm telling you. If God can save Paul, God can save you, he can save me, he can save anyone, amen? If God can use Paul, he can use me, he can use you, he can use anyone, amen? No one is beyond the grace of God. Nothing is beyond the grace of God. Nothing is more powerful than the grace of God. And once you receive the grace of God, no one could take the grace of God for me, 'cause it's a gift given to all God's children to enjoy perfectly together forever, amen? That's the grace of God. It's the most powerful force in the universe. It's amazing. And I love it. Paul says elsewhere, just comes to mind, he says in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, "I worked harder than anyone. I accomplished more than everyone, but it was not I, it was the grace of God at work through me." You know what? Later in Galatians, you're gonna hear this called fruit. Jesus doesn't work for you, Jesus doesn't work in you, Jesus doesn't work through you. Who gets the glory? Jesus does because it's all him from beginning to end. That's the real, that's the genuine. What about the counterfeit? Well, I want you to be so familiar with the real Jesus, the real gospel, the real Christianity, the real Christian life, that when the counterfeit comes, you're like, "Yeah, that's not the real thing, that's a knockoff." Five questions for counterfeits, Galatians 1:6-10. "I am astonished," he's like, "I'm shocked. This is unbelievable that you are so quickly deserting him who called you?" He said, "I know you, I love you, I baptized you. We planted a church together." Some of you were here when we planted this church. Some of you were here when there was just a couple of us. We started with no one and nothing. And all that God has done, you know everything that's happened here. You know what it is? It's the grace of God. It's all God's grace. And it would be like, then people walked away from Jesus and said, "You know, we think there's something better than Jesus." He's like, "I'm shocked, I'm astonished. You're returning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort, that's the counterfeit, the gospel of Christ. But even if we are an angel from heaven, that's a demon, that's another counterfeit, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach, let him be accursed." I'll tell you what, I want God to bless me, not curse me. God doesn't bless people, he blesses his gospel. So if you continue in his gospel, you're living in the place of blessing. And if you walk away from the gospel, you've walked into the place of cursing. "As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary," there's the counterfeit, "to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man or God? Am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." Here's the context. The church in Galatia, they were largely Gentiles, non-Jewish people. Paul shows up and says, "Jesus is God. He'll forgive you. Give him your sin, trust in him." They do, they're enjoying God's grace. And then he leaves, some religious people show up, and they have a combination of religious tradition and culture. What always happens is we take the gospel and we add religious tradition and culture to it. That's what they're doing. And what they are telling these people is that there is a new, upgraded, improved Christianity and gospel. Most people who preach a false gospel, which is actually a non-gospel, they believe that they are helping God. Let me just tell you this, God doesn't need your help. They believe that we've moved forward and now we need to have an upgraded gospel. Now let me tell you this. On your phone, you've got apps. How many of you update the apps on your phone? And you should. How many of you, you've got software, Microsoft Word, and you update your software. There's one thing that we never update and that's the gospel of Jesus Christ, because God got it right the first time. There's no

bugs, there's no flaws. There's no code that was miswritten. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. The Bible uses the language of the eternal gospel. God got it right the first time. We're all saved by the same Jesus. We all trust in the same good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what they're trying to do, they're trying to improve, upgrade, fix the gospel. And I always like to say that the gospel is like math. It doesn't change. It doesn't change. When you get a counterfeit though, these are five questions to consider. Number one, is there a, quote/unquote, "new gospel?" Is there a new gospel? And here's the essence of what's happening in Galatians. I've got this in the introductory study guide. If you sign up for daily devotions, five days a week, I'll send more information to your inbox. But let me just hit this briefly. Paul's view and God's view, Jesus' grace plus what? Nothing equals salvation. Their view is Jesus' grace plus some human work effort equals salvation. God did his part, you gotta do your part, right? You gotta help Jesus out in some form or fashion. This is the gospel that God creates. This is the false gospel that Satan counterfeits, okay? So in Galatians, it's Jesus' grace plus what? One guy said it very softly, circumcision. Okay, now how many of you weren't thinking about that until right now? Circumcision. So the Gentiles were not circumcised and they were told, "Okay, you trusted in Jesus, but to go to heaven, you need to be circumcised. To have a real relationship with God, you need to be circumcised." These false teachers were so convincing, guys had scheduled appointments. Wow! Wow, just imagine that. No? Okay, no. No, no, no. Well, that had to be weird, right? You're preaching, "All right guys, you got two options. Get circumcised and go to hell." Guys are like, "I could go either way on this, all right? I could go either way. I'm not sure which is the worst scenario. Okay, Lord?" See, what we do, we look at that and we say, "That's crazy, that's silly." We've all got things that are crazy and silly that we add to the gospel, right? They're just not crazy and silly to us, but they're religious tradition or cultural opinion. Well, this still happens today. Most people say, "Well, I don't need to do anything. I'm sure I'm good enough. I'm a good moral person. I believe in God, God grades on a curve. And I'm sure I'll be fine in the end." Other religions will add Jesus' grace plus some human works. So today, there are religions and cults, cults claim to be Christian, but they're full-on counterfeit Christ and counterfeit churches. Religions don't claim to be Christian, but they both add something to Jesus. So the two of the biggest cults are the Jehovah's Witnesses, and they will add a whole new translation to the Bible, plus a whole bunch of additional teaching that says that Jesus is the archangel Michael and a created being. So it's a whole bunch of human, manmade religion in addition to Jesus. Those who are Mormons will add another book, other books, other teaching, right? You need to know too that the Mormons are... I got in an argument with a Mormon leader. If you're here again, we'll do it again after this service. He came up and confronted me after the service because I taught and he said, "We're not Mormons. We're the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We're not allowed to use the word Mormon." I said, "I'm not a Mormon. Mormon leaders are mall cops to me. I don't pay attention. It means nothing, right? I'm not gonna call you the Church of Jesus Christ 'cause you have a different Jesus Christ. And if you don't have the right gospel and the right Jesus, you're not part of the church." He said, "That's offensive." I said, "To God, it is. He said, "You shouldn't make fun of us." I said, "It's a joke. That's what we do with jokes, we make fun." He said, "I feel like you're dividing." I said, "We'll be divided forever." Look, let me just tell you this. The gospel of Jesus Christ is always under fire. I love you, I love Jesus, I'm passionate, but Jesus plus anything ruins

everything. You can protest, you can yell at me in the front row. But you got better odds of getting me pregnant than denying the gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm going down with the ship. Geeze. He's very intense. What happens in religion as well, we take Jesus and we add all kinds of stuff. So Islam will come along and say, "Well, yeah, Jesus plus Muhammad, he's a greater prophet. Jesus isn't God, he's just a prophet. Yeah, the Bible, whatever, the Koran's a better book. And it's about what you do, not about what Jesus does." Hindus and others will say, "Well, you gotta die and reincarnate, 'cause you gotta pay God back. Jesus didn't pay the debt on the cross. You gotta pay the debt yourself in the next life." Even Catholics, some of whom who love Jesus, they're even told, "Well, when you die, maybe you gotta go to purgatory. You gotta work a little bit and you gotta pay God back." Let me tell you this, Jesus plus anything ruins everything. It's only Jesus, it's always Jesus, it's solely Jesus, it's eternally Jesus, it's fully Jesus. You want your sins forgiven, his name is Jesus. You want eternal life, his name is Jesus. You want your burdens lifted, his name is Jesus. You want your soul saved, his name is Jesus, amen?

- Amen. One answer, every question, his name is?

- Jesus.

- That's our answer. Now what happens is sometimes, even while many Christians will come along and say, "Okay, you're a Christian, but now you get to go varsity." Varsity? I've always wanted to go varsity. Let me just tell you this, on team Jesus, there's no junior varsity. But some will come along and say, "Okay, you ready to go varsity?" So here's the audience participation, the congregational participation. Jesus plus what helps you go varsity? Tell me the things you've been told.

- Nothing.

- Well, I said nothing, so that's the right answer, congratulations. Okay, what else?

- Baptism.

- Baptism, Jesus plus baptism. Then you could go to heaven 'cause Jesus is in heaven going, "I don't like the dry ones, I only like the wet ones," right? Don't like the dry ones, only like the wet ones. Jesus plus?

- Tongues.

- Speaking in tongues, which is an angelic private prayer language. You wanna go varsity, you gotta speak in tongues. Ooh, if you do that while you're being baptized, ooh, bonus round, okay? What else, Jesus plus what?

- Offering.

- Tithing, giving, the more you give the closer to God you are. What else, Jesus plus?
- Homeschool.
- Homeschool? Says one kid who apparently wants to transfer out of homeschool. Get me out, Mark, get me out, get me out, get me out. Tell him it's legalism. Jesus plus what?
- Denomination.
- Denomination, the right confession of faith, the right Bible translation, going on a missions trip, joining the right political party, supporting the right social cause or issue, and/or fasting. This will be a new one for some of you. Some of you are like, "What's that?" It regards eating. You're like, "I eat fast," that's not fasting, okay? Fasting is where you don't eat. None of these things are necessarily bad, but none of these things save you, because Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, those works are the only saving works. Now here's why I tell you this, because I love you and I care about you, and I need to give an account before the Lord for you. I had a painful experience when I was a brand new Christian. I became a Christian in college and I was not a Christian in high school. And once you meet Jesus, you're like, "Man, I wish I would've known Jesus. I would've told all my friends in high school about Jesus, 'cause he's awesome." And I heard a friend of mine that I played sports with in high school had become a Christian. How many of you have had that? You became a Christian and then some old friend, you realize they became a Christian, you're like, "I gotta talk to them." It's so awesome, right? So I meet with this guy. He's smiling, his countenance is glowing, he's really happy, seems really joyful and unburdened. I'm like, "Tell me what happened." He's like, "Jesus loves me. I know he died for me. Man, it's so nice to be forgiven. I was living with guilt and shame and regret. And I'm starting to read the Bible, it's super fun. I'm going to church, I'm praying, I'm getting to know God's people. I feel like God is really doing a great work in my life, and I really love Jesus." Ah, that's awesome. I told him my story, how Jesus was working in my life and we prayed together, and I went back to college, and I came back some months later and I got together with him. His countenance had changed. He seemed very burdened, seemed very anxious. I said, "Well, what are you learning?" He's like, "I got questions for you." It was an interrogation. He said, "Are you reading your Bible?" I said, "Yeah, I like it. It's like ice cream, I like it." He's like, "What translation?" I told him, he said, "That's the wrong translation." He said, "Only the King James is the real translation." I said, "Well, actually, I'd love to argue about that, 'cause that is my second spiritual gift." I said, "And the King James is fine, but that's, actually, not the best translation. Doesn't work from the most recent manuscript evidence." And he says, "Have you been water baptized?" I said, "Yeah, I was." He said, "Where you water baptized so you can go to heaven?" I said, "No, I know I'm going to heaven 'cause of Jesus. I was water baptized 'cause I love Jesus. But whether or not I get baptized, I was still gonna heaven." He says, "No, you can't go to heaven unless you're water baptized." I said, "That's not true, man." He's like, "Were you baptized in Jesus' name?" I said, "I was baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." He said, "Then it wasn't a real baptism." I was like, "We got all three, so Jesus was in

there. I covered everything. I covered it all." So then he asked me, he's like, "Are you doing street witnessing?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Otherwise you're ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." I said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I talked to people about Jesus all the time." He just kept hammering. And I told him, I said, "I love you, but we disagree." He said, "Well, I'm not sure you're gonna go to heaven. I'm not sure you're a real Christian." His first church taught him about Jesus' grace. His second church started loading him up with human works. I went off to college, I came back, I met with him again, it was worse. At that meeting, I started discussing with him, "No, no, no, we're saved by Jesus. It's the grace of God." He's like, "No, no, no. We need to do our part, Jesus did his part." And we argued for a bit and he said, "I need to break fellowship with you because I don't believe that you're a true believer, and I believe you're gonna lead me astray." I got a call some months later. His mom said, "I just wanted to let you know, he killed himself." God creates life. Satan counterfeits that and it results in death. Jesus lifts burdens. He doesn't give burdens to his children. Jesus heals your hurts. He doesn't break you. Jesus gives you joy and hope and peace, not misery and angst and fear. I love you like I loved my friend. I just want you to know if you're with Jesus, you're okay. And anything that you add to Jesus is not okay. Number two, five questions for counterfeits, is there suspicion or rejection of other Christians? Paul says early on, he says, "My name is Paul, and all the brothers are with me." What he's saying is all of us Christians, we're all together over here, and you guys formed some crazy new team, Jesus Plus. So, hey, come back to team Jesus. And there's a debate as to whether Galatia is a people group or a place, I'm not gonna get into all that. If it is a place, it's a place in Turkey. I've been there three times, and I've been to the archeological ruins, and I took a historical professor, archeological professor with me. And what he said was that oftentimes cities were built in high places so you could fortify and see your enemies coming, that the Galatians lived on an open plain, so they were vulnerable for attack from anyone at any point. And so they grew to be a strident, disciplined, always red terror alert, very serious people. And if his report is correct, when they would go to war, the men would bring their wife and children to the battlefield. They would kiss their wife and kids, and then the man would go to fight. And the point was, if you kill me, you get my wife and kids. These guys are serious. I mean, these are intense guys. If you have a disagreement with a guy and you're like, "We're gonna fight," and he shows up and you're like, "Why are your kids here? Why is your wife here? Why do you have the keys to your car and your house?" He's like, "I'm gonna kill you or you're gonna kill me. And if you kill me, you get them." You're like, "That guy's not gonna lose." This type, rock, paper, scissors, not it. Some of you are intense. Some of you are disciplined. Some of you are focused. Let me just let you in a little secret, I am, too. I know you didn't know that, disclosure. It's okay to be intense for the grace of God and the love of God and the peace of God. It's okay to be passionate for Jesus plus nothing, okay? So their problem was not that they were intense and passionate and devoted, but they were intense, passionate, and devoted about someone or something other than Jesus. Paul is equally intense, passionate, and devoted for Jesus for Jesus, for Jesus. Is there suspicion or rejection of other Christians? They're not the real Christians. They're not the varsity. We're not sure about them. Yeah, we don't know, you shouldn't pray with them. Yeah, you shouldn't, yeah, I wouldn't read, yeah, I wouldn't, no, no, no, no. They do it wrong." Let me say this. There are closed-handed issues and open-handed issues, and if we agree on the gospel of Jesus Christ, the rest are just

disagreements within the same family, but we're all brothers and sisters. How many of you are in a family and you disagree on some things with your other family members, and you're all chuckling, right? Rhetorical question. But we're all still family, 'cause we have the same Father and Jesus is our big brother. So we wanna love all the churches that believe the same gospel and serve the same Jesus. We wanna work with them, pray for them, speak well of them, not speak ill of them. The devil's already speaking ill of them, that's already covered. Number three, is there demonic revelation? He says, "If an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to ours, let him be accursed." That's a demon. God creates angels. Satan counterfeits, corrupts and co-ops them. He recruits them to become unclean, unholy spirits, demons. That's why the Bible says test the spirits. Don't believe every spirit 'cause not every spirit is from God.

Someone might say, "An angel showed up." Someone might say, "I heard a word from the Lord," or "I got a vision," or "God showed me," or "God told me." And I would say, while we test that by the Word of God and we also invite in the people of God to confirm whether or not it was a word from God. They had a demon show up. Not only does God attend church with his people, Satan sends his minions as well. And sometimes people will get a genuine supernatural experience, but it's genuinely demonic and counterfeit. Curiously, the largest cult Mormonism, I'll say Mormonism, their founder, Joseph Smith, says that he was visited by the angel Moroni, that he received additional revelation, and it is counterfeit Christ. They will say that Jesus is a created being, not the Creator, that he is the half brother of Lucifer, that he is a man who became God, which is the original curse in Genesis 3. That is the original problem. Furthermore, on top of every Mormon building, I love Mormons, there are many in the Valley, but they need the real Christ, not the counterfeit Christ, on top of every Mormon building, I didn't call it a church, I called it a building, is what? A golden angel with a trumpet named Moroni, which is a demon, meaning the authority over that church is a demon, not a church, counterfeit church. You know what's on top of our church? A cross, because Jesus Christ is our highest authority. Jesus Christ is our Lord. Jesus Christ is the one we listen to and follow and the one we wanna be like. The largest cult is founded and led by a demon, a demon named Moroni. And again, the Mormon who argued with me after the last service, he's like, what I told him was, I said, "If an angel named Mormon," excuse me. I said, "If an angel named Moron shows up, move on." Move on. In addition, the largest religion apart from Christianity is Islam, the founder of the false prophet Muhammad says he was visited by the angel Gabriel, as well as other angels. What I would say is great, they showed up, they were demons. You've been led astray. You've added something to the finished work of Jesus. Here's what I'm telling you. Legalism is demonism. I'm telling you that manmade religion and tradition is demonism. My goal is not to get you to be spiritual. My prayer for you is to be spirit-filled, to have discernment. God creates, Satan counterfeits. And here's why it's so important, and it may seem like a little thing, a minor thing, but let me tell you an analogy. I think in pictures. There's a place that we like to go. It's a pristine, beautiful, clean freshwater lake. It's where we've gone many times as a family. There's orchards surrounding it. I rent a boat for a couple of days, pull the kids on the inner tubes, it's super fun. We were in the lake a couple of years ago and suddenly there's algae all over the lake. The kids get out to swim, it's algae. Algae is wrapped up in the propeller of the boat. Algae is covering the top. This beautiful, pristine lake is being choked out by algae. There's a friend of mine who lives nearby. and I asked him, I said, "What's going on with the lake?" He said, "Oh my goodness."

He said it was a clean, pure, pristine freshwater lake, and some guy, he towed a boat in from out of state. He didn't clean the hull like you're supposed to and he just dropped it right in the water, and he brought a foreign, external contagion. He brought algae, algae that's foreign to this lake." He said, "It was just a little bit of algae on the boat." He said, "But that algae has multiplied and grown. It has taken over the whole lake. It is killing the fish, it is killing the lake, it is in the process of absolutely overtaking and destroying the entire ecosystem of the lake." He said, "We're spending millions of dollars a year as a city to wage war against the algae, that all started with just a few external contagions on the bottom of one man's boat." The gospel of Jesus Christ is clean. It is pure. It is undefiled. The Bible compares it to fresh streams of living water. And what Satan is always trying to do is just get a little algae on the boat and then give it time. People, churches, families, denominations start to die getting choked out by that which is foreign and it's a counterfeit. Number four, is the dominant mood love of God or fear of man? The grace of God is the love of God in action. See, God loves you. How do I know that? God demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I know God loves me 'cause of what Jesus did for me. Therefore, the dominating energy, emotion, of Christianity is God loves me and I love God, amen? The counterfeit of that is fear of man. What are they gonna think? What are they gonna say? What are they gonna do? You're supposed to look up to God and live for his glory. That's where Paul says to God be the glory forever and ever and ever amen. What happens is religious people, legalistic people, intimidating people, fear of man people, they literally, they get right in front of you. They're like, "Hey, don't look up, look here. Don't respond to him, respond to me. Don't do what he says, do what I say. You do what I say or there's gonna be consequences for you. I'm gonna criticize you. I'm gonna oppose you. I'm gonna harass you. I might fire you. You might get kicked out of the family. We might disown you." It's fear of man. Let me say this. Paul articulates, he says, "Am I now seeking the approval of man or God? Am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." There will be decisions in your life where you're going to offend someone. It's gonna be them or him, them or him. If you don't offend them, you will offend him. If you don't offend him, you will offend them. The question is not, will you offend someone? The question is, who will you offend? Who will you offend? Paul says, "I want to live not out of fear of man, but out of love of God." Let me tell you this, too. That's the most loving thing you can do for them. So you know what, I do love you, but his love and his relationship is primary for me. And I would encourage you to receive his love and to love him as well. And sometimes it's under the pressure that your faith is demonstrated as being genuine and true. Some of you are people-pleasers. Some of you hate conflict. Some of you don't like to be criticized. Some of you can't believe the things that I say. Some of you are my family members who think that way. But at the end of the day, if you hold to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, someone is going to push you to add something to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The grace of God will sustain you. Number five, this is the last, has grace, what you get to do because God saved you, become law, that which you have to do so that God will save you? Let me say this. You don't have to be perfect, 'cause Jesus was perfect. You don't need to pay God back 'cause Jesus paid it all. You don't need to work for your salvation. You work from your salvation. You don't work for the love of God. You work from the love of God. You don't work so that God will accept you because God has accepted you. You're working out your salvation with fear and trembling in relationship with

God. But ultimately, what oftentimes happens is God gives something that is a grace, it's a means of grace, it's a gift from God, it's a benefit to the soul, it's a blessing to you, it's a life-giving opportunity, and we turn it into a law. There's a big difference between what you get to do and what you have to do. I'll give you a weird analogy, it comes up. Grace and I have been married 26 years. I had somebody ask me a weird question not too long ago. They said, "If you cheated on Grace, what would she do?" I thought, first of all, bad question. Second of all, I'm not gonna ask Grace. Third of all, her name is Grace, but she does read the Old Testament. This could go either way. Fourth, I said, "You know, I'm not sure, and I don't intend to find out." I said, "But you know, she'd probably forgive me and try to reconcile." This person asked, "Then why don't you do it?" Answer, Grace loves me. Answer, I love Grace. Our relationship is priceless to me. I wouldn't wanna do anything to harm that relationship. I wanna strengthen that relationship. Sometimes when we preach the grace of God, people are like, "So God will forgive you no matter what you do. And he'll take you back, no matter how far you run." Well, then why not do what you want and run where you want?" You know why? 'Cause grace and love is the most compelling, powerful, unifying force in all creation. People will do things for love that they won't do for law. People will do things out of grace because they want to and they get to that they would never do out of law because they have to. So I'm gonna bring the band up. We're gonna throw a little party. Let me tell you why. You don't have to have your sins forgiven. Ha ha, this is good news, amen, that's what gospel means. I have good news. You know what? You get to have your sins forgiven. Woo! Isn't that nice? Let me tell you this. You don't have to have your burdens lifted. I'll tell you good news. You get to have your burdens lifted. Hey, Jesus, here's a burden for you. How about a blessing for me? I'll tell you this. You don't have to have a relationship with God. You get to have a relationship with God. God's like, "I love you, I'd like to be friends with you." That's amazing, I don't get picked a lot. Thanks for picking me, that's amazing. Hey, God wrote a book. You know what, do you have to read the Bible? No, you know what? You get to read the Bible. That's amazing, right? God's like, "I'd like to teach you some stuff." You're like, "That's amazing 'cause I got a lot to learn." Do you have to pray to God? Do you have to pray to God? No, you get to. God's like, "I'll talk to you. You wanna talk to me?" I do, actually, nobody else will take my call. That's amazing, let's have a conversation. You know what? We're gonna take communion now. That's remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. Do you have to take communion? No, you get to take communion. It's a grace, it's not a law. And we're gonna sing, at least I am. We're gonna sing, right? Who are we gonna sing to? Jesus. You know why? Praise goes up to the one who sends grace down, amen? I mean, if we can get excited when our sports team wins, if you guys can jump outta your chair and cheer when a dead pig crosses a chalk line, you can get excited about the grace of God and Jesus Christ, amen? So here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna all rise. We're gonna do what we get to do. We're gonna do what God made us to do. We're gonna do what Jesus saved us to do. We're gonna do what the Holy Spirit filled us to do. Because it's all the grace of God, amen? Lord Jesus, thank you for your grace. Thank you for coming. Thank you for living. Thank you for dying. Thank you for rising. Thank you for forgiving. Thank you for unburdening. Thank you for healing. Thank you for blessing. Thank you for promising that there's nothing we can do to undo all the good you've done. Jesus, thank you for the work you've done for us. Thank you for the work you're doing in us. Thank you for the work you're doing through us. And Lord Jesus, we

come to enjoy your grace, not because we have to, but because we get to and we want to. And all God's people said, amen.

- Amen.