

Nothing but the Blood

Galatians 1:1-10

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When we drive, we must continually course correct due to slight curvature or unevenness in the road or imbalance in tire pressure or weight distribution in the car. Likewise, many factors in life can cause us to stray from the path of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's easy for our lives and even church gatherings to become centered on good things like finances, health, relationships, family, and parenting, but these are not the purpose of church. If we lose focus, we will eventually realize that our lives are not directed towards Jesus anymore. Both church and each of our individual lives should be directed primarily towards Jesus Christ. Paul's letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, serve as course correction for us. These churches also got off track after Paul left them, so he had to write these letters to bring them back on course.

After Paul left the church in Galatia, Judaizers arose claiming the authority of apostles and teaching that all Christians, both Jew and Gentile, had to be circumcised and follow the Old Testament Law. Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians in order to reaffirm that faith in Jesus alone is necessary for salvation. Obedience to the old Law could not save and is no longer required. Jesus should be the focus of the church, not the Law.

The first reason why Jesus is our focus is because He was raised from the dead (1:1). Many Christians tend to file away the resurrection of Jesus together with other miscellaneous facts about Jesus' life, like the virgin birth or walking on water. But the resurrection is just as important as Jesus' death on the cross. It is the historical event that changed the world. If there were no resurrection, the apostles would not have been emboldened to spread the gospel. Without Jesus' subsequent appearance to hundreds of people, nobody would be convinced that He is God. It is because of the resurrection that Christianity has endured and spread, and that we worship here today. Without the power of the resurrection at work within us (Ephesians 3:20), we could not be changed and could not endure in faith. Without the resurrection, there is no victory over death, and our resurrection would not be possible. The resurrection is a critical part of the gospel, but how often do you bring up the resurrection when you share the gospel?

In vv. 3-4, Paul states that Jesus should be our focus because He gave Himself for us willingly. He was not forced to do it, but chose to sacrifice Himself voluntarily. When I prompt

my son to tell his mom that he loves her, it's nice when he says it; but it's not as good as when he does it willingly without any prompting. Likewise the fact that Jesus gave Himself up willingly makes His sacrifice so much more meaningful. Yet when we receive this grace, do we thank Him once and continue on with our lives like nothing has changed? Are we like the 9 lepers who just walk away after Jesus healed them, or do we return to Jesus to thank Him? Let us not forget Jesus after receiving His grace, but rather in gratitude let us follow Jesus.

Finally in v. 4, Jesus should be our focus because He rescues us from this present age. If you've been here for the last sermon series on Ecclesiastes, you know that the world is messed up. That which is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted. The world is broken and cursed with sin, but it is not our home. Jesus rescues us from this broken world, which is destined for destruction. And we put our hope in Jesus alone to renew all things when He returns.

We see in vv. 4-5 that all this was according to God's purpose. He knew that humanity would turn its back on Him and that they would have no ability to restore their broken relationship with Him. God's will was always to send His Son to rescue us from our sin and bring us back to Him. And it is only Jesus who can pull us out of the hole we dug ourselves into. It may not be news to us that we must keep our eyes on Jesus, but let us not tire of hearing it and let it spur us to faithfully follow Him.