

**Grace Didn't Die**  
**Your Relationship With God: Man's Approval or God's?**  
**Galatians 1:10-24**

**Introduction:** Motivation is everything; that is, why we do what we do will ultimately dictate everything we do. That being the case, being there is no more important relationship in the universe than the one we have with God, it is therefore vitally important to examine why we have it! What's driving us to know and follow Christ? Is it because we love being loved by Him so much that we can't help but love and obey Him, or is there some other motive fueling and defining our efforts?

In Galatians 1:10-24 it appears a group of people called the Judaizers were attacking Paul's ministry by suggesting that he was not righteously motivated; specifically, that the Gospel he was proclaiming was being formulated and driven by selfish motives. They rationalized that Paul's statements that the covenant God made with Israel, including the Law God gave Moses, had been fulfilled and replaced by the New Covenant in Christ were intended to do nothing but earn him favor from Gentile believers. Therefore, in attacking Paul's motives for preaching such a Gospel, they sought to undermine his right to authoritatively proclaim the truth about God and His Gospel and, as such, undermine what Paul was teaching. Therefore, as we look at Paul's response in Galatians 1:10-24, it's important to remember who these "Judaizers" were that he was responding to.

The Judaizers were Jews who professed that Jesus is the Messiah and thus the eternal Son of God, died on the cross to pay the penalty of sins, rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and is coming back to judge the living and the dead. However, they also insisted that Judaism, specifically the Law of Moses and the many oral traditions and laws they had added to it over the centuries, was still the covenant of God with man, and therefore, all of its requirements, both morally and ceremonially, needed to be met. Some believed they needed to be met to be justified and adopted as children of God, while others believed they needed to be met to receive spiritual power and favor from God as one of His children, as well as favor from the Christian community.

Therefore, in Galatians 1:10-24 the motivation of Paul's response is ultimately not to protect his ministry and influence with the believers in Galatia but to protect their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! We will discuss this in great detail through our study of the book of Galatians, but the "gospel" being preached by the Judaizers was NOT the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and two millenniums later, the attacks first launched by the Judaizers continue. They may have nothing to do with Judaism, but they nonetheless target the same things about the Gospel and try to replace it with the same types of things. In the end, even if they proclaim to be teaching "grace," they are ultimately trying to kill the covenant God made with us in Christ and replace it with something that motivates mankind to perform for God and others with the expectation that a successful performance can and should earn favor while unsuccessful performances should earn condemnation.

So, let's see how Paul's defense of his motives highlights the difference between a relationship with God through Christ, that is, a relationship based on the favor He has

already given us (the Gospel) and one based on favor that needs to be earned and then maintained (religion).

**Proposition: In Galatians 1:10-24 Paul offers three very clear proofs that his ministry was not to achieve man's favor but rather a result of God's favor.**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> proof is that ...**

**(1) Paul's life was a total failure if the purpose of his life was to win the favor of man! (1:10)**

- A. 10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.**
- B.** As we get further into this letter, we will clearly see that Paul's motivation in life was in no way to win the favor of God because he knew, first and foremost, it couldn't be won. Second, Paul knew God's favor had been fully given to him through Christ, meaning there was nothing left to be won! So, verse ten should not be seen as a statement that Paul is trying to convince God to be pleased with him. To make such a conclusion would be to directly contradict the fundamental point Paul is making in this letter.
- C.** So, what is verse ten about? Paul is asking his readers to objectively look at his life and ministry, that is, the actual facts about his life and what he preaches and writes, and ask themselves if it makes any sense that it could possibly be for the approval of men. Or, when you look at his life and ministry with objectivity, does it appear to be motivated by what God thinks about him?
- D.** Verse 10 then serves as a bridge between what Paul was saying in the previous verses and what he's getting ready to say through the end of the chapter. Therefore, when he writes, **"For am I now ..."** is meant first to take us back to the previous verse where he wrote, **"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." (1:9).**
- E.** If you read verse 10 in that context, Paul is asking, "Did that sound like I was concerned with getting men to love me, or was I saying that because I was concerned about what God thinks?" Paul was essentially saying, "Does that at all sound like I'm trying to get men to love me?" The answer is, of course, not! Paul was rebuking people, not flattering them! If you are trying to get people to love you, then you probably shouldn't be rebuking them!
- F.** As a matter of fact, Paul then states that his life is the opposite of a testimony of one trying to get men to love him, but is instead an obvious life of one completely committed to the glory of Christ. Being a servant of Christ doesn't mean you

mistreat people; as a matter of fact, if we love Christ, we must love others as He loves us (1 John 4:7-21). But you also can't be a servant of Christ if you are concerned about getting the approval of men, and Paul is clearly not concerned about it!

- G. William Barkley wrote, **"Paul denied that he was trying to ingratiate himself with others. It was not other people he was serving; it was God. It made no difference to him what people said or thought about him; his master was God. And then he brought forward an unanswerable argument: 'If I were trying to gain favour with other people, I would not be the slave of Christ.' What is in his mind is this: slaves had their master's name and sign stamped on them with a red-hot branding iron; Paul himself bore on his body the marks of his sufferings, the brand of the slavery of Christ. 'If,' he said, 'I were out to gain favour with other people, would I have these scars on my body?' The fact that he was marked in this way was the final proof that his aim was to serve Christ and not to please others."**<sup>1</sup>
- H. Later, Paul would have to address a similar subject with believers in Corinth. In that letter, he significantly expanded his argument that he was in no way trying to please men, and if he was, he was a total failure! Paul wrote,
- I. **1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. 5 Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. 7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of**

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<sup>1</sup> Barclay, W. (2002). [\*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians\*](#) (p. 14). Westminster John Knox Press.

Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands. (2 Corinthians 11:1-33)

- J. Therefore, if Paul is preaching a Gospel intended to get people to love him, then he's totally failing at it! The fact of the matter is that Paul had no concern about whether mankind liked what he had to say or not. He was preaching the Gospel from one motivation and one motivation alone—Christ's love for HIM!

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> proof that Paul's ministry was not to achieve man's favor but rather a result of God's favor was that,**

**(2) Paul wasn't teaching a message that came from man. (1:11-12, 15-22)**

- A. The best way to make men love you is to tell them something men came up with! Mankind is obsessed with itself, so much so that we generally only want to hear things that agree with us; that justify our dreams and desires rather than challenge them. So, if Paul wanted to win the favor of man, then he should preach something man came up with.

**B. 11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 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. ... 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 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; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. 20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.**

**C.** I will share much more about Paul's testimony in our next proof, but at this, we just need to understand the proof he's presenting in these verses. The key phrase is in Galatians 1:12, "**nor was I taught it.**" While defending the motivation and integrity of his ministry, Paul is also establishing a case for the divine origin of the Gospel he is preaching versus the false Gospel of the Judaizers. He didn't learn the Gospel in a rabbinical school or from anybody else, including the men who were first recognized as Christ's Apostles, but rather, he learned it straight from the Risen Christ Himself (Acts 9). It was certainly verified and affirmed by the Apostles as the same Gospel they had been commissioned by Christ to preach, which certainly validates it, but when you add to it the fact that Paul didn't learn it from them, yet somehow preached the same thing they had heard from Christ, then suddenly we have divine validation rather than men!

**D.** Therefore, applying that to the point he's making in this passage, if Paul was trying to please men, he should preach something man came up with to affirm himself and win the approval of other men. However, the Gospel Paul is preaching didn't come from mankind, but rather came to mankind from the GodMan, Jesus Christ, and they killed Jesus for preaching it! Therefore, if the motivation of Paul's life was to get mankind to love him, then Paul was an idiot for preaching the Gospel of Jesus! It was a proven fact that mankind had violently responded to it, especially his Jewish brothers! In addition, Jesus promised those who followed Him and preached His Gospel would be persecuted.

- 1. 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:22)**
- 2. 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. (Matthew 24:9)**

**3. 18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. (John 15:18-22)**

- E. So once again, if your motivation was to get people to love you, then you would have to be the stupidest person on the planet to pick something that had only proven to make people violently angry and was promised to continue to get the same results! This actually takes us right into the third proof.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> proof that Paul's ministry was not to achieve man's favor but rather a result of God's favor was that,**

**(3) Paul was preaching a message he tried to destroy! (1:13-14; 23-24)**

- A. Paul clearly didn't fully know and understand the Gospel of Jesus until it was revealed to him by Christ, but prior to that, what he did know, he hated! It offended everything he was about because it directly challenged the things he and his culture held to as their personal and ethnic identity! Here in Galatians 1, Paul wrote,
- B. **13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 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. ... 23 They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me. (13-14; 23-24)**
- C. Notice that what people said was that he was now preaching "the faith" that he once tried to destroy. This Gospel he is preaching is the Gospel he hated, that is until he heard it in full from the Risen Christ! There are a few places in the book of Acts that give us more details about Paul's violence against the Gospel of Jesus Christ and those who believed it, but Acts 22 might be the most vivid.
- D. **1 "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet**

of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. 6 "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 8 And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' (Acts 22:1-8)

- E. This is not only proof that Paul's motives are sincere, but it also establishes a point of integrity for the Gospel itself. The Judaizers claim they have a superior love for the Law of Moses compared to Paul. In fact, they suggest that Paul never really appreciated the Law of Moses and the covenant God made with Israel, and thus, why he's now preaching a Gospel that replaces it. But the fact of the matter is NOBODY was more committed to the Law of Moses and the traditions of Israel than Paul, so much so that he was at the forefront of leading a violent reaction to it to annihilate it!
- F. Therefore, for Paul to now agree with and confidently proclaim the faith he killed people for having is both a massive testimony to its validity and his sincerity in preaching it! Paul is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ because he can help it! He is so blown away by God's love for him, a love fully revealed in the very Gospel Paul is now preaching, that he can't be silenced! He doesn't care how people respond to it because it's not about their response; it's about proclaiming the truth that totally changed his life, a truth he had tried to destroy, but nonetheless, a truth that God, by His grace alone, opened Paul's eyes and soften Paul's heart to finally understand and believe! If Jesus, whom he was trying to eliminate from the memory of humanity, gave him salvation, how could he do anything other than proclaim that salvation to the world?

**Challenge: Is the motivation of your relationship with God best described as an effort to convince God that you love Him, convince others that you love God or a genuine response to how much God loves you?**