

Second Sunday after Pentecost June 6th, 2010

NIV Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead-- 2 and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But 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! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! 10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we are sorry for the terrible decisions we make in our daily lives to plug into this present evil age and unplug from your grace and peace. By your Spirit through your Word today keep us under the protection of your Gospel, the good news of free and full forgiveness for sinners like us.

Intro: There's now a 99-cent iPhone app, "Type n Walk," that uses the device's camera to display on screen what is happening in the physical world, giving users the confidence, if not the ability, to walk and type at the same time.

My idea of an out-of-touch with reality computer nerd is a man who lives in his parent's basement connected to his computer with a microwave oven and refrigerator within arms reach. But that isn't the reality anymore. A recent Pew Research Center study found that "a significant proportion of people who visit public and semipublic spaces are online while in those spaces." Parks. Libraries. Restaurants. Churches! Marriage is suffering as well-- and the complaints are coming from men and women. "I can't reach you. I can't find you. You can be sitting two inches from me, but you are not there. Where are you?" Spouses are checking out at dinner, on vacation, even in bed to be entertained on the Smartphone. Why do we choose fun and new over more important, more compelling things like playing horse with our children, holding our spouse, reading the Bible? It is because we are sinful humans, who tend to repeat actions that are pleasurable and rewarding. **What complicates it more is that we devalue delayed rewards and favor of the immediacy of the new.** Get some friends together and tell them you will give them \$100 now or \$200 next year. Most of them, will take the \$100. Now tell them they can have \$100 in 10 years or \$200 in 11 years. Most will take the \$200 because there is nothing immediate, or more exciting, fogging up their calculation about which is the greater reward. It's new, fun and rewarding right now. We need to step back and disconnect as believers -

Disconnect from the present evil age!

Stay plugged in to the eternal Will of our God; Stay under the protection of the Gospel

1) Stay plugged into the eternal Will of our God

The churches in the Roman Province of Galatia in modern day Turkey, were started by Paul on his first missionary journey. Places like Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. We may not know much about these congregations of believers but we do know what had the apostle Paul so upset in this letter to them.

6 I am astonished that **you** are so quickly deserting the one who called **you** by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- 7 which is really no gospel at all.

The apostle Paul witnessed himself, their conversion from unbelief to trust in Christ for salvation. He saw their baptisms. He heard their confessions of faith in Jesus as their Savior from sin, death and the devil. But sadly he was taken aback at how fast they turned their back on the God who created them, saved them and sent the apostle Paul to them. They knew the will of God for them. God loved them and sent His one and only Son to be their substitute. They heard and believed that God's Will was to take their punishment for sin upon him. They knew that God wanted no one to perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. They knew the one and only true God --a merciful and compassionate Savior God.

Oh they are still believers. He greets them with : "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." But he is surprised of their desertion process. By their actions and words they are following a path of deserting God -- he literally says they are "in the process of falling away from the grace of Christ."

What happened? How could believers start falling away so fast? Just like in life, it is usually not one bad decision that causes a catastrophe, but instead a serious string of bad decisions. The believers in Galatia were putting up with and listening to the present evil age. False teachers were adding to what God wanted, what God said, what God commanded. They were in the process of turning away from God's Word and following the reasoning, thinking and desires of the present evil age.

Our present evil age leads us away from God's Will for us now and into eternity as well. Not with the Devil appearing to us when we are alone and asking us to sign our soul away for fortune and fame. No, but in small seemingly insignificant decisions that strung together keep us from staying plugged into the eternal will of our God.

Getting up early to go through your emails, staying up late to keep up with your Face book, sleeping in on Sunday morning, taking a vacation from the Word on your vacation: All of them seemingly insignificant small decisions, but strung together they unplug us from the eternal will of God and plug us into the thinking of this present evil age that lives for fun and entertainment in the here and now. May the Lord forgive us for our bad decisions and grant us His grace and Spirit to stay plugged into the eternal Will of God for our lives.

2) Stay under the protection of the Gospel

The Galatians churches were in the process of falling away. Well what course of action was that? They were adding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by default were then subtracting from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Luke sums up succinctly the false teaching gaining momentum in Galatia:

NIV Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless **you** are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, **you** cannot **be** saved."

In short they said to be saved you needed Jesus and your good works. In truth by saying you needed anything with Jesus in order to be saved they were taking away from the greatness that is to God's Glory: salvation. In the gospel reading we hear of Cornelius. The teachers looked at his work and thought, "he deserves Jesus' help." Cornelius said instead "I deserve nothing not even to have you come under my roof." Jesus commends Cornelius' words and thereby condemning the teacher's opinion. And again in our OT lesson, we see God's great gospel – the good news that even though there was no one who could do anything right – not even one- God's own hand worked salvation!

When you add to the free Salvation a requirement it's no longer free! When you take away from God's Work you take away his glory and give it to sinners. The apostle Paul knows the consequences to adjusting the Gospel to human reason. He calls it a perversion and that anyone who does that to the gospel, no matter who they are, will be eternally condemned – TWICE!

Now I know that none of you would willingly run out from under the protection of the gospel. None of you would intentionally rob the glory of Salvation from Jesus and give it to yourself and other sinners.

But how many times don't we in our prayers and thoughts reflect the ideas of the Jewish leaders about Cornelius, "if anyone deserves a miracle it's him or it's me." We are quick to judge ourselves and others by what they do. We make judgments of worth and value based on what kind of sins and how many sins we commit. That is the thinking of this present evil age that leads us away from the real power of the gospel.

"Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed his blood for me, Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die, As the branch is to the vine, I am his and he is mine."

We need to stay protected from this evil present world that puts its hope and trust in the good of humanity. We need to stay under the protection of the good news of Jesus Christ, so that we might never be too proud to think that we need a savior. And that we might never be so distraught by guilt that we think our Lord would never save us.

The other day I was having coffee with a friend and my cell phone went off. He stopped talking and waited for me to answer it. I told him I can get it later, this is more important. Do we need to do that more often? Maybe we should just repeat this sentence more often, "God's Word is more important. God's Work is more important. God's Will is more important." Disconnect from this present evil age! Stay plugged into the eternal Will of our God and stay under the protection of the Gospel.