

Galatians 1:6-9 (ESV) ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 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.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

Paul's heart was breaking for the churches in Galatia. It is my opinion that those who have the ability to break your heart are those that you love the most. Paul's love for his fellow believers in Galatia is unquestionable. God used Paul to cause people in Galatia to be saved by grace through faith, to be born anew, to be born again. Whenever you lead a person to Christ, there is found a bond of love that comes from Christ. That bond will last for all eternity.

This week I was introduced to our new granddaughter, Addy. I am a person who forgets names, but I never forget a face. She looks exactly like our daughter looked when she was born. My emotions got the better of me and I could not speak for a moment or two. The love you feel for your grandchild is something else indeed. This is my point, heaven celebrates when a person is born again, brought to faith in Jesus Christ. God uses you and me to bring this about. God used Paul to not only see people come to faith in Jesus Christ, God used Paul to birth the churches in Galatia. The love of God in Paul for those churches was supernatural. The teaching of these churches came directly from Paul. He spoke the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them, and faith was birthed in the listeners. "Faith comes from the hearing, the hearing of the Word of God. Paul taught them the pure Gospel, convincing them that the Good News of Jesus Christ is true absolutely and absolutely true. What was heading in the proper direction when he left was now found to be heading in the wrong direction toward destruction.

I read the article on Christian Post and want to read a part of it to you. It is about a plane ride that crashed landed. Both father and daughter lived but only by the grace of God. "*Most*

pilots get into that, and they get confused, they get twisted upside down, and it's fatal. ... I flew into the snowstorm, and I was like 'wow, I'm snow-blinded,' and my instant reaction was not panic, but I shut off the landing lights because they were shining lights into the snow," he recounted. "I focused on the attitude indicator, which is what we are trained to do, and I saw that the plane was level. And honestly, I don't know what happened. I could have probably flown out of it, but I don't know what else happened. The next thing I remember is [being] crushed in this airplane, dead silent and cold." The plane took off perfectly and no one predicted the crash.

The church in Galatia crashed and now needed rescuing. Paul's pen was part of that rescue. I did my best last week to describe what caused the crash. False teachers slithered into the churches of Galatia like the serpent slithered into the Garden of Eden tempting Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve fell as are the believers in Galatia to a crashing halt.

Friends, when I teach confirmation, I take with great seriousness the soul of every student. One day I will answer to God for every comment, every lecture, every class I taught. I want them all to know Jesus personally, to make the Christian faith their own, to live the rest of their lives for Jesus. Inwardly, I feel very connected to them.

When I hear of former students falling away from the faith it deeply bothers me. It more than bothers me. What could I have taught then to counterbalance what they are learning in college or later? Whatever turned them away angers me. All I can do in the present is to present the truth of the Gospel to the best of my ability and not hold back.

I know of professors who are atheists and false believers at the college level who live every day to destroy the true Christian faith of their students. When the student finally has enough courage to speak up for the faith, they are instantly ostracized, bullied, and worse. There is no longer such a thing as free speech on secular college campuses. Bible-believing students are like blood in water infested with sharks.

The sharks began to do their dirty work in Galatia. Some of what the sharks taught was true. The sharks believed Jesus to be the true Messiah, crucified and risen from the dead. False teaching always has some truth to it to get you to listen and then bow down to it. The Judaizers had some things there were correct. But where they went wrong, they went beyond grace for a person to be truly saved. Friends, we are saved by grace through faith, period. The Judaizers said they had to be circumcised and follow the laws of the Old Testament. Whenever salvation is based on works it is a teaching straight from the pit of hell itself. The plane has crash landed and Paul sent his letter hoping to rescue the survivors before it was too late.

A word of warning. Apostasy can overtake any of us. None of us are immune to falling for false teachers. Todd Wilson writes, *“Apostasy ought to grieve us all deeply. For what is sadder than for someone to turn his or her life-story from gospel triumph to heart-rending tragedy (Galatians, pg. 30). The author continues, “Apostasy comes over us when two things happen to us. First we experience soul trouble – a personal crises, hardship, tragedy, or loss. And secondly, we encounter twisted truth – some subtle perversion of the truth of Scripture, a slight distortion of the grace of God in the Gospel. The Galatians were troubled, threatened, scared by these false teachers; they were also being taught a bogus gospel, a distortion of the real one” (ibid pg. 30).* There are foxes in sheep’s clothing in pulpits all around this nation. Please be aware and know that you have been warned. John Calvin writes, *“The devil sometimes uses apparently small, subtle issues to distance us from the gospel without our even perceiving it” (ibid pg. 31).*

One of the most encouraging messages that we have as Christians is that of forgiveness. I have seen young people walk away from the church because of some mistakes they have made, some poor choices, and they are filled with guilt and shame, so much so that they can’t stand to walk inside the church where they think they will be highly judged. And that is exactly why they should come back to church. There is no sin so great that God will not forgive, and

God promises His children that He will forgive. Jesus went to the cross to bear our guilt, to carry our shame so we can be forgiven and freed of all our sins. Our behavior can be atrocious, and God loves us just the same, unconditionally. It is that love and grace that brings us, woos us, and motivates us to get our lives right with God. Judgmentalism, legalism and being critical turns people off. Love and grace bring healing to the soul. Paul is admonishing his children of the faith as a loving father ought to.

What do you do for a child, a friend, a person you love who walks away from the Lord and from the church? What do you do for a person who has fallen into false teaching? I have recently spoken to a number of people who have left the church and I want to know why. I speak very calmly and ask specific questions. 1. Have you felt hurt by the church? 2. Have I as your pastor driven you away? 3. Have you found another Bible believing church yet? 4. Can we pray together? Often it is a person's pain that keeps them away, and most often it has nothing to do with the church. They are struggling with a different season of life. The church does not feel safe, so they go into hibernation. Human relationships are about as strong as a spider web, easily broken and difficult to fix. That is why I want us all to read the book by Rod Wilson, "Thank you, I am sorry, tell me more." As our friendships in this church grow more healthy, it is absolutely amazing how the church will grow.

Of course we pray for the Lord God to bring back to Himself those who have strayed. It may take years of heartfelt prayers before you see a change. Please keep praying

It is good to claim the promises of God in your prayer. Give God's word back to God for God is always faithful to His word. God's word does not return void. "Lord, I claim your promise for my son, for my daughter that: **1. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).**

Peter had his way of disappointing Jesus so much so that Jesus called Peter Satan for thinking wrongly and later Peter denied he knew the Lord Jesus. The words of Jesus to Peter

get to me for they are words of restoration and God is still in the restoration business, the ministry of being restored by God's grace. **2. Luke 22:31-32 (NLT2)** ³¹ **“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. ³² But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So, when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”** Peter blew it. We all blow it. He was restored and proved to be faithful until he himself was crucified upside down. I have found those who walk away from the faith and come back become dynamo believers for they realize how much they have been forgiven. Left to himself Peter would have been devoured by the roaring lion. But he was never left alone. Jesus stood faithfully by his side, defending, protecting, and keeping him (ibid pg 33).

The Bible says: **3. 1 Peter 1:5 (NLT2)** ⁴⁵ **“And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.”** God, I claim this verse for my child, for my grandchild, for my **godchild.**

We read: **4. Jude 1:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ **Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.** You can claim this promise for the one who has broken your heart. **5. 1 Peter 5:10-11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ **The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.** Please use these verses in prayer. **6. 1 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)** ⁸ **who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** And finally, **7. John 10:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ **My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.** These verses give us hope and motivate us to keep praying as long as we have breath. We are secure in the Father's hand (ibid. pg. 33.) God's restoration grace is more powerful than our sin. Amen and Amen.