

opening prayer (2 min)

Father, thank You for the gospel You have given us: that Jesus gave Himself for our sins to rescue us. Open our eyes to anything we have been trusting alongside Christ. Give us discernment to recognize what is true and courage to hold on to it. Amen.

highlights (13 min)

Big Idea: God has given us one gospel: Christ gave Himself to rescue us. No messenger has authority to change it, and no pressure to win approval justifies compromising it.

opening reflection

- How would you know if you were walking away from the gospel?
- When has a small mistake or a slightly wrong direction taken you much farther off course than you expected?

Bridge Statement: The Galatian believers still believed in Jesus and still gathered with the church, yet teachers were telling them that faith in Jesus needed something added: circumcision and life under the law. It sounded convincing and even spiritual, but Paul called it desertion. A plane leaving Las Vegas just one degree off will miss Israel entirely. In the same way, small modifications to the gospel are not harmless—they are deadly, because they change what we trust for our acceptance before God.

Key Line: A gospel that is one degree off will never bring you home.

scripture focus

Read Galatians 1:1-10 aloud.

Context: Paul planted churches across the region of Galatia, in what is now Turkey. After he left, teachers arrived insisting that Gentile believers must be circumcised and live under the law of Moses to belong fully to God's people. Paul writes with urgency. In place of his usual thanksgiving, he expresses shock that they are turning to a different gospel, and he reminds them that the gospel is God's rescue through Christ alone.

time to consider (30 min)

Reflect on what God has spoken through this week's sermon by discussing the key truths together. Take this moment seriously: slow down, listen, and respond to what the Spirit is saying.

1. God Has Given the Gospel

Paul's greeting is more than a formality. He was once Saul, a persecutor of the church, until he met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and was rescued by God's grace. His authority did not come from people but from Jesus Christ and God the Father, and the message he preached was affirmed in community. The gospel is not a human idea we can improve; it is a message God has given.

discussion questions

- Why does it matter that the gospel comes from God and not from people?
- Paul went from persecutor to apostle. How has God's grace changed the direction of your life?

Insight: The gospel is not something we invent or improve; it is something we receive.

2. The Gospel Announces God's Rescue

Verses 3–5 are the theological center of the letter: this is the gospel. Jesus gave Himself for our sins, willingly paying the debt we owed. He did it to rescue us from the present evil age, at work around us and within us. And He did it according to the will of God, because there was no other way. Like someone drowning in deep water, we cannot save ourselves. Salvation is a gift we receive.

discussion questions

- Which part of the gospel in verses 3–5 speaks to you most right now, and why?
- Where are you tempted to treat salvation as something you contribute to instead of a rescue you receive?

Insight: Jesus did not come to coach drowning people; He came to rescue them.

3. They Deserted After Being Called

Instead of thanksgiving, Paul expresses shock. The Galatians were “deserting”—transferring their allegiance—and they likely had no idea. The persuasive influencers among them said that faith in Jesus was not enough without circumcision and the law. Paul’s answer is clear: there is only one gospel. When we make something alongside Christ necessary to secure the acceptance God gives through Christ, we change the gospel. Anyone who preaches a different gospel stands under God’s judgment, whether an angel, a popular preacher, or even Paul himself.

discussion questions

- What “Jesus plus something” messages do people hear today (performance, religious observance, approval, or the newest teaching)?
- How can we test what we hear? Ask: What does it change about Christ, His saving work, or how we belong to God? And whose approval is governing it?

Insight: Counterfeits succeed when they look close to the original, so the best protection is knowing the real gospel well.

4. The Gospel Requires Our Allegiance

Paul’s allegiance is settled: even if the whole world is against him, he is a servant of Christ, and Christ’s approval governs what he preaches. We face the same pressure to believe what is popular, soften what is uncomfortable, or chase the approval of people whose opinions keep changing. Faithfulness means holding on to the gospel as God gave it, even when it costs us.

discussion questions

- Whose approval most shapes what you believe, say, or stay silent about?
- Where are you tempted to soften the gospel to be accepted by others?

Insight: A servant of Christ lives for one approval: His.

renewal

Reflect: When boaters off the Florida coast were struck by lightning and thrown into the water, they did not try to swim halfway back or fix the boat; they grabbed the Coast Guard cable and were rescued. What are you trusting for your full acceptance before God—Christ alone, or Christ plus something else? Where is Jesus inviting you to let go and cling to Him?

Key Line: Cling to the only gospel that saves—and if you have never grabbed hold of it, today is your day of rescue.

missional living (30 min)

1. Read Galatians 1:1-10 daily this week and write one sentence about what Jesus has done for you.
2. Share the story of how God rescued you with one person this week.
3. Test one message you hear this week (a sermon, podcast, or post) against the gospel by asking:
 - What does it change about Christ, His saving work, or how we belong to God?
 - Whose approval is governing what is believed and proclaimed?

follow-up

Where did you notice “Jesus plus something” thinking or the pull for others’ approval this week? How did resting in what Christ has done change your response?

closing time of prayer (15 min)

Pray for gratitude for Christ’s rescue, discernment to recognize distorted gospels, courage to stay faithful when the gospel is unpopular, and for those in our lives who still need to be rescued.

final takeaways

- The gospel comes from God; no messenger has authority to change it.
- Jesus gave Himself for our sins to rescue us. Salvation is a gift we receive.
- Adding anything alongside Christ to secure our acceptance changes the gospel.
- Being convincing does not make a message true; test every claim against the gospel.
- Our allegiance belongs to Christ, and His approval governs what we believe and proclaim.

Memory Verse: *Galatians 1:3-4* — “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”