

# If We Don't Get This Right...

October 15, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "If We Don't Get This Right." The scripture reading is Galatians 1, 1 to 10. Thank you to Dave, Ed, Amy, Toluwani, and Don for being involved in the service. Happy anniversary this week to John and Connie.

## Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

I invite you to come in and take a seat. We're glad you're all here. We have some announcements. Happy birthday to Allie and there are no anniversaries this week. Happy Independence Day to those of you from Nigeria, and Wil Maddeaux passed away. We pray for his family and loved ones as they mourn him and his funeral will be on October the 28th.

Some of you may recall the passage in Ecclesiastes 3. I mean it's quoted. It's in songs. There's a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven. Time to be born, time to die, on and on and on. I'm not going to read it all, but the message, a time. Time is kind of a determining factor in all of our lives. We're caught up in schedules, deadlines. Our free time is at a premium. We're busy. We need time to prepare, time to think. Let's our time here this morning be a time of soul and spirit refreshing. A time of restoration. A time to spend with fellow believers and a time to express our praise to God. I read a couple of verses in Psalm 31 verse 14, 15 and 16. But I trust in you, O Lord. I say you are my God. My times are in your hands. Deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine upon your servant. Save me with your unfailing love. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray for your continued guidance and that we may respond to the needs of others. That your spirit move within us. We pray that our time here may be a time of praise, a time of refreshing our spirits. May we see and reflect your grace and your mercy as we live our lives. And we pray that you, we may be your people. Accept our praise as we recognize your surrounding presence. In Christ's name, amen.

## Song Leader

My granddaughter asked me a couple of weeks ago how old I was and when I told her, her response was, "Oh, you are old." Well you see the thing is, I just keep getting up in the morning and I keep breathing. And when I do that, the days click by. We're gonna be singing a praise medley this morning of parts of three or four songs. And I believe, I believe that when we sing praise songs, we do it collectively together here. But I want you to realize that you are praising God whether you realize it or not. Because if you draw in oxygen into your air, into your lungs that has oxygen, that oxygen has been picked up by hemoglobin and circulated to all of the cells of your body, several trillion cells of your body. That oxygen goes through a process where it pulls apart glucose and other molecules and provides energy that give you life. And when you are breathing, you are praising God. Because not only are you taking in the goodness of oxygen, but you're getting rid of the waste of carbon dioxide. We're a miracle, a walking, breathing miracle, and we praise God every time we're kind and loving and patient and long-suffering. Every time we do that, we are praising God. Whether we know it or not. We're gonna be singing some songs that are based upon the Psalms in the Bible. Many of these songs start,

Psalms start with the word hallelujah. So we're gonna sing hallelujah. This is a rejoicing. This is a, you know, I think of Handel's Messiah, just this absolute gushing of praise.

## Communion

Good morning. If you did not get a chance to pick up a communion cup at the back, and you would like one, they are available at the back. In the month of July, I read this book. It is called The Story, and it is subtitled, "Read the Bible as One Seamless Story from Beginning to End." It's 31 chapters long, and the month of July is 31 days long, and that worked out really nice for me. I'm not actually going to do a book report on this. I just brought it to plug and to say it is October 1st, and it's a 31-day month, so if somebody wants to take this home with them, they are welcome to it. It is a book that is the narrative telling of the Bible, so the story parts of the Bible, and it is going in chronological order, so sometimes you're reading about a king, and then you hear about a prophet who prophesied to that king. Really interesting way to read the Bible, and in the index it has a list of what chapters and verses it covers, because it is mostly a direct quote of scripture.

When I got to the end of July, I asked the question, "What did I miss?" So I read the one-third narrative part, and now I am doing the two-third non-narrative part of the Bible. It has led to some interesting juxtapositions. I am kind of choosing my own adventure doing Old Testament and New Testament back and forth, so I'm not stuck in one or the other, and one of the most interesting pairings was Job, Ecclesiastes, and Revelation. Read those three back to back. There are a lot of interesting ties, but what I want to talk about today is in the last few weeks I've read the non-narrative part of Exodus, Leviticus, and Galatians. Our reading today is from Galatians, so I felt like this was going to tie in nicely. Reading the non-narrative part of Exodus, you take out the plagues, you take out the escape from Egypt, and Leviticus, what you are left with is the law, and it is a heavy, heavy law. I think I had a respect for the high-strokes version of the law. Don't kill, got it. Honor my father and mother, so-so. Love your neighbor. Sometimes? But I had a good big-picture version of the law, but what reading non-narrative Exodus and Leviticus showed me was just how big the law is. It is put blood on your big toe and on your ear and on the horn of the altar and sacrifice, and if you do it wrong, you are struck dead. It is only these people may touch the Ark of the Covenant, and if it's falling and you reach out to touch it, you die on the spot. When the New Testament says the wages of sin is death, I can understand that when it's murder, but I can't understand it when it's blood on my big toe or on my ear or on the wrong person's big toe or ear, that the wages are death and it's death immediately. The law is so much bigger than I gave it credit for.

And then I read Galatians, and the book of Galatians is the first book that was written in the New Testament, and it is a book of saying Christ fulfilled the law. Christ abolished the law. You are free of the law. You are forgiven from the law. If the law is so much bigger than I'm giving it credit for, grace is so much bigger than I am giving it credit for. I should be struck dead, but I am not, because grace is there and bigger, and that is a compre- that is a level of grace and sacrifice that I cannot comprehend, because the law is more than I can comprehend, so its fulfillment is definitely beyond me too. As we pray going into our communion time, I want to pray from Psalm 130 starting in verse three.

"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than a watchman waits for the morning, more than a watchman waits for the

morning. O Israel, O Church, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem us from all our sins. Amen."

## Scripture Reading

### Galatians 10:1-10

The reading is taken from Galatians 1 verses 1 through 10. Paul, an apostle, sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ, for even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse. As we have already said, so now I say again, if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse. Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God, or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

## Sermon

### If We Don't Get This Right...

Good morning everybody. Thank you so much for being with you with us today. It's interesting to note that the first New Testament book, as was said already this morning, that the first New Testament book that was written wasn't Matthew or Mark or Luke or John, but the first New Testament book that was written was the book of Galatians. And it's primarily important that it was the first book written, because how in the world do you get two opposing cultures, Jew and Gentile, that are very opposite to one another? How in the world do you get two cultures that disagreed on just about everything? Their worldview, what to eat, what not to eat, what to say, what not to say. How in the world do you get two cultures to come together and be one? And it's very important to understand that that's why Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are written at the beginning of the Bible to talk about Christ, because without Christ the culture of Jew and Gentile would never come together.

And so I just want to spend some time looking at this magnificent book, whether or not the church was going to exist after reading the book of Galatians was up to them. And of course the church began to thrive and to glory, but it wasn't easy when you have two cultures that are opposed to everything. So I want to read just a couple of scriptures today, and if you would just keep one ear open and one ear open to the other side, everything that we've just said, but just listen, if you were there in that first century and there was opposing views on everything, what time you went to bed, what time you got up, what you did during the day, what culture, what you ate, how you felt, all of these things were opposing one another. How do you come together as one? Well, Paul begins the New Testament, if you will, by saying these words, "There's no other gospel than Jesus Christ." And so he says, "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. The gospel is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ Jesus."

But they're getting mixed up. They're adding a lot of things to the gospel, and Paul throughout the New Testament is saying the gospel is death, burial, resurrection of Christ Jesus, believing in him and knowing that he lives in us. So be careful, because we can stop.

Now listen to the emphasis that Paul makes. "I'm astonished that you're so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of God, turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all, because evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to," and this is strong language, "pervert the gospel. But even if we," listen now, "or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be eternally condemned. And it's not very often in the Bible that you see an exclamation point, but in my Bible there's an exclamation point. Don't let that happen. As we've already said, I want to say it again. If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than the one that's been accepted, let them be eternally condemned." So here's the Apostle Paul making his first appearance, if you will, in these scriptures, and it's just, "Wow! How is the church going to deal with this?"

Well, in verse 11, Paul says, "I want you to know, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached is not something that any man made up. I did not receive this gospel from any man, nor was I taught. Rather, I received this teaching, this revelation, from Jesus Christ. For you may have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism." Listen, "how intensely I persecuted the Church of God, and I tried to destroy it." So the man, the Apostle Paul, before he was the Apostle Paul, his name was Saul, and he was going around throwing Christians in jail, giving the thumbs up to their death, applauding when Christians died. And if someone were to say, "Paul, one of these days you're going to be a Christian," I think he would have laughed, but he becomes the monumental man, the monumental person throughout this New Testament. To this day he's teaching us. Thousands of years can go by, but this Word of God that's declared Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, living in all of us, and don't get sidetracked from anything else other than, "I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in God's Holy Spirit. I believe in the Lord, and I believe that God knew me before I was born, and he knows me now." And based on all of that, how should we live? With different cultures all around. He said this, "But when God," listen now, "who set me apart from birth," as God does for each of us, "sets us apart, he created you. He knows you're inside and out, and he wants you to have a relationship with him." And he says, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age, and I was extremely zealous for all the traditions of the Old Testament. But when God, who set me apart from birth, called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal to me His Son in me so that I may preach Him to the Gentiles." And then he says, "I didn't consult any other person, but God gave him the message."

And so you have the apostles, you have Peter and James and John and so forth, and they meet this man named Saul, Paul. How are they going to get along? The apostles knew that this Saul killed many of the Christians, threw them in or had them killed, threw them in prison, and they were executed. And now he's coming to them and saying, "I've changed my life." And I don't know about you, but you can picture this. Here comes this apostle Paul, apparently, whose name was Saul, who had my wife killed, who had my husband killed, who had my children killed because of their anti-establishment feeling of the government. How would they feel? And Saul, I'm sure with tears in his eyes, would go into these places and declare the message. He didn't hold anything back and he said, "Yep, I was a liar, I was a murderer, I had some of your sons and daughters put to jail and died." Yep, I did that. And I'll never do it again. God has changed my life and it's not going to be easy for people to believe that.

And so Paul, with a great deal of integrity, stands up and he declares the message of Jesus Christ. But even some of the apostles weren't so sure about this. Peter wasn't sure about it. When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because it was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, they used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he drew back so they separated like the old time. Paul comes along and says, "Don't do that." When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of all of them, "You are a Jew and yet you live like a Gentile." And then he says, "How is it then that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" Let's separate the law and let's focus on Jesus Christ who knows us, who loves us. The message hasn't changed. It's this beautiful understanding that God knew us before we were born. He knows us now. He'll never leave us. He'll never forsake us. And so therefore, how do we respond to that? That we give our love to him and live lives of goodness, of grace, of love. And so it's an interesting book. It's the first New Testament book that was written. How is that going to affect everyone? Well, it's affected everyone even to this day.

And so Paul comes along and he says, "Who am I? I'll show you this. I've been crucified with Christ. I don't live any longer to myself, but Christ lives in me. In the life I live in this body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me. Christ died. Christ died for us. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if the righteousness could be gained by that law that I used to follow, then Christ died for nothing." So then he gets pretty strong in his language and he says, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by observing the old law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish after beginning with the Holy Spirit that you're now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered persecution so much for nothing? If it really is for nothing, does God give you his Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard?" Paul doesn't mince words. He just puts it out there. And then he says this, and it's pretty strong language too, "All who rely on observing by the law are under a curse, for it's written, God is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law." No one could fulfill all that old law. Clearly no one is justified before God by the law because the righteous live by faith. The law, the old law, is not based on faith. On the contrary, the person who does these things live by them. And Christ redeemed us from the curse of that old law by becoming a curse for us. It was written, "Cursed is everyone who's hung on a tree." But he redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham would also come to us, those of us who received the Spirit.

So even though this book was written 2,000 years ago, it's so true for us today. And I would like you to just personalize what Paul says in this scripture. Listen to what he says, "For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ." Have you ever thought of yourself that way? You are a son of God. You are a son of Jesus. You are a son of the Holy Spirit. And you are a daughter of God, a daughter of Jesus, a daughter of the Holy Spirit. That's how connected God is to each one of us. And so he says, "You are all sons of daughters of God through faith. There's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all of us are one in Christ Jesus. You belong to Christ. And because you belong to Christ, listen, you belong to each other." How many brothers and sisters do you have? Hundreds of thousands to millions. People who believe in Jesus Christ just like you do. Coming together as one. Not just this wonderful little church that we have right here, but men and women around the world. We are part of people like Noah and Abraham and David. One of these days we're going to see them face to face. We're going to see God's face. We're going to see Jesus face. We're going to see the spirit of God.

We're all part of this. It's not just today. We're part of this huge family that continues to grow. And part of our work as Christians is to encourage others to become part of this wonderful family.

And so when Paul comes along, people were terrified of him. Here was this guy throwing people in jail, giving thumbs up because Christians were being killed. And now here he is coming to a church. You can just imagine, can just imagine what it must have been like if he came into a church. And there's a mom and a dad who said, "That's the man that had my child killed. That's the one who did it." I'm sure Paul had tears of remorse every day of his life, but it wasn't going to stop him. I know of my former way of life. Maybe some of us can say that, but God changed me. God changed me. And you may be terrified of me, but just let me prove how much I've changed so I can help you have strong faith. You see, even though this book was written so many years ago, it's still perfect for us today. Cultures have changed, but the message is still there. He said formally, "You didn't know God. You were slaves, but now you do know God." And so he asks us to come to him. But this message is multiple.

So, in the fifth chapter of Galatians, I love this. It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm then and do not allow yourselves to be burdened by a yoke of slavery. Meaning in the Old Testament, you had all these commands, all these commands and rules and regulations. And if you didn't do them perfectly, boy, you're in trouble. Jesus comes along and he says, "I am the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament, and I have come to set you free, to say that God knows you and loves you and welcomes all. Stand firm. It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm then in your freedom and don't allow anyone else to be burdened again by a yoke of slavery, especially yourself. Let that be gone. Be who God has called you to be." Not only that, he said, "I want you to remember that there's more to you than you, more to me than me." God the Father, God the Son, but listen, the Holy Spirit who is continually working in our life. So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Meaning I may be thinking these bad thoughts. I might be doing things that are wrong. Stop it and say, "I am a child of God. I want to live for him because he knows me." We have this relationship and yes there are sinful desires that are contrary to the Spirit, but it's the Holy Spirit that's contrary to that old sinful nature. So recognize that the Holy Spirit of God lives in us and you may have lived a life like this. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, even witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, don't go back and do those things because that will not inherit you the kingdom of God and they know that and we know that because here's why.

The difference about all of those things that have just been said, here's what God gives us. Here's what's available to live in us and just listen. This is God's gift to you. How much does it cost? It's given to you. The fruit of God's Spirit is love. What a gift. Joy. Well, I haven't felt that in a while. Peace. Oh, wouldn't that be great? Patience. Yeah, I need that. Kindness. Goodness. I just need to do good. Faithfulness, not just to Jesus, but to each other. Gentleness. Quiet answer turns your wrath and self-control. I want to live by the Spirit for exactly, he says, since we live by the Holy Spirit, let us keep in step with the Holy Spirit. Let's not become conceited, provoking each other to anger. No, let's live this wonderful blessing that God gives to us.

And then he says, we're not all on the same timeline because he says in chapter six and verse two, carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. We're at different stations in life. And sometimes there's someone that just needs their arms to be put around them and be held into love and say, you're important. You're significant. You're God's child. God loves you. There are

times when we just need to do that. Carry each other's burdens and then allow others to carry your burdens. Allow someone to come to you and hold you and hug you and love you. We may not think about this, but God's arms are always around us. He is a loving father who holds us in his hand. So he said, don't let your hearts be troubled. Even though trouble comes and don't be deceived. We need to sow good things, not bad things. So how does this book conclude? How can you conclude everything that's being said here? Where he says, well, you have an advocate. You have someone who lives inside of you all the time, God, the father and God, the son. But remember God's Holy Spirit, that we sow to please God's Spirit because there will be a proper time when all people will come together as one and we'll live with love and peace. And he concludes the book with these words. Don't cause trouble. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen now, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, not just your mind, but your personality. All of you, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you and in you. Amen and Amen and Amen. If they didn't get this right, the first New Testament book, if they didn't get this right, the church is not going to exist.

How in the world do you get two opposing cultures to come together as one? There is such a thing, my wife and I had the privilege of being in Germany several times, but there is such a thing called parallel seating and personalized seating. If you go into a restaurant and many times in Europe, there are different cultures in different cities, Italy and so forth and so on. And if you're sitting in a booth, my wife and I did this, we were sitting having a dinner and all of a sudden three or four people came and they just sat in our booth and squeezed us right in. And we thought, what's going on? What's happening? We don't know these people. What's happening? And they very politely, even though the language was difficult saying, it's our culture. If we see someone we don't know and we don't know their language, we come and sit with you. And it was difficult to translate all of this, but we finally got it. It was just like, welcome. You are welcome to this country. You are welcome to this place. Frightened the daylight out of us when it first happened. But then we realized, well, this is really wonderful. So every once in a while, as we traveled along, Barb would say, let's go to that restaurant. I want to see who's going to sit beside us. And every single time people would come along and we would try to converse back and forth with one another. Different cultures, sometimes opposite cultures, but we always left being friends.

You see, this is one of the great things about Jesus Christ. Not only is he our Lord, our savior, but he's also our best friend. Please welcome Jesus as often as you can. Amen.

## Song Leader

An interesting thing about that list of sins and the list of good things is that if we're honest, we can find ourselves in both lists. That bit about anger, I play golf. And I have seen on a golf course anger when people who are 100% responsible for applying a force to a little round ball don't like the result. But you know, you don't have to react that way. You can react by, wow, I accept the result and I try to do better. The song that we're going to sing in conclusion today, it's a beautiful song. I would like you to listen for our, our, our, and we. So we have praises. We sing praises here. But we sing praises elsewhere in our behavior. And people see us and they sometimes ask you, I said one time we were up at the at the No Frills parking lot helping our brother who was massively drunk. And we were getting him into a car to take him to detox in St. Catharines. And there was a man standing there. And as we were putting him in the car, he said, you're Christians, aren't you? And Jim remembers this. Yes, we yeah, we are. So we

take that praise with us. We take that praise to the streets and to our neighborhoods in our home and other places.

## Closing Prayer

It has been good to be here and thank you for your presence and participation, especially for Amy and Ed and Toluwani and Don Smith. It's been good. It's connected. We're glad you're here. I have one little reading and that will be our closing thought. Colossians three. Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Thank you.

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