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## Chapter 1 – God's Message Sent by God

### God's Favor Alone (vs. 10)

**Galatians 1:10:** “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

Well, I can't help but feel as I read this particular verse that Paul himself was wrestling with “Why am I really doing what I'm doing?” All of us have to come to that point. We have to come to the point of what is really important and who is important in our lives. Are we going to follow God? Is God going to be the one that we want to please or is it going to be man? You have to work through that. I mean, you can say one thing or the other, but until it comes right down to when you really have to make the decision; when things like embarrassment or being associated with somebody actually becomes an issue, then you really have to ask yourself, “Who am I trying to do this for?”

A number of years ago, I had a Bible study. In that Bible study, were a number of, I would say, people of reputation. When I was giving the Bible study, there was a lot of cooperation and involvement. I was always excited about that. I remember thinking, “I'll never minister out in Ponte Vedra because those people are snobs.” I don't even know how I got out here. Actually, I do. This was the cheapest property that we could find. Talk about unbelievable, isn't it? We rented from the Captain's Club, and we rented from hotels and other churches from time to time. We were actually willing to rent until the Rapture; it was kind of our phrase, but the Lord brought us here. There was a little trailer out here where we met just for a little while. Wow, I surprised myself. The Lord opened it up to where I had this Bible study. It was interesting, it was about a couple months later, Connie and I were at a restaurant. So, we walked in, and I recognized one of the guys that was from the Bible study. So, I said, “Connie, there's one of the guys in our Bible study.” So, I went over there to talk to him, and I said, “Hey, good to see you.” He looked at me. I said, “I'm Pastor Gary.” He was with some other people. I said, “You know, the Bible study.” He was acting like he didn't know me. So, I told Connie, “I don't think he wanted to be seen with me.” So, it was pretty interesting that at that particular juncture he made a decision, and the decision was to please the people at the table. That's ok. It's understandable that people wrestle with those kinds of things, but this is what Paul is talking about as we come to this particular passage. There was a real concern that this was infiltrating

not only some of the people that were perhaps prone to be superficial, but apparently the intensity of the peer pressure was so intense that Peter was starting to go over.

In fact, if you look with me in Galatians 2:11, "But when Cephas..." that is Peter, "came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."

(Galatians 2:12) For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles..."

Of course, one of the interesting points of this is that God had actually given this blanket full of things to reveal to Peter that he was the messenger that was going to the Gentiles. So, Peter was convinced that this was true. Nevertheless, the point is that after eating with the Gentiles, and seeing that the Lord had opened the door with Cornelius first and with many others later, "...when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof" from those who weren't Jews because of the pressure.

"... fearing the party of the circumcision."

(Galatians 2:13) "The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy..."

Of course, Peter does it. So, it must be the right thing to do. One of the things we know about Barnabas is he was basically for the underdog, and even at this juncture, he forsakes the underdog and goes with the hierarchy away into hypocrisy. Paul is very concerned about this. That's not what our gospel is about. "For God so loved the world" and God is not a respecter of persons. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Therefore, we recognize no man according to the flesh any longer." The only distinction that we see is "Do you love God or not?" Anybody can love God.

So, as we come to this passage, you begin to see this sense of examination. There should be a self-examination in all of us. As we come to the very beginning of this chapter, we start off with the saying that this message was sent by God; God was the one that made it all happen. Paul was wanting to establish right from the very onset the exclusivity of this message, "It's all God." That's why we call it definite article, "the gospel." There is no other gospel; there is no other good news. This is the good news. So, he starts off by conveying to us, "It's all Him; He sent the messenger. He sent me. He's the one that conquered death; He's the one that gives peace." All these are in the first few verses. Therefore, "He's the one that did all the giving, not me." You ultimately walk away going, "Well, who can take credit?" "Not me. Him."

So, verse 4 reads this way, "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

Why did He do this? “Well, because I asked Him to do it.” No, no. I couldn’t even move Him to do this. It was according to His will because of who He is that He did this. The bottom line in all of this is it was all Him. So, when we talk about the gospel, the emphasis of our message is “It’s all Him.” You can’t in any way tie anything else in this. That’s why for man to take any kind of credit in any way, to stand up in any way and point to himself is not only erroneous; it’s blasphemous. Once again, we live in a world in which this is a common thing. Even in churches, man is elevating himself, and it’s not us.

As the psalmist says in Psalm 115, “Not to us, but to Your name be given glory.” Why? Because it’s all Him. This is the exclusivity of the gospel. He is the way, the truth, and the life which means there is no other way; there is no other truth, and there is no other life. He is the way.

That’s why Acts 4:12 says, “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Scripture is very clear about this gospel.

Titus puts it this way in Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy...”

One of the lessons that we have in New Members’ orientation class is dealing with the fact that “Could there have been another way? Could we have had something to do with it?” Ultimately, the bottom line is no; we had nothing to do with it. It’s all Him and according to His mercy.

Romans 3:10-11 says, “...THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE...”

He goes onto say, “THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”

So, even in the moving us to seek Him. As Paul will write in 1 Corinthians 12:3, he makes it clear that no one can confess Jesus as Lord except by the Spirit of God that moves us to do that. So, it is the working of His power.

He will go onto say in Romans 3:20, “by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”

So, anytime you try to add your works with His salvation, you’ve just muddied the water, and I would say, blasphemed the name of Christ.

Romans 3:23, a verse that we all know, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

He goes on to say in Romans 3:24 that we’re justified as a gift of God and it’s all through the redemption through Christ Jesus.

He then adds in verse 25 that Christ has become our propitiation, or more specifically, He has become an atoning victim that took my place, but it was all Him. He who knew no sin became

sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. My point is if you're not clear about this message: it's repeated over and over again in Scripture. So, the gospel stands alone and there's nothing like it. This is our message, "God alone."

One of the great epistles that was written is Colossians. If you read through that small epistle, you'll begin to realize "It's all God; it's not man." He even says, "Look, as you receive Christ Jesus, so walk in Him." In other words, the walk doesn't change. The thought is you start off, and ok, God had to save you. "It was all God, I'm good with that." Then, time goes on, and you start getting full of yourself. Then, you begin to go, "And It's partly me too." God says, "No, you're walk has to continue to be all Me."

His statement in Galatians 3:3 is "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

In other words, you started off ok. Now, you're thinking you had something to do with it. Obviously, you don't.

One of the things I've realized in my life, as the song goes, "*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.*" Though I am saved, and I am redeemed, and I have the Spirit of God within me, it doesn't take long before my flesh begins to take over. It's one of the reasons why I have to walk by faith. It has to be a way of life, and I have to continue being filled with the Spirit of God as Ephesians 5 says. How easy it is to begin saying, "I got this. I don't need to talk to God about this; I don't need to put my trust in Him; I don't need to ask for His power. I can do this on cruise control." You begin to try to do the things that you do in your own power, and before long you find yourself falling flat on your face. A lot of Christians have found themselves doing this. You go, "What happened?" What happened is they're human just like you are, and they started thinking that they were somebody. As Paul says in Galatians, "If you think that you're somebody when you're nothing, you deceive yourself." By the grace of God, we become somebody through Him. So, he begins to ask this question because we realize that there is this sense of exclusivity, "It's all God." Therefore, the bottom line is "Who is it that I'm trying to please?" Well, if it's all God, I would think just God. Why am I so concerned about, as he says in Galatians 2:6, "men of reputation?" People have their credentials, and they have their degrees and pedigrees, but what does that matter? Paul says, "Everything that was gain for me, I count as loss" in Philippians 3.

So, we come to this, and there is a wrestling. His question starts off this way, as I would say it's introspective in the sense that he knows where he stands, but he's dealing with the thought "Is there a little bit of me that wants to please men?"

(Galatians 1:10) "For am I now seeking the favor of men..."

See that one simple phrase there? The word that he uses in The Greek, "*peithō*," is actually where we get our word "to believe." It is dealing with in this particular context, persuasion. So that his question to himself is "Am I trying to persuade men...", as he'll go onto say, "to like me?" It has this inference of trying to win the favor of men over. Certain people are actually "more important" to win over than others, right? Because they're "really important people." It's not like they're valuable because God loved them, it's because of what they did, right? See, it has nothing to do with that. One of the reasons why we put tags on people is because we forget the exclusivity is there's only one good and there's only one God. We forget that. If you lived there then you're not going to be a respecter of persons, you'll minister to all people the same. "For God so loved the world." You won't see a distinction. Now, they might reject the gospel, and by that point you'll see a distinction, but other than that, there's not one.

So, the way it basically reads is "Am I trying to win over the favor of men? Is this what I'm doing?" It's an interesting question. The second part of this question is "Is this what I want?"

So, it reads this way, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men?"

The word "striving" has an emphasis of a desire; "Is this a longing of my heart? Is this a goal that I have?" You can find yourself in a pattern of pleasing men just simply because it's the way people live their lives, but "Why am I doing this?" It's a sobering thought. "Why am I jumping through all these hoops? Why am I laughing when it's not a funny joke? Why am I trying to get this person to like me so much?" It is a strange world that we live in. If I were to define this age in which we exist today, I would probably say that we live in a world of narcissistic histrionics. Now, I'm going to describe to you what that means. A narcissist obviously is somebody that's egotistical and who loves themselves. We have people that love themselves a lot. As 2 Timothy 3 says, in the last days, that's one of the definitions of the way things are going to be. "Men will be lovers of self" is the very first thing that he puts on there, and I'm seeing it; you're seeing it. The other part of this, "histrionic" means melo-dramatic; we would refer to them as "over-actors;" somebody that's always on stage a little bit too much. Wow, do people love being on stage. I haven't sat down and counted, but how many shows do we have of people performing? It used to be that you had a group of movie stars, and there were just a few of them. Now, everybody's a star, and everybody wants a chance to get on the stage; everybody is an over-actor. You have to ask yourself, "What is it they're looking to get?" And the answer is very simple; the applause, praise, accolades, the rewards and trophies of men. You see it all the time. When he writes this, his question is "Do I desire this? Is this what I'm looking for?"

The way it reads is "...am I striving," "*zēteō*," is dealing with a sense of desire and a seeking after or striving after; "is this my goal?" Then, he uses another word within the passage,

“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please...”

See that word “please” there? “*Areskō*” in the Greek is making reference to your desiring to pull and to create some emotion for yourself from this person. One of the things that we’re looking for is “What a wonderful person you are” or “How great you are.” “That’s the greatest song I’ve ever heard.” People are looking for recognition; they’re looking for all these things. It’s bizarre, we write books and we put our picture on the cover. Now, I’m not just talking about secular, I’m talking about spiritual too. Now, I have to ask you, why did you do that? Why did you put your picture on that cover? There’s only one answer, “I want people to see me; I want them to recognize me.” That’s opposite from what John the Baptist says, “I have to decrease; He has to increase.” It’s also opposite from our gospel because it’s all Him; it’s not me. On top of that, we top it off by going, “Do you want my signature on that book?” Then, it’s really special and it’s going to be valuable one day, probably when I die. The emphasis is “me” and the same thing is true with songs. People sing these songs; you look at these magnificent backdrops. Why do you think that the backdrops are so magnificent? Because they want to make the person look significant and magnificent as they stand before you. Not only that, but the words are powerful, and the music is moving. That’s actually what he’s talking about in this particular wording here. “Am I striving to move men to like me?”

There’s an interesting example in the Old Testament, if you look with me in the book of Amos. Once again, Amos is what we refer to as a minor prophet, but wow, there’s a lot of major stuff in this book. Amos writes to people that are really concerned about their status. It is bizarre that God would send Amos to these people. In fact, if you were to read the beginning of the book of Amos, one phrase that you’ll see repeated over and over again is “I will destroy your citadels.” Well, citadels were like high towers, and it was a metaphor as well as literal. It was a metaphor of “your high position” and the exaltation of man. So, one chapter after the other, “I’m going to destroy your citadels.” In other words, “I’m going to bring you down to the ground.” We know that the book starts off just a few years before the earthquake. Of course, God’s basically warning, “You want to get on the ground. You don’t want to be up there when the earthquake happens” and He sends Amos. Now, Amos is going to go to the people that are way up here, and he’s a day laborer. In fact, he will admit, “I’m not even a prophet or a son of a prophet. I’m just a day laborer.” Why would God do that? To humble them. They’re going to have to humble themselves to hear this message. So, he’s going to be, shall we say, tearing down some of their towers as he goes to them.

It starts off in Amos 6:1, “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion  
And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria...”

In other words, they feel secure in their elevated place.

“... The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,  
To whom the house of Israel comes.”

The question is “How do they entertain themselves?” I’m glad you asked, it’s going to sound familiar in verse 4, “Those who recline on beds of ivory  
And sprawl on their couches,  
And eat lambs from the flock  
And calves from the midst of the stall,

(Amos 6:5) Who improvise to the sound of the harp,  
And like David have composed songs for themselves.”

Look, I’m not trying to be critical, but I often thought it was interesting that I’d see young people singing these songs of how rough life is, and they still haven’t moved out of their house. I never could get that connection. There’s this sense of dramatics, and the whole goal is to tug at heart strings. Why? To get people to like you. Scripture is revealing whether it’s in our speech or our songs, the things that we do, the way we react to people, the conversations that we have. The question is “Why are you doing it?” and “What are you trying to accomplish?” Is it that you’re trying to please God in everything that you do?

The wonderful thing about only pleasing God, and I really appreciate this the older I get, you don’t have to remember a lot of stuff. The same thing that was pleasing to God over here is the same thing that will please God here, and I just have to walk in a way that’s pleasing to Him. If you’re pleasing man, you have to memorize all those people out there and what they like and don’t like. You’re going to get mixed up one day, and it’s going to be kind of embarrassing.

As you come back to Galatians, the point is that “Who am I trying to please?” Let me show you an example of this. It’s pretty interesting that there are a number of examples of this particular point. In Jeremiah 38, those of you who went through the study of Jeremiah with me will probably remember king Zedekiah who was the last of the kings of Judah. Now, the nation of Babylon is coming in and attacking. The prophet Jeremiah is saying to the king, “Look king, if you’ll just cave and surrender to the king of Babylon, he won’t kill you. God will take care of you if you do what He tells you, but the nation has sinned; you’ve got to go into captivity, and it has to happen.” The king goes, “I don’t think I can do that.” Then, he goes, “If you don’t, everybody’s going to die.” “I don’t think I can do that.” I’m thinking, “Ok, that not even a “Everybody’s going to die, let’s just go ahead and do that; let’s go ahead and surrender.” He’s not thinking that way. The reason why he’s not thinking that way is because he’s afraid of what somebody is going to think. Think about it, people are willing to die because they’re afraid of what somebody is going to think.

So, the way it reads in Jeremiah 38:19 as the king responds, “Then King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, ‘I dread the Jews who have gone over to the Chaldeans, for they may give me over into their hand and they will abuse me.’”

“People are going to be mad at me.”

(Jeremiah 38:20) “But Jeremiah said, ‘They will not give you over. Please obey the LORD in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live.

(Jeremiah 38:21) ‘But if you keep refusing to go out, this is the word which the LORD has shown me...”

Now, watch what it says in verse 22. It’s very interesting. I always thought there was gender confusion today, but there’s actually a little gender confusion with Zedekiah because the point of the matter is he wasn’t afraid of the men, he was afraid what the women would think. That’s why Jeremiah responds the way that he does in verse 22.

“Then behold, all of the women who have been left in the palace of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women will say, ‘Your close friends have misled and overpowered you; while your feet were sunk in the mire, they turned back.’”

In other words, he knew that they were concerned about what women would say. Then, he says, “You want to know what the women are going to say? They’re going to say, ‘You’ve been deceived.’” Long story short, he doesn’t listen. The king of Babylon will slay his children in front of him, and then he’ll burn his eyes out. So, it will be the last memory he has in his head. All this happened, why? Because he was afraid of what people would think.

If you look with me in the gospel of John, in chapter 12, a particular incident is recorded in which wow, miracles of miracles, a guy is risen from the dead. Who could think of that? Who would think that something like that would happen? It’s witnessed by people. So, they actually saw Lazarus coming out of the tomb, and he had been dead for four days. So, it’s undeniable.

(John 12:42) “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

(John 12:43) for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”

They denied the reality of the fact because they were concerned about what somebody else would think. Scripture is telling us and showing us throughout just how powerful peer pressure is. In fact, if you back up into chapter 9, and you remember the blind man that was healed and was blind all of his life basically. I suppose his parents had to take care of him, but Jesus came and heals this guy, and the guy goes, “Mom, Dad! I’m healed!” and they go, “Please son, don’t



make a scene.” Why are they doing that? They’re worried that if they claim this guy, they’re going to be put out of the synagogue. “Is this your son?”

(John 9:23) “For this reason his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’”

I could just see the guy, “Mom, Dad...”

The point goes on, and it says in verse 22, “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.”

How many times have people compromised simply because they’re concerned about what somebody else is going to say?

I apologize for having you go back and forth, but if you look back with me in Galatians, I want you to see how he ends this verse. He starts off with that sense of “Who am I trying to gain the favor of?” and “Why am I doing this?”

The verse ends with this wonderful phrase, “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

Now, I want you to underline the word “bond-servant” so that you would understand who Paul is and who you are when you receive Christ. You actually become one of these. The word “*doulos*” that is used within the passage is making reference to somebody that literally serves for the advancement of the one that they serve. In other words, they’re not seeking their own desires anymore. They’ve literally sold themselves out to advance the cause of their master. They’ve made the decision to be devoted to another to the disregard of their own desires. That’s what a bond-servant of God is and it’s what you and I are. We’ve made a decision to advance what He wants us to advance, and we’re not concerned about what anybody else thinks; we’re willing to disregard our own interests in elevating His. We’ll surrender that.

There’s a passage in the gospel of Luke that speaks to me in particular in regard to this. Once again, some passages you just keep going back to because I would trust in your own life that you have claimed them as your own. This passage has oftentimes brought my thinking back to straight because there have been times where I would think, “God, I’m doing you a favor.” As Paul would say, “Wait a minute, you’ve been bought with a price. Your body is no longer your own; you’re devoted to His cause to the denying of yours” and I go, “Ok.” So, the wonderful thing is God gives us pictures. In Luke 17, he’s given us a picture. In the context, he’s dealing with you don’t want to cause stumbling blocks. The bottom line in all of this is you want to walk humbly before God. He gives you this parable of sorts in verse 7.

(Luke 17:7) “Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’?”

“Everything’s ok. Maybe I can serve you a little bit. You’ve worked hard all day.”

(Luke 17:8) “But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’?”

(Luke 17:9) “He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?”

(Luke 17:10) “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”

Now, Scripture is giving us a picture of what a slave is. A slave is not thinking about himself. He never goes into the realm of privilege, entitlement, concession, or advantage; he’s never looking for that kind of stuff. He’s a servant, that’s what he does. I know in our mindset, wow, servant is way out there. It’s not even in our dictionary, but Scripture is telling us that this is the way a servant thinks. His whole focus is on pleasing his master. Here again, the one thing he wants to do is please his master, no doubt about that, but he’s not looking for accolades or rewards, which is what most people do. The reason why they do what they do is because they’re looking for something like that. The slave is wanting to make sure, “Did I do it right?” The very interesting point is he’s trying not to be seen. Really, the best servant that serves is somebody that’s not seen. If you think about a waiter at a table, if you’re coming into a restaurant and you’re having a discussion with somebody. Then, the waiter comes in and they just dominate the conversation. Ok, could you just bring the water? You’re a good waiter if nobody even knows you’re there, but yet everything was taken care of. We have become so selective in our service. We go, “I don’t do that.”

Look at the extremities here, verse 7, “having a slave plowing or tending sheep...” Now, he’s got to clean up to serve the table. Serving the table is a lot different than feeding and tending the sheep. It’s extremely different, but he’s willing to do whatever his master tells him to do; it’s the mark of a slave. He’s not thinking, “Well, there are certain things I do and there are certain things I don’t do.” One of the things I appreciate about so many of you in the church is that you’re willing to do anything; whatever it takes, so we might minister to the saints. I’ve seen some of you, you have positions of teaching, but you just drop everything because you know that maybe somebody else is teaching at this time, and you’re going to do everything you can to set up the chairs; to help prepare because servants wear a lot of different clothes. The only one we’re trying to please is God. What pleases Him is that we walk humbly before Him, and that we build up the body. You can’t be selective about doing that. God is good when He begins

to reveal to us these things because it really causes us to examine our hearts. “What am I doing?” and “Why am I doing this?” “Who am I doing it for?” “Who’s servant am I?”

**Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to change our hearts. Lord, You know that we have a tendency to feel like people need to recognize us; they need to affirm us; they need to look at us and we need to be important. It seems to be all about us. We long for the recognition and the accolades, and we’ve lost Your presence. You talk about the hidden person of the heart. We see in Your word, even Jesus Christ quietly servant, washing feet. I don’t even know how He got that job. I don’t know how He could even imagine that would be something that the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords should ever do. Yet, He did. He turned to us, and He said, “This is what you should be doing.” Lord, I have to admit, I’ve oftentimes forgotten what I’m supposed to be doing and who I’m supposed to be doing it for. Change our hearts. Work in our lives. Make us more like You.