

Don't You Get It?

Standing on Grace series

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. How y' all doing? All right. All right, let's get started. Father in heaven, thank you for an opportunity, Lord, to come together once again as a church family as we begin a new series, Standing on Grace.

Lord, lead and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

So, trying to think what could we talk about the next six weeks for our small group series. And one of the things that I love to do is, I love to at least, I try to study at least one book of the New Testament and also the Old Testament in one year. And so over the next six weeks, I want to kick off a series called Standing on Grace, and I want to dive specifically into the book of Galatians. And Galatians is interesting because, It's a letter written to the people of Galatia. And Paul, as you're going to see, has some very strong convicted feelings.

So have you ever, maybe mom and dad, have you ever assigned your kids an assignment and you ask them, this is what I want. Can you please do this? Can you please accomplish this assignment? Such as go clean your room. And instead of going to clean their room, they go dig a big hole in the backyard. I've never done that. Or maybe you're a boss and you ask, "Hey, can you please type the reports this way?" And they do it a completely different way. And they thought, "Well, this is a better way, but it doesn't align with how we're trying to make sure we're all in uniform."

Now, I also want to note as well that this sermon series is influenced by our friends at Ministry Pass as well, so I want to note that. But as we journey together, I hope and pray that this will be a life-changing experience and that you'll be feeling more equipped and empowered to share the love of Jesus with others. Amen? All right.

So we find ourselves in Galatians, and we'll get to that in a second, but we see that there is a problem, a conflict, right? Where you have one group who's trying to add on things that are unnecessary because Jesus is all. Jesus is

enough, right? Have you ever been driving and for once you have a very reliable GPS that gets you to your destination every time without fail? Have you ever experienced that? I can hear the silence in the room. All right. And you're on the right path. You're on the right destination. But then you got the backseater. And then says, no, you need to turn right. If you keep staying on this road, you're going to have to pay a toll. And against your better judgment, what do you do? You turn right. And then you turn left and you turn right until all of a sudden, instead of getting there at 11 o'clock, you're going to get there at 11:05. And then 11:07. And then 11:15. But then guess what? He says, make a right against your better judgment. And what do you do? You end up in an alleyway. That is a dead end. So frustrating. So frustrating. And sometimes you wonder, I cannot believe I listened to you. And I wonder if that's what Paul was feeling in verse six.

I am astonished that you were so quickly deserting the one who called you. The secret shortcut of a legalist is a dead end. So Paul, Galatians, it's been described as a Magna Carta of Christian liberty, okay? It's been described as the Magna Carta of Christian liberty, to be freed from that which shackled us from unfair imprisonment, to find freedom.

So let's go to Galatians chapter one, okay? I'm going to go through Galatians chapter one. For those of you, maybe the first time you're opening your Bibles, it's towards the end. You have Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. You have Acts, Corinthians, and then Romans as well. And then you find Galatians. So Galatians is before Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Chapter 1, verse 1. Are we all there? All right.

Paul, an apostle, sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers and sisters of

What do you think Paul's tone is here? Why do you think he tends to lead with that? To the churches in Galatia. Amen. He continues though. Because normally right here would be usually a Thanksgiving or a prayer for the group. Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, they have that, but Galatians, oh no, no, no, no. No, Paul gets to the heart of the matter.

Verse 6, I am astonished that you have so quickly deserted 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 are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let them be.

Some pretty heavy language, amen? I kind of feel like Paul is like that father who just, he sees his kids going down a path that is wrong. And you want to try to bring them back. And so he throws the gauntlet. He gets rather upset at them. So what was happening is that there were some people, some leaders or influencers in the church who were trying to tell the Gentile converts that they needed to be circumcised and to follow the Torah.

Okay. So there are leaders in the church who are trying to teach that the Gentile converts, they are not, they didn't grow up Jewish. And so, hey, by the way, you've accepted Jesus Christ. That's great. But, you know, the Jewish people, we've been doing this for a very long time. It's the better way. So they're expecting them to be circumcised and to follow the Torah. And Paul says, no, that's not how it works.

If you read Acts, if you read other passages in scripture, he basically says, we tried doing that and it didn't work. Guess what? Jesus came along. Jesus died for us. We're not saved by what we do, but who we believe in. Okay. We'll come back to that more. And so, Paul, he writes with passion and authority, even though he is being questioned. One of the other things that he's being questioned about is, well, you claim to be an apostle, but you never walked with Jesus. You know, some people who knew Jesus. And that's why,

Let's go back to Galatians chapter one. Okay, Galatians chapter one. And so Paul says, he writes with Paul, an apostle. He says that, hey, this is my credential. I'm not sent by men. I'm sent by who? But by Jesus. And when did that take place? If you go back to, I think it's Acts 9, Paul, formerly known as what? Saul was going on to Damascus to cause some conflict, to try to punish and to get rid of this sect of growing, quote, what would become Christians. And he's on the war path to get rid of all of these people.

And Jesus knocks him down. And what happens to him? He becomes blind. And later on, I think it's Ananias is called to go to Paul or Saul. And he's like, what do you want me to do? Don't you know this guy has been trying to enslave or to send us to jail or kill us? God reassures him. And when he goes to see Paul, the scales that were on his eyes fall off and he becomes a changed man. Can you imagine now Paul or Saul showing up. This is a guy who's been trying to get rid of us, trying to kill us, imprison us. But he is so convicted because God had met with him on the road to Damascus and calls him into ministry to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And guess what? The other leaders, Peter, James, they all affirmed, hey, yeah, you are called by God.

But you have leaders here or influencers in the Galatian churches who are saying, you're not worthy. You're not good enough. We don't believe you have authority. And that's why he writes with such ferocity. I'm not called by man. And truly, we're not called by man. We're called by God. We can be affirmed. People can see us and say, yes, you are following God. We recognize that, but our true calling is from who? Called from God. And here we see that he is frustrated with the people because they've chosen to be influenced by other men and women who are saying, it's not enough that you just believe, but I'm going to add some extra constraints because it's not good enough.

Have you ever tried to maybe out of well-meaning people, you decided that I want to, you know, I want to be a faithful believer of Jesus. Just this last week, I was driving and I passed a Jersey Mike's and I had to chuckle to myself because I love bread. Do you all love bread? Okay, you're in a good club. All right, bread is good. A number of years ago, I decided to join a gym that is still around and they preached no bread, no rice. And the Asian in me is like, that's not going to happen. But I tried. And for a good long time, I looked at bread with not disdain, but it's just, you're not going to lose weight. You're not going to do this. You're not going to do that. And so for the longest time, every time I ate bread, I felt guilty. I wasn't good enough. And especially if I ate rice, I'm not good enough. I have now concluded I'm at a point in life where I don't care. I want to be able to enjoy bread. All right. I'm for the most part, fully functional. I'm not dying. All right. But for the longest time years, I would scan menus out and I would wonder this isn't healthy enough, but I love bread. And it was such a constraint until honestly recently, I just finally decided, let it go. I don't want

to get demonetized. So not that we're actually trying to make money, but I don't want to get, you know... And I realized how much joy I lost by saying, I can't eat that. And I didn't embrace the bread.

How often do we also try to add on and maybe minimize our walk with God? I can't do this. I can't do that. When Jesus just wants us to be able to experience Jesus and we put limitations and heaven forbid, we put limitations on those we love around us. Because what does God want us to know? God wants us to bask in his love. God wants us to bask in the bread of Jesus. Amen.

So God's not calling us for a sad, miserable life to add on unrealistic expectations. God wants us to be able to experience the grace and the love, the redemption of Jesus. And that's why Paul is so passionate. You're taking away the joy and the love of Jesus and trying to add on and doing it on your own.

The reality is we're all saved by faith alone.

There's a story told of a man called Daniel who he committed a crime, but almost everybody else in the city committed this crime. However, he was caught. He wasn't violent. He wasn't dishonest, but he just broke the law. And Daniel knew that judgment was coming. And so he awaited his court date. He went to court. But before that, there had been some time he tried to do the right thing. He tried to be kind to people. He tried to give money. He tried to do everything he could. He tried to be morally respectable. And everybody realized, wow, that Daniel, he's such a nice guy. He's such an upstanding citizen. But at the end of the day, when he showed up to court, it didn't matter because what did the judge say? You are guilty. See, that night before, he hadn't slept at all.

He tried to think about everything that he had been good at and tried to lay it before the judge, but the judge didn't care because at the end of the day, he was guilty. The courtroom was silent. He tried to say, Lord, sorry, your honor, I broke the law, but look at the life that I have lived. Look at how I've changed, how I've changed other people's lives. And Daniel, the judge said, Daniel, your good deeds are commendable. That's great, but it doesn't erase what you've

done. A judge who ignores the law is not just, I cannot declare you innocent based on your. And so Daniel's heart sinks. He's got butterflies in his stomach.

But the judge says there is another way, perhaps maybe a better way. And explained that someone else had already stepped forward, a man who had lived a perfectly wonderful, beautiful life without a single charge against him. And this man had offered to take his sentence on his own, willingly, lovingly.

The judge said, though, there's only one, one condition. You have to trust him. You have to try to stop justifying yourself and just simply receive what you have been given or gifted. And Daniel's thinking, what? What about all the good that I have done? And the judge says, if you trust in your own works, you must bear your own sentence. But if you trust in him, his record will become yours. And Daniel realized quickly within himself, it was scary, but also freeing at the same time. If he trusted the substitute, he wouldn't have anything to boast about. If he trusted the substitute, he would be empty handed. If he trusted the substitute, everything would depend on someone else.

Pride. Pride can get in the way, amen? But that is what salvation requires, that we give up everything and to trust. So Daniel said, I trust him. The gavel fell. Boom. Not guilty. Daniel walked out of that courtroom changed because he was a free man. Not because he had earned it, but because the scales had been shifted to do his favor because he had believed. But that's not the end of the story, though, because He still wanted to do good. And the good works that he did was not out of obligation, but out of love because he trusted and wanted to follow the lessons this perfect person had left behind. When you fell in love with your person, did you change or did you stay the same? I hope you changed because that person should affect you.

I'm a better person because of my wife. I know. I know she's rolling her eyes at me right now. No, but truly, I'm a better person because of my wife. My wife is definitely way smarter than me. She's a judge of character that I'm very grateful for. She listens, she's compassionate. And because of that, I love her. In many ways, I feel like I don't deserve her. But that's the same thing too. When you become a follower of Jesus, do you decide, do you want to live for Jesus?

Has Jesus impacted your life that you don't want to just do good because you have to, because we're supposed to, but because you want to. You want to please, you want to be kind, you want to be loving. For by grace, you have been saved through faith.

The other thing I want to point out is that Jesus is enough.

In Northwest India, there's an area called Meghalaya. I had to say this three times before. And it's considered one of the wettest places on earth. And what would normally be a creek has turned into valleys and gorges. And the area that they're in. It's hard to build bridges to cross these streams. You could add concrete, but then the rain falls during the summer monsoons, and in this season, these rains come through and they become raging torrents. And so you could try to build a commuter bridge to the various villages, but it's just going to fall apart. So steel, concrete, they're not really feasible.

So there's a story told of members of the Kassus tribe. They created a situation where on the riverbank, there's a strangler tree that grows and they manipulate it to where as it grows, it will eventually cross the creek or the river and it becomes a bridge. And if you look up later on, Google, Eumsiang, I hope I said that right. Um Shiong double decker route bridge. And it's these bridges that come across naturally with a little bit of help that helps to help people to cross. Otherwise, there would not be a possibility of people to be able to cross and get to the various different villages. Without Jesus as the bridge, we are nothing. We're caught. Jesus desires that we find freedom.

And Paul wanted that same freedom for the Galatians and for us. He wanted to, that's why he writes with such ferocity, such passion. You're trying to add what has already been taken care of. So enjoy it, appreciate it, bask in it, accept it, love it.

One other story in Acts 16. I wasn't planning to go here, but I was thinking about this this morning. Acts 16 says, I want to tell you how simple it is or how much Jesus is enough. Acts 16, Paul and Silas are in prison. Earlier in the story, there was a young lady who was able to, I think she was able to tell fortunes. And Paul and Silas, after they'd been falling, she'd been following

them and talking. They cast whatever was demon out of her. And her handlers, her owners realized their ability to make profit had been gone. And so they took it out on Paul and Silas and there's this uproar and they're thrown in jail. They're beaten and thrown into the jails. And later that night, they're singing and praising God. And there's this great earthquake and all the doors fling open. And the jailer, when he comes to see what had happened, thinks that everyone has escaped. And as a jailer, what was the expected outcome of what he thought? How would his life be taken? He would be killed because he let his boss down. He hadn't done his job. And just as he takes a knife or a sword as he's about to kill himself, Paul says, stop, don't do it. We're all here. He goes to Paul and Silas and he asks a simple question that many of us have all probably asked. What must I, actually he says, good sirs, what must I do to what? Be saved. And what do Paul and Silas respond with? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, actually, and you will be saved. I don't know where you're at, folks. I don't know where you are in the journey, but I hope and pray that as we go through the book of Galatians, it will give you courage. May you find freedom. As Adventists, we've been really good at trying to add things on, and I want to implore upon you. I want you to be free to love Jesus with reckless abandon. May you experience his grace. Because Jesus is enough.

So where have I added expectations on myself or my loved ones that suggest Jesus' gift of salvation is not good enough? Where have I added expectations on myself or loved ones that suggest that Jesus' gift of salvation is not good enough? Okay.

This week, I want you to pay attention and note if you're finding yourself judging others or adding some requirements scripture doesn't include. All right. You ever judged anybody? I was judging somebody today. I was judging their driving. I'm going to be honest. You judge people's decisions. I mean, unfortunately, and I hope and pray that we not judgmental, that we not add, but simply experience. And we do things not because we have to, or that it's a requirement, because we do so out of love. I want to give an opportunity. Bill kind of already did this in the music, but I want to give another chance. So let's bow our heads.

God, we gather together today to study, start a new series. I'm sure not just Paul, but I'm sure even you have also said, don't you get it? Lord, may we bask in your love and grace. May we know that we are redeemed, that we don't add extra credit or extra requirements, but know that we are a son or a daughter of you. And if there's anyone here right now who has never had that opportunity to say, Jesus, I want to follow you. May they have the prayer now, Jesus, I give my life to you and to follow you and surrender to you and guide me. This is my prayer. For those who are drifting and wandering, who are unsure, Lord, reach out to them, comfort them, remind them that they know there's always a place in your home for them. And Lord, if there's anything that we can do as a church to comfort them, let us know. And Lord, for those who are mature in faith, who've been on the journey, who need some fuel for the journey, Lord, Continue to give us wisdom, strength, courage. Every day, Lord, it seems it can be challenging and it feels like our faith is tested. God, I'm going to be honest, sometimes too, even myself, where are you right now? It's difficult, but we know that you are a good God and you are faithful. Lord, take away our doubt. Take away our misunderstanding. Take away our anger. Take away our ability to have to please God or feel like we have to do this, then simply, Lord, just experience your love and not try to add to it. Be with us as we journey, as we discuss and study, Lord. Thank you for all that you've done for us. In Jesus' name, everybody said, amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.