

“A Freedom Worth Fighting For” // Gal 1:1–10// *The Freedom in the In-Between #1*

The Vote and What is Next

A couple of quick things to celebrate: First, I’m really excited to share that the financing proposal for the new broadcast campus passed by well over 90%, which means we are poised to do something that will help us reach literally thousands of more people in the Triangle with the gospel.

This is a big step, and I’m thankful—if you are as well, **put your hands together** at all campuses...

- For **those of you who weren’t in favor** of the motion, we appreciate your concerns and your commitment to the church. I want to invite you to keep asking questions through your campus elder teams and praying for the Summit as we make these decisions.

Some of you have asked about **timeline**:

- In October, we’ll be securing with the banks, and if all goes as planned, we’ll break ground sometime in early 2018.
- Construction takes somewhere in the neighborhood of 18 months, which means we’d be looking a Fall of 2019 opening. If all goes according to plan. If.

Works Consulted:

- “Confidence to Stand,” Chip Henderson
- “Confidence to Change,” Chip Henderson
- “No Other Gospel,” Tim Keller
- “Why They Glorified God,” Tim Keller

Second thing to celebrate, and just as exciting, is that this weekend we had over **600 SG Leaders get trained** to lead our church in disciple-making for the upcoming year. Leaders, co-leaders, rhythm leaders. **Could we thank these volunteer leaders in our church** who serve as our first line of pastoral ministry?

(Introduction: Why Galatians)

BIBLES. Does anyone know what happens on OCT 31 of this year? You say, “**Duh, Halloween, of course.**” **Yes, you pagans...**

But you **real Christians** know that on **Oct 31 of this year we** celebrate the 500th year anniversary of the Reformation.

On that day, 500 years ago, a **deeply conflicted monk named Martin Luther** walked the ½ mile from his home in Wittenberg to the door of the main church there and nailed up **95 theses demanding change** in the church.

The changes that Luther brought about in the church for how we think and talk about the gospel cannot be overstated. Luther believed that centuries of religion and man-made traditions had covered up the gospel that Jesus taught and the Apostles proclaimed.

Whether you agree with him or not, he’s undoubtedly one of the most significant figures in church history.

And, because a 500th anniversary doesn’t come along that often, we’re going to spend the next few weeks studying the book of Galatians.

You say, “Well, why Galatians?” Because Luther considered Paul’s letter/epistle to the Galatians to be the most important book in the Bible.

- He called it, “*My epistle.*” And said, *if it were possible to marry an epistle, Galatians would be my wife.*¹
- He said “it would be **better to read Galatians 1000x** before you read the first thing by me.”²
- He said in some ways the book of Galatians is more important than Romans, because whereas the book of Romans most clearly explains what the gospel is; Galatians explains what it is not. And sometimes that’s more important to understand.

Now, one caveat: Many of you in here were raised Catholic, and some still consider yourselves still to be Catholic. And I want you to know that you are **welcome and loved** here.

- **At the Summit Church**, we come from all different backgrounds and for the most part we have left brand names behind. We’re just a group of people who are trying to read the Bible and do what it says.
- **So, as we consider some of the things Galatians says**, don’t hear it as a Catholic or Protestant; just as someone who want to know what God’s word actually says. **That’s how I’ll preach it—not as a Protestant or Catholic**, just a guy reading the Bible trying to be clear on what it means; that’s how you should hear it.

So, what was it about Galatians that Luther found so powerful?

Let’s take a look. We’ll start in vs. 6, “I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

- The thing to **notice here is that Paul skips all the usual affirmation and gospel celebrations** he normally puts in his Epistles and gets right into business.
- Every **speaker, every writer, has a pattern**. I get up here, for example, and I usually greet the campuses, talk about whatever is going on in the church, try to affirm you about something, tell a lighthearted story of some kind and then tell you to open your Bibles and then yell at you for 45 minutes.
- If I got up here one weekend, lights came on, and I was here with my arms crossed and said, “**I got something to say to you people...**” you would know something was wrong.

That’s basically what Paul does. He skips almost all the formalities and gets right down to business because something is wrong with Paul. **Paul is appalled:** ⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort (pervert) the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But (I tell you) even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! (Now, that’s a big ol’ statement, isn’t it? *I don’t care if an ANGEL gets up here next week, if he says something different to you than what I, Paul, and the other Apostles have taught you, he is lying*).

- **BTW, I always use this** when a **Muslim or Mormon** tell me that the reason I should listen to them, because an angel appeared to Mohammad or Joseph Smith, because that’s what both believe. **I say, Paul already answered that question**, “Even if it was an angel, if they tell you anything different, they are lying.”

¹ Martin Luther, from his *Table Talk*.

² Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 69.

Then he repeats his statement for emphasis, vs. 9: As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!

I have only 2 real points today. The Apostle Paul wants us to Know how to identify the perverse gospel, and Fight for the true one.

I. Know how to identify the “perverse” gospel

There was a group in the early church known as the **Judaizers**.

- Most of the new Christians were Jews, and **Jews of course had been raised on the law**, believing that obedience to the law was how you got close to God and obtained favor from God.
- **After these Jews had come to faith in Christ**—which meant that they recognized Jesus was the promised Messiah who died to take away their sins—they still kept some of this old law mentality. **Old habits die hard.**
- So, they taught that **in addition to faith in Christ**, there were certain law things you needed to observe to make yourself acceptable to God, and that by forcing yourself to obey the law you could get transform yourself into the kind of person God wanted you to be.
- **Chief among their concerns was the Old Testament command** to be circumcised.
 - **For 1500 years, circumcision had been the primary distinguishing mark** of the Jews—the thing that had set them apart from the nations; the symbol that that they were submitted to God.
 - Now, you say, “**Pastor J.D., what exactly is circumcision?**” (*Whew, look at the time!* Got to keep moving) I don’t have time to go into detail, but your campus pastors have been empowered with all the knowledge about what it is and they

would LOVE to stick around after the service and explain it to you—they have **charts and diagrams** and all you’ll need to understand.

- **Paul calls what the Judaizers are teaching**—that in addition to faith in Christ, you have to be circumcised and keep parts of the law—a different gospel, vs. 6, in vs. 7, a perverted gospel, and vs. 8, a contrary gospel.

Technically, vs. 7, when he says “perverse,” (~~not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort (pervert) the gospel of Christ.~~) he uses a Greek word that means, “reversal” or “polar opposite of.”³ What the Judaizers taught actually *reversed* the flow of the gospel. **Anti-gospel.**

The real gospel is that in Christ God did for us what we were utterly incapable of doing for ourselves, he did it all by himself, and all we can do is receive it by faith.

Paul encapsulates that in vs. 4, (Jesus) gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age....

We were helpless, so he saved us. **In 2 primary ways:**

- **First, we were condemned**, so he **lived the perfect life** we were supposed to live and then died the death we were condemned to die, in our place.
 - **It’s as simple as this:** Imagine taking a **final exam that counts for your whole grade** you don’t study at all for it because you are out the whole night partying, and so you fail. Sitting beside you is the perfect student who aces the exam. But when it comes time to turn the grades in, he takes your failing exam and gives you his perfect one.
- **In addition to that, we were dead**, **Jesus** infused new life into us through his resurrection.

³ The Greek word is *metastrepho*, meaning “to turn around.” It occurs when *one thing* is being turned into its *polar opposite*. For instance, the other two uses of the term in the NT

are in Acts 2:20 (“The sun will be **turned to** darkness”) and James 4:9 (“Let your laughter be **turned to** mourning”). For more, see <http://biblehub.com/greek/3344.htm>

- The **gospel is not we** were spiritually weak and needed a little law to strengthen us, or **that spiritually overweight and we had to shed off a few pounds of evil** to become pleasing to God.
- **The gospel is that we** were spiritually dead. **No pulse.**
 - I have **sometimes heard salvation** described like I was drowning in a sea and Jesus came along in a boat and threw me a lifeline. We were floating face down.
 - **Or one of my favorite** illustrations of salvation: **like waking up in an ambulance...**
- What part do you contribute in salvation? You did all the sinning! That's it. Jesus did the rest.

This is the true gospel. It teaches us that God saves you and blesses you as a free gift of unmerited grace, and in **response** to that, we do good works.

The **perverted gospel** reverses that, saying that we do some good works and then God saves and blesses us in response to that.

Now, most of us today are not hung up on circumcision or aspects of the Jewish law, but let me show you how many Christians today believe the same perverse gospel, they just substitute different things in for *circumcision*.

1. We do it whenever we make something else besides faith in Christ necessary for salvation.
 - For some, **for example**, you have to accept Christ and take communion... And belong to the church ...And go to confession. ...And be baptized.
 - There is no and in the gospel. **Faith + nothing saves**
 - Or when we **assume that God's acceptance of us** is based on how we've been living...

- **For example:** We start worship and if you have had a good week (Jesus death + good week makes you acceptable) / bad week
 - Here's **how we should** come: Christ's righteousness in enough!
2. Some more progressive Christians assume that it doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are a sincere, loving, and good person.
 - And that sounds so inclusive, but really it is just another way of saying that **what you do determines** whether or not God accepts you, because there is a standard you have to reach, even if it's a loose one.
 - **You've still got to be a good person—no one assumes everyone makes it.** *We assume murderers, child molesters, rapists, racists, bigots, and Hitler* won't make it.
 - **The gospel is not that God saves all good people.** There are only bad people who accept the rescue of Jesus Christ.
 3. Sometimes we do it when we try to grow ourselves spiritually through self-effort
 - **You know you were saved by grace, but becoming Christlike is now on you.**
 - In chapter 3, Paul is going to say that **any growth in the Christian life** is the fruit of the Spirit in you, and the power of the Spirit is released by faith in Christ, not by resolution or self-discipline.
 - **Illus.** My **wife complained about weeds...** Stapling roses on a rose bush?
 - For many of you, that's what you are doing. It's exhausting, and it's a false gospel.
 4. I realized this week that I believe a false gospel when I think I can produce spiritual change in others

- **A lot of times, when I am thinking about succeeding** in preaching, I lean most on the strength of my personality, my intelligence, and my ability to persuade.
- **Or when I think about why my kids will turn out right**, I assume it is because of the strength of my personality or because I master all the right parenting techniques
- **Paul would say, “That’s foolish.** Only the Spirit can produce eternal life in your kids, and the Spirit is not released into them because of your personality or abilities, but through faith in the gospel. You’ve bought into a false gospel.”

Basically, any time we focus on something besides God’s power released through faith in Christ’s finished work, we are believing a version of the false gospel.

Paul was not against the law. He said it has its place... **What he was against was elevating the law to a place** where you assume it makes you more right with God or is the secret to experiencing power in the Christian life.

Often, we commit the error of the Galatians not by believing bad things, but by taking a good thing and making it the central thing.

For example,

- **Some of the churches I went to growing up** had a tendency to emphasize conformity to a set of rules as the mark of a real Christian. **Real Christians do** this; they don’t do that. They talk this way; don’t go to movies; don’t drink or chew or go with girls who do; don’t have pre-marital sex because it might lead to dancing. Boys have short hair and girls wear dresses.
 - **There’s nothing wrong with rules.** We all have them. Unspoken rule: String bikini. 4-letter words.
 - **The problem was these rules is that they were the center of Christianity** for us, the thing we focused on—if we did them God would accept us and we would be spiritual.

- **So, I usually left church thinking about what I needed** to do to make myself more acceptable to God rather than trusting in what God had done for me and promised to do in me.
- **Some churches** emphasize learning correct doctrine. And I love doctrine, these churches measure how close you are to God by how much theology you know.
 - Education does not equal transformation.
 - **Transformation doesn’t come** from a mind stuffed full of knowledge, but from simple, childlike faith in the gospel.
- **Some churches focus on practical tips for living.** Sermons are all about “how to do this or that.” **That’s good.** I love relevance and practicality. But the problem in these churches is you leave thinking about a “how to” list of what *you are supposed to do* rather than in looking to what God has done for you as the power to change.
 - The power in Christianity is not in a helpful “to-do” list from Uncle J.D., but in **faith in what Christ has done**.
- **Some churches put all their emphasis on some dimension of social justice.** Real Christians care for the poor, or racial reconciliation, or whatever. And that’s great. Those are an essential part of being a disciple.
 - **But the power in Christianity comes not from a new social agenda.** It comes from simple faith in what God has *done*.

Don’t EVER mix up the implications of the gospel with the gospel itself. The gospel is not about what you are to do, but about what Jesus has done and that’s where the power to change rests. The power to do comes from faith in the fact that it’s all been done.

Jesus **last’ words on the cross** were not, “I got it started, now you go finish it up.” His last words were: **“It. Is. Finished.”**

- And believing that it is finished credits you with the righteousness of Christ and releases Jesus’s resurrection power into you.
- **That’s it; nothing more.**

- Believing that saves you!

Which leads to #2. Paul wants us to...

II. Fight for the True Gospel

- Paul **has used the strongest language imaginable** here. He has said that preachers and teachers or even *angels* who distort this should be cursed.
- Most people dislike any kind of fighting or controversy in the church. And I agree. I don't like strife. But Paul says **some things are worth** fighting for. Some things **are life and death**.
- And if you pervert the gospel, he says, you do two things:
 - You **“turn away from him who called you by the grace of Christ”** (v. 6). Literally, you *desert Jesus*. And he's the last one you want to drive out!
 - Secondly, you **condemn people** by pointing them to 'another gospel' that has no power to save. Paul says in vs. 7, **“not that there is another gospel”** (vs. 7) **There is no other gospel!** Like giving someone dying of thirst a cup of **hydrochloric acid**. Looks like water, but it would kill rather than bring life.
- And those **2 things**—the presence of Jesus and the clarity about the way of salvation—are **things worth striving for**—even if it means you have to sometimes offend people and or even create enemies.

Which brings us **back to ... the Reformation**⁴.

What was so important that Luther was willing to split the church over it?

- Martin Luther was German university student studying law.

- His family wasn't super religious, just normal religious like most Germans at the time: good, practicing Catholics.
- One day **Luther, as a college student, was walking home** when he got caught in a terrible lightning storm. Lightning was striking all around him—some accounts even saying it struck him—and he thought he was going to die so he cried out in terror to St. Anne (whom they believed was Mary's mom), his family's patron saint, and told her that if she would spare his life, he would become a monk.

Well, he survived, and to stay true to his word he enrolled in a monastery.

- **There he began to really obsess about what was going to happen to him when he died**, and experienced something he later called *Anfechtung*, which best translates as “inner fight,” or extreme anxiety, maybe even depression, and it came from thinking he **was rejected by God**.
- He **desperately wanted to know he was right with God** and wouldn't go to hell. So, he began to do everything he could do to try to gain an assurance of salvation.
 - For example, he would fast for days on end, sleep on the floor, and spend hours in confession trying to remember all his sins (b/c in order for a sin to be forgiven it had to be confessed, and he wanted to remember every one.)
- **He would beat himself** with a whip as a way of trying to show God that he was sorry.
- **The church taught all these things** as necessary to help make you right with God—but Luther wondered, how could he know that he had done enough?
 - And, when he did feel like he had covered them all, he felt pride at having accomplished it!

⁴ The below follows Erwin Lutzer, “Martin Luther and the Reformation,” preached at Shadow Mountain Community Church, July 2017.

- He said that **trying to remember every sin in confession was like trying to mop up the floor with the faucet running.**

Well, a **mentor and confessor** there at the monastery, Bro. Staupitz, who had to sit and listen to these hours of confessions, said, “**Martin, you’ve got to let this go.**” Luther said, “But how can I let it go? Isn’t my soul the most important thing I have? Shouldn’t everyone obsess about being right with God?”

Staupitz said, “I know what you need, Luther. You should start teaching the Bible.” **Luther said**, “I couldn’t do that, it would kill me!”

Finally, Luther agreed and took up a volunteer Bible teaching post at the University, and in his study, he started to see things that at first confused, but then delighted him.

For example, **the first book** he taught from was the book of Psalms: **He came to Psalm 22**, where David cries out, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” (which was a prophecy about what Jesus would one day pray from the cross). And Luther said, “This is how I feel—abandoned by God! But why would Jesus ever feel like that?”

- There, Luther said, **I first began to understand the concept of Jesus in my place**; Jesus experienced the **judgment and separation I deserved**
- (BTW, from Luther is where we get the **4-word summary** of the gospel we use here: Jesus in my place)
- Then he started teaching Romans, but he couldn’t get out of chapter 1. **I love his account of studying this book so much I have it up in my office:** “~~I had been captivated with an extraordinary zeal for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But a single phrase in Chapter 1, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed,’ stood in my way~~ (He couldn’t get past the phrase “righteousness of God”). **I hated that phrase ‘righteousness of**

God,’ which I had been taught to understand is the righteousness with which God punishes the unrighteous sinner. Thus, I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat relentlessly upon Paul at that verse (love that image of Bible study!), most earnestly desiring to know what St. Paul wanted from me.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is **righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith.**

- IOW, the **righteousness of God** that Paul speaks of is not a standard we have to live up to, but his righteousness that God gives to us as a free gift in Christ when we receive him.
 - Therefore, it wasn’t about Luther confessing enough or feeling sorry enough or beating himself enough—Jesus had done enough!
- Jesus had lived the life... he had **done everything in our place.**
 - (It started **at his baptism!** Luther pointed out that Jesus was baptized at the beginning of his ministry with the baptism of repentance...)
- And here he **developed the phrase: sola fide**, or “faith alone.” Christ did it all; **simply putting faith in that** is what saves us.

Here, he said, **I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”⁵**

Well, **meanwhile, back over in Rome**, Pope Leo wanted to finish a construction project he had begun on St. Peter’s Basilica, but he was out of money, so he started selling indulgences to raise money.

⁵ Preface to the Latin Writings, 1545

- **Indulgences were basically merit tokens** you could buy from the church that would earn you extra credit for heaven.
- **The saints, the Pope taught, particularly the Virgin Mary**, had lived such extraordinary lives that they had merit left over to spare, and you could get some of theirs applied to your account if you bought an indulgence from the Pope.
- **So, the Pope sent out all these preachers throughout the HRE** to preach these fiery sermons about hell and get everyone scared so they would buy indulgences to shore up their chances of getting into heaven.
- **In addition to that**, the Pope taught you could also buy **indulgences for the dead**.
- **The Church at this time believed in Purgatory**, which was a place in between heaven and hell where believers can pay off the remaining balance of their sins.
 - You see, **no believer, the church taught**, was good enough to go straight to heaven—except for maybe a few of the saints.
 - Now, you're not so bad you'd go to hell—so you go to this holding area, between heaven and hell, where you are punished for your sins for a few hundred years and they are "purged" out of you (which is **where the word "purgatory"** comes from).
- Well, you could help one of your relatives be **released from purgatory** early if you bought an indulgence for them.
 - So, for example, if **you were worried about mama**—maybe her drinking and cussing made you worried she was stuck in purgatory—you could buy an indulgence for her.
- These preachers would say "Don't you care about mama?" They had all these little **catchy poems**,
 - *"As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."*
 - Or, *"The moment your money thumps in the chest, one of your relatives finds heavenly rest!"*
- **As Luther studied Romans, this all started to anger him.**

- He said, for example, "If the Pope has this credit to give out, and he really loves us, why not just give it?"
- Secondly, he said, (and more importantly) "***Isn't the righteousness of Jesus Christ complete? Do we really need to add the Virgin Mary's obedience to it?***"
 - And why would we have to go to purgatory to pay for our sins? Were Christ's sufferings not complete? Doesn't Scripture say he put away sin once for all forever through the sacrifice of himself?"
- So, he **listed out these** and a bunch of other grievances in a document we now refer to as the '**95 theses**' and nailed them to the door.
 - Incidentally, btw, **he wrote them in Latin because he intended for them only to be read by the elite**, but they really struck a chord with the German people because they resented the Pope putting all this tax and obligation on them.
 - One scholar said that **80% of Germans were persuaded by Luther's reasoning**; 20% were not, and another 10% didn't care what Luther said they just resented the Pope. And I know that equals more than 100% but I read somewhere that **7/6 people** are bad at math and I be one of those peoples.)

Well, the **Catholic Emperor King Charles V** learned about all this and he wanted to **put Luther to death** as a heretic.

But **the problem was that Luther had grown so popular** among the Germans that Charles couldn't do that without provoking a riot—at least without a trial first.

So, the pope sent out a papal bull demanding Luther recant, and Luther publicly burned it. Luther was then officially summoned to come to the **Diet of Worms** to recant. (Now, real quick: We see that and say, Diet of Worms? Some of you are on a carb-free diet. You hear that and think, "This one would be really effective!" One of our pastors, Will Toburen, who was a college athlete at N.C. State, said

the most weight he ever lost was when he was on the NC State diet—where you only eat when NC State wins.)

Luther **got the summons to come to Worms** and said, "Why would I need to go all the way to Worms to recant I can recant here in Wittenberg? "If you really want me to recant—IOW, to take back what I said—then here you go: Previously, I said that the pope was a representative of Jesus. Now I say he's an apostle of the Devil. There's my recantation." This is what he actually said!)

So, they brought **Luther in**, and spread out the 95 theses and all his other books in front of him and **asked him to recant**.

- **Luther asked for a day** to think about it. Now you have to realize, **he was scared! He thought when he refused he'd be put to death.**
- So, he asked for a day to think about it.
- **He prayed a prayer that night** that is one of the most touching things I've ever read... "*God, I'm scared. I don't want to die. I feel like you have abandoned me again. I'm not sure if I can do this.*"

The next day, Luther walked into that courtroom. It was even more packed than the day before. The king and all of the princes and nobles were there. **Luther said,**

- *First, there are many things in these books the church agrees with. Of course, I can't recant of those.*
- **The bishop interrupted,** "Luther, do you insist that the church is in error for selling indulgences? Are you holding on to this ridiculous idea that we are saved by faith alone? Are you really saying that all these other church leaders and the church for hundreds of years are wrong and **you alone** are right, Dr. Luther?"

Witnesses said that Luther got really quiet for a minute, looked down, and then slowly looked the bishops in the eye and said, "*Since you want a simple reply, I'll give you one without 'horns or teeth.'*"

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—for I do not accept the conclusions of councils of popes because they contradict each other—my conscience is held captive by the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me, Amen."⁶

- **The courtroom descended into chaos, and Luther slipped out.**

King Charles had promised Luther safe conduct to Worms and back as part of the deal to get him there, so he had to let Luther walk out free, but **as soon as Luther left**, King Charles immediately published the **Edict of Worms**, in which he declared that once Luther got home anyone may kill him without punishment.

So, on the way home, **some local militia took kidnapped Luther** and Luther thought he was going to die. But, they were friends, and they took him and hid him in castle at Wartburg, where he changed his name to Sir George, grew a beard and lived in secret for several years translating the Bible into common German, and writing a bunch of other books I now have in my library. s

- **You can visit the cell where they kept him.** There was a famous story about the cell where Luther supposedly threw an ink well at Satan, and savvy tour guides will smudge some soot on the wall and say, "This is the stain left by the ink well."
- **But what Luther literally said was,** "In this cell I fought the devil with ink,"—not that he threw ink at Satan, but that he fought Satan by writing out the first ever translation of the New Testament into common German so the people could read it.
- ~~It was there—however—~~and this is not a legend, that Luther said that he discovered the two ways to drive out Satan—the Word of God, and strong gas. (explain) I often use this V—just fighting Satan.

⁶ *hier stehe Ich. Ich can nicht anders.*

Not even Luther was not expecting the impact this simple discovery would make. He later said, I didn't mean to cause the Reformation, and I'm not the one who propelled it forward. I simply translated the Bible and prayed, and then sat back and drank a good pint of German beer while the word did all the work."

The Reformation—built on the idea that salvation came through faith alone in Christ—began to spread like wildfire all throughout Europe, as more and more preachers began to translate the Bible into their common language.

Luther described it like falling down the shaft of a tower and reaching out to grab ahold of a rope to break his fall, the rope attached to the bell. That rope for him was the book of Romans, and it rung a gospel bell that woke up all of Germany.

~~(A couple of decades after the nailing of the 95 theses~~ a man named John Calvin read Luther's work and said that through them for the time saw the **light of God.**⁷

- ~~Calvin opened up a seminary in Geneva, Switzerland, and it became a hub for the Reformation and Protestants who were being persecuted by the Roman church began to flee there.~~
- ~~For example, as the Protestant Reformation started to spread in England in the 1550's, Catholic Queen Mary began to round up its leaders and kill them (which is how she came to be known as Bloody Mary)~~
- ~~So, a group of young Protestants fled to Geneva to escape her, and there they were tutored by John Calvin, and they translated the Bible for the 1st time into common English, a translation called "the Geneva Bible", the 1st English translation.~~
- ~~It was **this translation that was first brought over** to America. It is the immediate predecessor of the KJV, and I have a copy of a page from this Bible dating back to this time back in my office.)~~

⁷ Calvin then wrote *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* which became the primary Protestant theology text in Europe for the next 300 years.

What followed were some of the bloodiest years in history—scholars say **more protestants died for their faith in the years following the Reformation than all the early Christians in Rome.**

- But they did it gladly! **One historian** of the time described it: "No human being was able to take out of their hearts what they experienced. The fire of God burned within them. They would rather die 10 deaths than forsake the divine truth. They knew this was about eternity. Their tent they had pitched not upon the earth but in eternity... God had so drawn them unto himself that they knew nothing, sought nothing, desired nothing, loved nothing but God alone."

Some things are worth fighting for. Paul knew it. Luther knew it.

The gospel is worth fighting for in our day, because, again if we change it, we **cut ourselves off from the presence of Christ** and obscure God's saving power.

There is no other gospel!

Paul is going to **spend the last ½ of the chapter** explaining why he was so zealous about the gospel—and basically, he says this gospel is the only place you can experience power from God.

- **And if you tamper with this message**, you'll lose the presence of God and cut yourself from his power!
- I've described it like this before: say you were really poor, at the point of starvation, and a really rich man had compassion on you and said, "I want to give you full access to my bank account—millions upon millions of dollars. Here's my bank card. My pin is 1973, the year I was born." You say, "I'll never remember that. I'd prefer my birth year, 1982." He would say, "You can enter in 1982

if you want, but you'll never access my money that way. If you want my money, you must enter 1973."

- **If we want the power and gift of God**, we have to access it the way that he said, by faith in Christ alone.

So, Paul said—I **don't like striving, I'd rather just get along**, but I'll do it here, because your soul and the souls of future generations are worth it.

¹⁰ For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

I feel the same way: I don't want to offend you, and it's easier **just to let everything co-exist**—let you have your way and my way—but the one I'm trying to please here is Christ because he alone has the power to save and I'd rather lose your affirmation than his presence.

Conclusion/Invitation

- This **gospel is worth dying for**—have you experienced it?
- This gospel is worth dying for—are you proclaiming it with the urgency it deserves?

