

How a Church Almost Lost the Gospel

THE GOSPEL • PART 1

Galatians (Introduction) | Arvin Assembly of God | Pastor Brian Overturf | August 9, 2026

INTRODUCTION

We just finished James, and now we open Galatians. Some people think Paul and James are in a fight. They're not. James showed us the fruit... faith proves itself by works. Paul is going to show us the root... how you get in in the first place. And the answer is grace.

Most of us understand earning. Nobody hands you a paycheck for work you didn't do. You show up, you put in the hours, you earn what you carry home. That's good. That's how a job is supposed to work.

But there is one thing you did not earn and could never earn... the grace of God. Jesus went to a cross for you while you were still a sinner and handed you a righteousness you didn't deserve. Here is the danger of this whole book: the moment you try to earn what God already gave you for free, you trade grace for a paycheck. A gospel you have to earn is no gospel at all.

That is exactly what was starting to happen in Galatia. Churches that had been set free were almost talked right back into slavery. To see how, we have to go back to the book of Acts.

What would you fight to protect?

1. The Gospel Planted

| ...everyone who believes is justified... (Acts 13:39)

Years before this letter, Paul planted these churches on his first missionary journey, Acts 13-14. The very first time the gospel was preached in Galatia, the note was grace: you are justified by faith, not by the law of Moses. To everyone who believes.

And this wasn't plan B. The Gentiles coming in was the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), spoken again by Isaiah, fulfilled in their own town. But it didn't come cheap... Paul was stoned at Lystra, left for dead, and got up and walked back into the very city that tried to kill him. That's what it cost.

Acts 13:38-39

³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you... through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹ and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

The gospel planted. Free. Rooted. Rejoicing. That's what you have too... you didn't earn your salvation.

2. The Gospel Threatened

| ...Unless you are circumcised... you cannot be saved. (Acts 15:1)

Paul moved on, and other men came in behind him with a different message. They didn't deny Jesus. They said Jesus... plus. Faith plus circumcision. Grace plus works. And that one little word, plus, is the whole fight, because the moment you add a requirement to grace, it stops being grace.

MY NOTES

Acts 15:1

¹And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

| ...you have fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4)

Adding to grace doesn't make you safer... it cuts you off from the very thing you were trusting in. Add law to grace, and you don't get grace and law. You lose grace altogether. Ask where the mortgage has crept back onto your grace: do you believe God likes you more on the weeks you read your Bible... It was grace that saved you, but now it's on you to work your way to staying in? That is the Galatian mortgage.

Galatians 5:4

⁴You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

The gospel threatened. Not by enemies who denied Christ, but by teachers who simply added to Him.

3. The Gospel Defended

| ...let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8)

When Paul found out, he didn't raise an army. He picked up a pen. And he broke his own habit... every other letter opens with thanks; this one doesn't. He skips hello and says, I marvel. Then he says he would curse an angel from heaven before he'd let this gospel be changed.

Galatians 1:8

⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

| ...then Christ died in vain. (Gal. 2:21)

Why fight this hard? Here is the heart of it: if you could earn your way to God by keeping the law, then Christ died for nothing. To add to the gospel is to stand at the cross and call it not enough.

Galatians 2:21

²¹I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

The gospel defended... by a man who would sooner curse an angel than watch you trade it away.

CONCLUSION

Planted. Threatened. Defended. That same gospel is planted in you... if you're in Christ, you were justified by faith, and you didn't earn your seat. And that same threat is coming for you... not to make you deny Jesus, just to get you to add to Him. A little guilt here, a little performance there, until you're lying awake afraid you haven't done enough.

Some of you have been carrying that mortgage for years, trying to earn a house that's already paid for. Lay it down. You don't have to clean yourself up first. There is nothing to add. The gospel is grace plus nothing... and grace plus nothing is the only thing that ever set anybody free.

Grace plus nothing. Fight to protect it.