

# How Do We Know We Are Right?

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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**Bible Text:** Galatians 1:1-14  
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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Galatians 1. Now for those of you who have been participating in our Bible reading plan and for those of you who have not, let me implore you to join the race wherever you find yourself. A very dramatic difference this week from last week. We spent almost a month on the ash heap with a man by the name of Job, this week we find ourselves in the book of Galatians, probably one of the most beloved sections of the entire Bible particularly the New Testament. You may not realize it but many of the very famous quotations and statements from Scripture are found in the book of Galatians. Chapter 2 talks about that I am crucified with Christ, yet it is not I that lives but Christ that lives within me. In chapter 3, it goes on to say that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, nor male nor female, nor bond-servant or owner. In other words, we all come to the foot of the cross the same. By the time you make your way to chapter 5, we discover that famous passage of the fruit of the Spirit. It is love, it is joy, it is peace, it is gentleness, meekness, temperance and self-control. And in chapter 6, it begins by saying that the way that we fulfill the law is to bear the burdens of those that are around us. Verses 7 through 9 says God is not mocked, we will reap what we sow. Reap unto the flesh, you'll sow unto the flesh. Reap unto the Spirit, you'll reap unto the Spirit. Then in verse 10 of chapter 6 it says do good to all people but especially the brethren. I could go on and on. I'm not gonna quote the book of Galatians but I think we need to understand the foundation that all those great passages are established on.

Galatians 1. We're gonna read the first 14 verses and then we're going to answer a very important question: how do we know that we're right? Now that sounds like kind of an odd question to ask in a context like this but let's be honest with ourselves, when it comes to what you and I claim to believe, if you've come here this morning as a believer in Jesus Christ, you realize that you're outnumbered, you're out-financed and you're out-politicized in this world. The majority of our world thinks that you could be somewhere else doing a better effort with your time, effort and energy. Those of you who faithfully give, the world says you could put your money in a better place. Those of you who are here whether online or in person, the world would say there's better places you could allow yourself to be. So how do we know that we're right? Beginning in Galatians 1:1, it says,

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Now that being said, when we address this question how do we know that we're right, how do we know that Christianity is the one thing that we ought to place not just our today in but all of our tomorrows, how do we know that Jesus Christ really is the foundation that we just read that he claims to be?

Let's begin with a little overview here, kind of the 30,000 foot perspective of the book of Galatians. As you walk through the book of Galatians, you'll discover that it actually lays itself out pretty easily for us. First couple of chapters are very personal. The Apostle Paul not only uses the personal pronoun a numerous amount of times, but he shares with us his own testimony. He talks about being not necessarily on the road to Damascus but that 14 years earlier when that happened, his conversion to Jesus Christ, his fellowship with the apostles and the early believers, they gave him the right hand of fellowship, and then by the time you move to chapters 3 and 4, it becomes very doctrinally rich because there's this struggle that not just the Apostle Paul but all of us have, is anything and everything that competes itself with Jesus Christ, in this particular case it is the issue of the law. How do we know that the law is there to show us our depravity and not there to show us our expectancy for perfection? How do we know that the law pictures for us our inadequacy and it is by faith that we are saved? And there in chapters 3 and 4 there's this richness of deep biblical understanding of why we believe what we believe and then chapters 5 and 6, how do we live this thing out? How do we not walk according to the works of the flesh but according to the fruit of the Spirit? How do we love those that are unlovable? How do we walk among those who are unrepented? The book of Galatians, at

least personally, is just a dear section of Scripture that shows us why we do what we do and how to do it, but in this sense it's very specific.

Notice verse 2, it says, "To all of the brethren." Now I want to get specific for just a moment. The book of Galatians that talks about this struggle between law and faith, it talks about this issue between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit is written specifically to Christians, and I think one of the things that we fall into the trap of is thinking, "Well, now that I'm saved, all my troubles go away." No, they don't, they just get started, trust me. In other words, he's saying, "Now I know you're gonna struggle with what you believe, you're gonna struggle with how to act, you're gonna struggle with the flesh that is still surrounding you, you're going to have these difficulties." Why is this important? Because you've been there at some point in your life. Maybe it was after a series of heartache and despair. Maybe you were disappointed in others and yourself and you've just kind of looked up and said, "God, is this really real? Is this really what I want to place my life, my forever in?" We've all had those questions at some level and so it's very specific that this is to the Christian community that was having questions and doubts and concerns and what abouts and struggles and difficulties just like you're having today, but it also allows us to see kind of a broader scenario.

Notice it says in verse 2, "to the churches," plural, "of Galatia." This is the only time in what we know as the letters of the Apostle Paul that we don't have a specific congregation that is addressed. Allow me to illustrate. Today whether in person or online, you are at the "First Baptist Church of Opelika, Alabama." Notice that in Thessalonians he writes, "Unto the church at Thessalonica, unto the church at Ephesus." It would be the same context. I want you to imagine in today's vernacular, it's as if the Lord is saying, "To the churches of East Alabama." Now that's a broad spectrum geographically, right? But it even creates a larger scenario for us because I think what's important for us to see is this wasn't just about a single issue that a single group or even a single person was having, a single fear, a single concern, a single doubt, a single struggle, it's almost as if the Lord is saying, "If you have come to the place where you have recognized your own sinful condition and asked Jesus Christ to save you, these are the six chapters that you need." Now I know we need them all but it's got such a scope to where it addresses those who are new to the faith, those who are mature in the faith, those who are weak in the faith, those that are strong in the faith, those who are free, those who are persecuted. No matter where you find yourself on this journey of faith, it is what we know as the book of Galatians that's gonna help us kind of settle those concerns, those issues, whatever they may be.

Now that's kind of an overview, so to speak, but by the time we get to the fourth verse, we discover that there is an obstacle. It says, "Who gave himself," being Jesus Christ, "for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Now this is not the intent of the message today but allow me to chase a little rabbit trail for a moment. Have you ever asked the question or had somebody ask you, "I just don't know what God's will is"? Well, we just read it. You know what God's will is? To deliver you from this present evil world. God's will is never for you to get entangled with this evil world. God's will is never for you to mess around

with this evil world. You say, "I just don't know what decision to make." If it involves getting tangled up with the carnality of this world, I can promise you that's not God's will.

It says it is God's will to deliver us from this present evil world. Now let's talk about that specifically. Where we're about to go, and we're just gonna spend there for a while today, is into the realm of the politically incorrect. We're gonna go where the world won't go, and unfortunately where, and I'm gonna use the famous air quotes here, "the church" won't go. What does it call this world? Evil. Now think about that for just a moment. One of the most popular songs that has been written in recent decades is titled "What a Wonderful World." Isn't that funny? Ironic that we talk about what a wonderful, and I know what some of you are saying, some of you are going, "Well, I just like to be positive." You're not gonna find many people more positive than me. I can see the glass half full, half full when it's only got a little bit in it. I can see it. And I know you say, "Well, there is some good." What did the Bible say? This world is, what? Evil.

Now let me get a little more specific here because I know some people are going, "Well, I just don't see it that way. I just believe in this." Alright, how about Jesus himself? A pretty good source, right? Please note my sarcasm there. The gospel of Luke 11:13. He's dealing with a group of people who are struggling with what he's teaching, what he's promoting and here's what he says. He says, "You don't believe that God is good by sending me? Don't you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children? If he asks for an egg, you would never give him a scorpion." Jesus Christ called humanity evil. Now how's that for your best life now? That's what he called us. Jesus Christ looked out on you and me and humanity as a whole and said, "You are evil."

Now how did we get into this mess? How did we become the evilness? Well, let's go back to Mark 7:21. It says, "The heart of man is evil." Now do you notice a trend here? This evilness, it's who we are as humanity. Our heart is evil. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah says the heart is deceitful above all things. What we discover is that you and I and humanity, we've got a heart problem.

Now we live in a world today with a big mess, right? In fact, those of us who "live in the geographical South," we have a term for our world right now, it's called we're in a hot mess, alright? It doesn't matter where you look, it doesn't matter what the news story is, it doesn't matter what the "chaotic concern" of the day is, everybody wants to address it with this and with that. Let's just cut to the chase: the reason that we have injustice, the reason that we have sickness, the reason that we have pains and agony and hurting and suffering is because humanity at its core has a heart problem, and when you have a heart problem – hear me clearly – then none of the rest of your body will work. Have you ever thought of that for just a moment? When the heart stops, so does everything else. "Oh, but my arm's injured." Your heart stops no matter how good your arm is. You say, "Well, my brain is sharp." It doesn't matter if your heart stops. Your brain will cease to function.

Why is that critical? Because the Lord told us we've got a heart problem and what we're doing is we're talking about the arms and the knees and the this and the that, but at the end of the day we've got to talk about the heart. You say, "Well, why do we have a heart

problem?" Well, Ephesians 2 says that when you were born and I was born, we were born in our sins, dead in our trespasses. And here's the one, this is the politically incorrect of the incorrect in that we walk, this is before we got saved, this is the world at large, we walked according – listen – to the spirit of disobedience. How's that for politically correct? Jesus called us evil. Our hearts are evil and guess what? We were born with a propensity for evil.

That's not gonna sell a whole lot of books, is it, but you understand that's the obstacle. The obstacle is not this issue or that issue, the obstacle is not this problem or that problem. What did it say here in verse 4? That Jesus Christ came to deliver us from this perfect, beautiful, I've got hopes for it world. No! This present evil world. Now I've got news for you and I know you probably know this between your ears but let it sink down for just a moment: whatever it is that you cherish and appreciate and love and adore and invest your time and money on, one day it's all gonna burn up. It's gonna be gone. It's evil and guess what the Lord's gonna do the last two chapters of your Bible? He is going to "recreate" a new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem, and thankfully a new body.

But here's the thing I want you to hear: in 2 Corinthians 4, we talked about the evilness that's out there, 2 Corinthians 4:4, you know what it calls Satan? The god of this world. I know what you're saying, you're saying, "No, no, no, whoa, whoa. Jesus Christ is on the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ is the God of this world." You watch the news tonight and tell me he's the God of this world. You read the reports of what people are getting arrested for, you tell me he's the God of this world.

Now don't get me wrong, the Bible says one day he is coming as the King of kings and the Lord of lords but that's when the heaven splits open and he comes in on a horse. You know what Revelation 1:5 calls him? The Prince of the kings of the earth. Now you can ask Charles on the other side of the pond, a prince means you don't get to do anything. He just sits around and takes photo ops and drives a Rolls Royce running on wine. I mean, that's all he does because he's not in charge yet. The god of this world is who we know as Satan. Why do you think there's so much evil? Why do you think there is so much disdain? Why do you think there's so much destruction? But guess what, folks? There is coming a day that Jesus Christ will come as the King of kings and the Lord of lords and let me promise you, you want to be behind him and not in front of him on that day.

So what's the scenario? What has this produced? What has this allowed our world to look like? Some of the most famous verses not just in the book of Galatians but in the entirety of the Bible beginning at verse 6, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you unto the gospel of Christ which is another gospel, which is not another but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." Now let me define in this scenario, let me define what the gospel is. The gospel by simple definition means that which is good news. Do you notice the qualifier here? The gospel of Jesus Christ. There are a lot of people that talk about the gospel of science, the gospel

of philosophy, the gospel of education, the gospel of this and the gospel of that, and it says very clearly that if anybody preaches, advocates, believes in anything other than Jesus Christ, what does it say? Let them be accursed.

Now we're addressing the issue how do we know that we're right, because we would have to be honest with ourselves there are people of other faith systems that are probably more zealous than we are, there are people that believe other things that are more concerned with spiritual matters than we are. So we can't measure it by zealousness or energy put forth or even amount of resources that are donated, how do we judge it? It says real clearly if it's of Jesus Christ, you're good, if it's not, you're not.

Let me share with you how people tend to do this. Let me kind of unpack this for a moment. Really I kind of call it mathematicalness here. There's two ways. You can either subtract or you can add. Let me demonstrate. If you subtract from the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ, according to what we just read you will be accursed. You say, "Well, how do people do that?" Well, if you thought we were politically incorrect five minutes ago, go ahead and roll the cameras, here we go. In the religion of Islam, Jesus is only a prophet. That's all he is. You have subtracted from his deity so you, my friend, are accursed. That's what the Bible says. You may be in power, you may be wealthy, you may have resources, and you may outnumber others, but according to God's word you're accursed.

There are other people that love to ride bicycles and knock on your doors that believe that Jesus is actually in times past the twin brother whom we know Lucifer now Satan, they strip from him all of the "Godhead." Guess what? If you take away from who he truly is, you are accursed. And I know what you're thinking, "They're more faithful than I am." Yes, they are faithfully going to hell apart from Jesus Christ. They're accursed.

What about those who may not ride bicycles but love to give you paraphernalia on your door particularly on a Saturday morning, that Jesus in their eyes is not the God of all time? They remove from him his eternity. What does the Bible say? Let him be accursed.

Now that's low hanging fruit, folks. Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, how about the liberals? Now y'all woke up. What about those who say, "Well, the Jesus I believe in isn't that harsh. The Jesus that I talk about wouldn't say those kind of things." Jesus said you're evil. Jesus told the Pharisees their converts are twice the descendants of hell as they would be. That is not a sit around the campfire and sing Kumbayah Jesus, is it?

What about those who say, "Well, I just don't think Jesus meant that. I don't think Jesus really meant hell. I mean, it was Gehenna, and well, that word when you translate it 13 times over just really means a bad place." Guess what? What does the Bible say? Let them be accursed. You know, one of the biggest problems is people who claim the name of Jesus and go to church on a regular basis, sing songs, and even have "studies," I won't call them Bible studies but they have studies, are going to be in the same place as those who we would openly clearly say are accursed.

So sometimes it's by subtraction, but sometimes it's by addition. You say, "What do you mean, addition?" You do understand that it's the gospel, the grace of Jesus Christ, not the gospel of Jesus Christ plus whatever you come into the mix. There are some people that believe, and I love what Pastor Paul said earlier about our baptism when he said, "This water doesn't save." There are people out there that believe if you don't get dunked in water, you can't go to heaven. They have added to the gospel. What does the Bible say? Let them be accursed.

There are those that say unless you show up at the right place, at the right time, confess your sins to the right person, take the wafer, take the wine, you can't be saved. What does the Bible say? Let them be accursed.

Lest you think I'm picking on somebody else, there's a lot of people gonna get to heaven one day and say, "I'm a Baptist," and he's gonna say, "Let them be accursed."

Folks, how do we know that we're right? Because our own eternity is at stake here and you do know that eternity is too long to be wrong? Just because you're a Baptist doesn't mean you get to punch your ticket, and just because you're something else doesn't mean you have not, but that being said, the scenario is we have a lot of false gospels out there, we've got a lot of messages out there that are not true to the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. Sometimes we subtract who Jesus is, sometimes we add our own works or our endeavors, but we end up in the same place. What does he say? Let them be accursed.

So what's the observation here? I love verse 10. It's one of my favorite verses in the Bible, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." It's pretty specific here. It says at the end of the day who are you really trying to please? At the end of the day whose attention are you truly seeking? You know, it's interesting as not only you walk through the book of Galatians but as you walk through the entirety of Scripture, how much that our contemporary Western world has so twisted up the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you just a little litmus test here. How do you know specifically if your endeavors, your actions, your faith practices are honoring to the Lord or not? I'm gonna give you just three little guides right here, just a little litmus test. Number 1 is this: if it's appealing to the flesh, it's probably not of God. Luke 9:23, what did Jesus say? "If any man follow me, let him take up his cross." Rarely if ever does the Lord call you to do something you say, "Oh boy, I can't wait!" Because rarely is it appealing to the flesh. In fact, I can speak this in my own life. You look at the biblical record, the prophets in the Old Testament, the preachers in the New Testament, even those that are called today, rarely is ever does God put his hand on somebody and say, "I have called you to the mission field. I have called you to the ministry." Rarely if ever do they get excited about it. Let me tell you what we do, we run from it is what we do because it's not appealing to the flesh. There is nothing about it that appeals to the flesh.

The second thing is this: if it appeals to the masses. If you find yourself on the higher end of the majority opinion of this present evil world with whatever it is you want to advocate, do or promote, it's probably not pleasing to God.

Last but not least. I'll use the word prosperity. You know that Jesus Christ didn't go to the cross to make you rich. Now he allows people with great wealth to not only serve him but to give generously in a lot of capacities, and I've said this before but I'm gonna say it again, I just want to give you a good rule of thumb here: if there is a ministry, a local church or any entity that you want to promote and advocate, if they have gold chairs, big hair, or Learjets, run away. Just run away from it. Why? Because does it seek to please men or does it seek to please God?

The flesh, the popularity, the prosperity. What does it say? Who am I really trying to please here? And you see, that's one of the problems is because true biblical Christianity does not appeal to the flesh, at least in our world and culture today we're not a part of the statistical majority, and last time I checked, it doesn't necessarily help you.

Some weeks ago I had an incredible conversation with somebody who was sharing with me that his daughter was a law school graduate and was applying for a job and at that time, just had the opportunity to succeed and to do well. Those of you that were at our man church heard this story. I'm just going to abbreviate it because it resonates so well. The story was that the preacher was up talking about some of you, you come to the church, you're members of the church to help your career. She turned to her parents and said, "Putting church on my resume actually hurts my career now." Fifty years ago, you'd go for a job interview and told them what church you had joined, right? Today you tell them what church you're a part of and it may not get you that job.

Do we seek to please men? Do we seek to please God? So what's the scenario? Verses 11 through 14, the Apostle Paul says, "Here's the deal. I used to be the one persecuting. I used to be the one inflicting pain. I used to be and I was so zealous for the traditions of my fathers." At the end of the day, the simple scenario is this: if the world pats us on the back as a Bible-believing Christian in this time, in this age, we may not be headed the right direction. In fact, one of the great words of wisdom that one of my mentors in life gave me, some of you have heard it before, is if you wake up and you find yourself walking in the same direction as the devil is, you might be headed the wrong way.

So what does he say? "I persecuted those, I inflicted pain on those, I made life miserable for those who were believers in Jesus Christ." If the world is patting you on the back, if the world is saying, "Atta, boy, go get 'em!" You might want to do a heart check real quick because right now, at least in our context in our world, when you stand up for biblical truth, when you stand up for Jesus Christ, it will not get you a promotion, it will not get you a raise, and we're getting close to where it may put you in jail real fast. Isn't that what happened to the Apostle Paul? Isn't that what happened to the early disciples? Isn't that what is happening literally all over the world right now for people who will not back down from their faith?



Days are long gone. Can the Lord send revival again? Sure, he can. But days are long gone at least from today's perspective where you and I are a part of the statistical majority. Days are long gone where decisions are made and they say, "Why don't we gather the pastors in town and pray about this?" Days are long gone where we'll actually be patted on the back for our faith. Today it is much the opposite and it makes you question how do I know it's right? I mean, after all, I'm outnumbered, I'm out-financed, I'm out-politicized. We're out everything. The way you know it's right is because it looks just like Galatians 1.

I'll close today with one of the great books of the faith, at least in the modern ear. A man by the name of Watchman Nee. Watchman Nee was martyred for his faith in 1972. He established and started what many of us know as the House Church Movement in East Asia today. I won't get into the details of his life but he wrote a book called "The Normal Christian Life." The normal Christian life. You say, "Well, I've been to Walmart and I don't see that on the shelf." You're right. You say, "I've been to some of these big stores that sell 'Christian books' and I have never seen that book." You're right. You know why? Because here's what he stated: the normal Christian life according to Scripture is never a bestseller, the normal Christian life according to Scripture is not the majority opinion, and the normal Christian life according to Scripture is usually persecuted rather than prospered. Maybe you're that person today saying, "Man, I'm struggling. I'm having a difficult time. I'm this, I'm that. I'm not in the majority. I'm not in the popular opinion." That might be just what you need to hear to know that your faith is grounded on the solid rock of Jesus Christ.