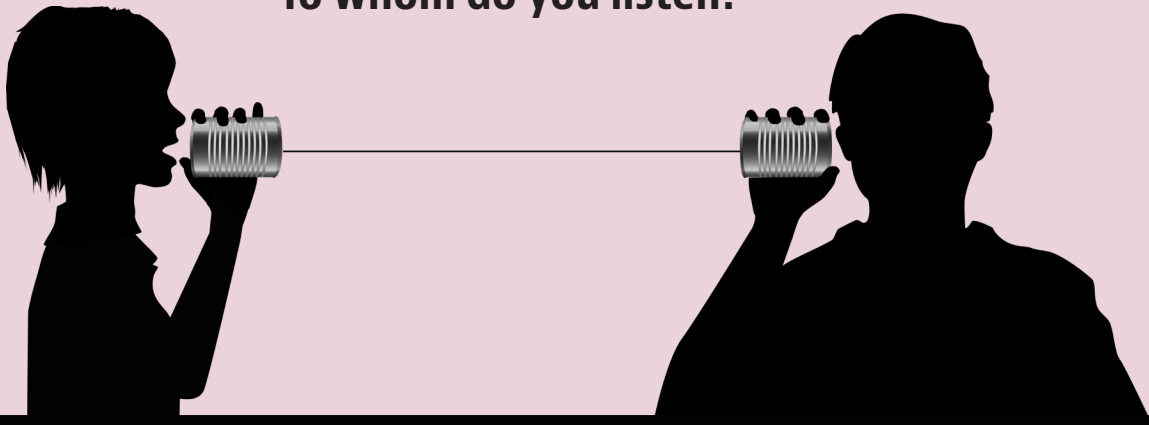


Who is your authority?

To whom do you listen?



Who is your authority?

Who do you listen to?

A war rages over our freedom in Christ. So why such a raging conflict? Because the war over our freedom in Christ is a war over the gospel. And what we believe about the gospel comes down to the issue of authority. To whom do we listen? Do we listen to the Apostle Paul? Or do we give an ear to those who preach a different gospel?

Grace versus law.

Faith alone versus faith plus works.

Freedom versus slavery.

Paul versus the false brothers

- (Galatians 1:6 ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Stop and ask yourself: How could the enemy be so successful in subverting the gospel to crisis proportions in these churches in southern Galatia? What devious scheme had the false brothers unfolded that threatened to drag these churches back into slavery? What dark, diabolical tool had fallen into the enemy's hands that would give them the power to do such a thing?

The gospel. Yes, you heard me correctly. The gospel. No, it wasn't really the gospel. But it was the gospel to them and that is important to note. They were absolutely convinced of it, just as people are in our churches today. This slightly different gospel was very compelling as was evidenced by even strong Peter falling to its deception for a time.

And the fact that it was only slightly different was the key to the enemy's—the devil's—cunning deception. They had just added one thing. But here's the problem with adding even only one thing. You are obligated to keep the whole law. There is no such

thing as adding only one thing. Adding even one work—whether it is circumcision, water baptism, speaking in tongues, etc—commits you to keeping the entire law of God.

- (Galatians 5:3 ESV) I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

Why is this so? Because for all religions in the world and even including the diverse doctrinal positions of those who profess to know Christ, it comes down to only two options—two modes or methods of salvation.

Two options: Work or believe.

You work or you believe. You work and receive what is due. Or you do not work but believe and receive a gift.

- (Romans 4:4–5 ESV) Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Where did these confused, bewitched Galatians go wrong? How could they be so foolish? How could they be tempted to turn from the only true gospel to a gospel that promised freedom but in reality made them slaves to sin?

How did that happen? Simple. They listened to the wrong people. The false brothers told them that they should **work and believe**, that, in fact, **faith plus works** was the true gospel. And 2,000 years later people continue to believe the same lie. Now, that's a good lie that last for 2,000 years. But that would be expected from the father of lies, right?

They rejected the authority of Paul.

When we understand the conflict in Paul's day, then we understand our battle now. The problem for these foolish, bewitched Galatians

was that they listened to the wrong people and did not listen to Paul because the "wrong people" who *had their ear* refused to accept the authority of the Apostle Paul.

- (Galatians 3:1a ESV) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?

Who had bewitched them? False teachers who refused to accept the apostolic authority of the Apostle Paul.

They undermined the teaching of Paul by misrepresenting the teaching of James.

And here is where it really gets interesting as we continue to put two and two together.

THEY REJECTED PAUL'S AUTHORITY.

- **THEN:** The false brothers did not accept Paul's word as the final authority.
- **NOW:** Those who believe in works salvation do not accept Paul's word as final authority.

THEY CLAIMED AUTHORITY VIA JAMES.

- **THEN:** They falsely claimed authority to speak for James and used the respect and influence of James to manipulate his views and reject Paul's authority. "Certain men came from James" (2:12).
- **NOW:** False teachers manipulate the teaching in the book of James to reject Paul's authority.

Why do you think those who believe in a faith-plus-works-gospel so often divert the discussion to the book of James? Because they do not accept Paul's authority.

We are accountable for what we know and for what we willingly do not know.

We are accountable to see the battle for what it is. **It was about Paul's authority then, and it is about Paul's authority now.** Over and over he draws our attention to the gospel that he preached in contrast to the false, different gospel.

The Apostle Paul is the preeminent representative for the voice of God in the New Testament. When anyone tries to work around the teaching of Paul to explain or define the gospel, be assured they are manipulating the text toward a gospel contrary to the purpose and plan of God.

Scriptures that assert Paul as the preeminent voice for the gospel.

🗨️ THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL ...

- (Galatians 1:6–7 ESV) I am astonished

that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

- (Galatians 1:8–9 ESV) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

🗨️ PAUL RECEIVED HIS GOSPEL FROM CHRIST ...

- (Galatians 1:11–12 ESV) For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

🗨️ HE WAS SET APART BY GOD BEFORE HE WAS BORN AND CALLED BY HIS GRACE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ...

- (Galatians 1:15–16 ESV) But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

🗨️ HE WAS SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL OF GOD AND RECEIVED GRACE AND THE AUTHORITY OF APOSTLESHIP ...

- (Romans 1:1, 5 ESV) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ... 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

🗨️ THE SECRETS OF MEN WILL BE JUDGED BY JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO PAUL'S GOSPEL ...

- (Romans 2:16 ESV) On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

🗨️ PAUL REMINDED THEM THAT HE RECEIVED THE GOSPEL THAT HE DELIVERED TO THEM ...

- (1 Corinthians 15:1–3 ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.