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Countering the Counterfeiters

An examination of Galatians 1:4 conducted over four Sabbath mornings in Tavistock Free Presbyterian Church by visiting preacher, Rev Ivan Foster (Retired)

"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," Galatians 1:4.

Note: Recordings of the four messages may be heard **here**.

There is only one Gospel and it is that taught by the Saviour to His apostles and that which they preached to the world. It is fully revealed to us in the Bible, especially in the New Testament.

It is a gospel ever under attack from the one Paul refers to in 2 Cor 4:4. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

That attack is ongoing today; indeed, we are told by the Lord that it will intensify in the days before the Saviour's return. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," 1 Tim 4:1.

The diligence shown by the devil is seen in that the Galatian churches have come under attack from him very shortly after their formation. Note verse 6. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." I believe that I can say with certainty that the work in Galatia was no more than 10 years old!

I recall a story which illustrates just how the gospel can be corrupted as it is passed from generation to generation.

An Army communication was relayed across a number of radio transmissions. The original message read: "Send reinforcements. We are going to advance."

Due to human error in hearing and clear enunciation the final message was understood to be, "Send three and fourpence. We are going to a dance!"

How true this is I am not sure but it illustrates just how even the most vital of truths can be corrupted!

This is why we must be like the Bereans: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so," Acts 17:11.

The Bible alone must be our only source of instruction. To it alone we must turn for a revelation of just what it is God would have us receive and believe.

In order to counter this attack by the devil on the churches in Galatia note the actions of the apostle.

I. PAUL REITERATES THE GOSPEL

This is important for us to note. Before countering the lies of the devil Paul declares clearly the cardinal truths of the gospel. No better summary of the gospel could be given than that which appears in our text.

1. Reiteration of the gospel is God's means of ensuring that the truth of the gospel is maintained.

So it is in 1 Cor 15:1-4. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also



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received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The Corinthian church had many problems and Paul makes sure that he gives to them a clear picture of the core of the gospel message.

Putting God's people in remembrance of the gospel and its key doctrines is an essential part of a godly ministry and also of maintaining the purity and spiritual health of the people of God. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance," 2 Pet 1:12-13.

This what moved Jude to write his epistle. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," Jude 1:3.

There is no better way of refuting the lie of the devil than preaching the truth of God! Of course, we must dissect and dismantle the devil's lie and show its emptiness and worthlessness but that exercise must begin by an exposition of God's TRUTH!

It is thus that God's people are established and strengthened.

2. The reiteration of the old truths is a benefit and a joy to preacher and people. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe," Php 3:1.

The gospel is the ONLY source of joy and peace and blessing. It is our food and drink; our comfort and strength. We must ever remember that the gospel is the medicine of heaven for all our ills. "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations," Ps 67:2. The church stays healthy only as she continues on a diet of Gospel truth. Let her stray and she falls sick. It is by feasting the eyes of faith upon Christ that we recover our health and remain healthy. Our souls were healed from the dread corruptions of sin by a sight of Christ crucified. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Galatians 3:1. The place where we found health is the place we must remain if we are to retain our health.

As we continue in our study of Paul's efforts to recover the churches in Galatia, let us look at the statement in our text: "That he might deliver us from this present evil world."

I noticed a strange warning in a newspaper the other day. "Leprosy was thought to have died out in the UK in medieval times but recent discoveries confirm that red squirrels carry the disease."

How strange that a disease long believed to have ceased to exist is still lurking close at hand! There is a very clear spiritual warning here.

II. THERE IS A NEED TO EMPHASISE THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WORLD

This what Paul did in our text. The outcome of the devil's plan of attack on the Galatian churches was to drive them from the Lord and back into the world. Thus Paul says: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ," verse 6. The removal had begun and the return to the world was underway!

1. The devil is ever so good at white-washing sin! This is his chief means of deception. He disguises the poison. He fooled Eve, Genesis 3:4-6. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."



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The Lord calls the world an 'evil' place. The word means 'degenerate, malicious, hurtful.' Men believe that this age has advanced from the dark days of times past. Man has evolved into a better creature. WRONG! Utterly and dreadfully wrong. Mankind grows worse and worse.

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," 2 Tim 3:13. The world is a greater danger to us than ever it was to our fathers for the simple reason that it is more wicked and evil! We need to separate from it more than ever did our fathers. How sad to see the lines of demarcation between the Church and the world diminishing and declining and men are taken in by the lie of the devil and deceived by his 'whitewashing'.

2. This world is in darkness. We can learn nothing or benefit nothing from the ways and philosophies of the world. We are to fight it and resist its notions. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Ephesians 6:12; John shares Paul's views. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John 5:19.

Darkness is the haven and breeding ground of wickedness. "The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death," Job 24:14-17.

See also Psalm 104:20. "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth," We once walked in this darkness but no longer. It is not our natural environment. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light," Ephesians 5:8. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Colossians 1:13.

Being citizens of "the kingdom of his dear Son" we want nothing to do with the kingdom of darkness and its ways.

3. There is nothing but evil in this world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever," 1 John 2:15-17. Remembering this great truth will aid us in keeping ourselves clean. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," James 1:27.

The heart of true religion is remaining 'unspotted' from the world.

4. Sinful man loves that darkness. "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John 3:19. This explains man's rejection of Christ.

When we move away from Christ, as did the Galatians, it is an evidence of the working of darkness upon our hearts attracting us away from the Saviour.

That is what Paul detected amongst the people of God in Galatia and which he was seeking to combat.

The state of the people of God today may be explained by this fatal allurements at work.

Let us remember our text:

"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."

As Paul seeks to counter the devil's attempt to poison the churches in Galatia, he does so by applying the



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balm of Gilead, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have considered already how that at the very beginning of this epistle Paul reiterates the very essence of the gospel. He indicates that the gospel is God's cure for backsliding.

We have also noted how he reminds the Christians in Galatia of the sinfulness of the world out of which they have been delivered. We need to remember that for Christians to turn their back on the gospel is for them to return to the world's side!

The word 'removed' in verse 6 means to 'switch sides'!

I want us to note the third point that Paul would have the Galatians to remember.

"That he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

Let us consider the will, the purpose of God, that which He has decreed, particularly that which He has planned for His people.

III. THE WILL OF GOD IS A MATTER WHICH FEW UNDERSTAND

This is a land in which in times past, the ploughboy had a wonderful grasp of the deep things of God. The writings of the great preachers were not for the universities but for the people in the pews and the homes of England!

Matthew Henry's Commentary, a cornerstone of Biblical exposition, was born out of the systematic Bible teaching he gave his children! The Shorter Catechism was likewise devised for children and others "of weaker capacity"! What a testimony of past knowledge and what a humbling rebuke to the lowered standards of today!

1. This ignorance of God's will is because of man's inability to grasp the truth of God. There is no subject about which man has less understanding than the gospel. Man lost the core of knowledge at the Fall and the loss increased at the confounding of languages recorded in Genesis 11:7. Man has retained something of the knowledge of the treasures of the earth. Thus we read of trades and crafts being followed immediately after the Fall of man. This indicates some understanding of natural science. "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah," Genesis 4:17-22.

Man was permitted to harness some of the powers of creation but in more recent times that knowledge has increased, though it is scant, as recent advances show. Advancing knowledge serves only to highlight how dark was man's past ignorance.

It has to be noted that advancing knowledge is controlled by the providence of God. A consideration of the history of man's researches and delving after knowledge will show that he 'stumbled' upon his discoveries! I suppose that nothing illustrates this better than the story of Alexander Fleming's 'discovery' of 'Penicillin'. Providence intervened to bring about that great medical breakthrough.

Man's knowledge of God's creation is not something man dictates by his understanding and research. The honest mind must acknowledge providence.

Likewise, man by himself cannot uncover the knowledge of the God of Heaven.



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When man met God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ he did not recognise Him. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John 1:10-11. Man cannot find God by his research. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job 11:7.

These truths are everywhere repeated in the Bible. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isaiah 55:8-9. "O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this," Ps 92:5-6.

Nicodemus, the learned Pharisee and Jewish ruler, is an example of man's ignorance of things spiritual. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?" John 3:4, 9.

Despite his learning and years of studying the Old Testament, this man remained ignorant of the simplest and most basic gospel truth - man's need of regeneration!

The gospel is a mystery to men because of the darkness of their minds through sin! "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Timothy 3:16.

Man has devised many religions all of which differ from the gospel in ONE central thing. They make MAN his own Saviour!

IV. THIS GLORIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

1. The Saviour sent forth His servants with a simple commission. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark 16:15.

2. God's will is revealed in the gospel. 1 Cor 2:7-10. It is the means God has ordained to enlighten this world, John 8:12, 9:5; 2 Cor 4:4

3. However, without the aid of the Holy Spirit the gospel remains a mystery. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor 2:6-12.

Men consider it foolishness and think themselves wise when they do so!

V. ALL THE EVIL, THE MISERY AND THE SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD IS DOWN TO THAT IGNORANCE

1. Ignorance of God is the origin of man's present state. Man lives to defy and fight the will of God. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job 9:4. Man is a slave to sin. "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service (were a slave) unto them which by nature are no gods," Gal 4:8. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from



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the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Ephesians 2:12. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," Ephesians 4:17-19.

"They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isaiah 44:18-20.

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" Acts 26:17-18.

2. That is why every effort by humanity to lift itself fails for it does not address this fundamental deficiency. Every enterprise is planned in total ignorance of God's will. Man can only devise a 'rope of sand' by which to save himself. Man is trying to 'lift himself by his boot laces'!

3. There is a terrible price to be paid for such ignorance. Pharaoh gloried in his ignorance. "And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go," Exodus 5:2. That ignorance cost him dear! "And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them," Exodus 14:27-28.

So it will be with all sinners. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day," 2 Thess 1:7-10.

We come to the final consideration of this wonderful verse in which Paul lays the foundation of his counter-attack upon those who would trouble and deceive the believers of the Galatian churches and turn them aside unto "another gospel: which is not another," Gal 1:6-7.

There was a serious and powerful spirit of deception at work as Gal 3:1 indicates. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" As stated before, the word 'bewitched' shows us the power of the devil that was at work. It means 'fascinate', 'beguile'.

Does it not show the power of the old nature when we see such a tendency to be bewitched by that which is sinful? I say again, we are very prone to being taken in by the splendid appearance of sin!

We have considered how in our text Paul sets forth the sinfulness of the world out of which the believer has been delivered and into which the deceivers would lead the people back.

We have also considered that such a deliverance lies at the very heart of God's eternal purpose and will for His people.



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Now I want us to consider the great PRICE that was paid to deliver us from sin, the wonderful PERSON Who paid that price and how these considerations should dissuade us from heeding any who would remove us "from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel," verse 6.

VI. THE GREAT PRICE OF OUR DELIVERANCE

1. The word 'deliver' means to 'select and tear out, release, rescue.' That highlights the preconceived plan that was carried out forcefully and powerfully in order to rescue the elect of God from the bondage of sin.

*Chosen not for good in me,
Wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Saviour's side,
By the Spirit sanctified,
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
By my love, how much I owe.*

The redeemed sinner is as "a firebrand plucked out of the burning," Amos 4:11.

What power is at work in the saving of sinners. It is the labour of "a stronger than the strong man." However strong the devil may be and he is strong, the Lord Jesus puts forth greater power when He saves the sinner. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God," 1 Corinthians 1:18.

2. We were delivered by a voluntary sacrifice. 'Gave Himself'. He freely gave Himself. No strings attached. The Lord Jesus was moved by LOVE.

Love for His people. ". . . having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end," John 13:1. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour," Ephesians 5:2. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," Ephesians 5:25.

Love for His Father. Isaiah 53:3-6. Christ loved His people and submitted to the sufferings of the cross because of that but also because it was the will of the Father Whom He loved, John 3:16.

3. The sufferings He endured are beyond our understanding. We should ever speak of the cross with the deepest reverence. The Saviour's sufferings were hidden from mortal eyes. "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst," Luke 23:43-44.

Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,
For man the creature's sin.

VII. THE WONDERFUL PERSON WHO PAID THE PRICE

It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who died on the cross, verse 3.

1. LORD. Consider the use of this word 'LORD'.

He is "the LordthyGod," Matt 4:7.

He is the only One to be worshipped and served. "Thou shalt worshipthe Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matt 4:10.



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It is the title applied to Christ on the great day of His appearing to this world. "Many will say to mein that day, Lord, Lord," Matt 7:22.

It is the title given by the Saviour to His Father. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," Matt 11:25.

These verses serve to underscore the dignity, the deity of our Saviour.

2. JESUS. Surely we all know the origins of this name! "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins," Matt 1:21. It is the equivalent of the Old Testament name, 'Joshua'. All that Joshua was to Israel, our JESUS is to us and that countless times more!

He will bring us over Jordan and into the 'Promised Land', the wonderful inheritance referred to by Peter. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," 1 Peter 1:3-5.

3. CHRIST. the word means 'The Anointed One, the Messiah long promised.' He is the One believers had been waiting for since Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." He was the 'seed of the woman'. See Gal 3:16.

How joyfully Simeon received Him. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," Luke 2:25-32.

No better way of concluding our study than by quoting the final use of this title of our Saviour in the last verse of the Bible.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen," Rev 22:21.