

Galatians 3 – Building Trust

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We are in a sermon series through the book of Galatians called Freedom Through Christ. The letter to the Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches in a Roman province in Asia Minor, which is now Turkey. Paul visited these churches 3 times, but at some point, some false teachers called Judaizers began to influence the believers in Galatia.

The word Judaize means to embrace the customs and beliefs of Judaism. The Judaizers taught that Gentiles who became Christians must observe the rituals and regulations of the Law of Moses.

The main point of their teaching was that to be made right with God, it is not enough to have faith in Jesus Christ; one must also obey the Law of Moses. This is the main issue Paul addresses in Galatians.

The Judaizers also declared that Paul was NOT an apostle, that he had had NO personal revelation of Christ. So Paul challenges this right from the start of the letter by saying that he was an apostle called by God, not by men. Then he spends the rest of chapter 1 and most of chapter 2 explaining why the Galatians should listen to him rather than the Judaizers.

I'm preaching today on Building Trust. **Simply put, trust means confidence. The opposite of trust is suspicion.** When you trust someone, you have confidence in their integrity and in their abilities. When you distrust someone, you are suspicious of their integrity, their agenda, or – as in Paul's case – their teaching.

The Judaizers had attacked Paul's character, his credentials and his communication. He knew that he had to rebuild trust before he got into the real issue he was writing about.

Listen – **if people do not trust you, they cannot receive from you.** I've had this happen before. There have been people in the past who for whatever reason – I usually did not know the reason – got an attitude towards me. Maybe I taught something they disagreed with or I made a decision they did not like.

That caused them to not trust me – and all of a sudden, someone who loved my preaching and got a lot out of it would start saying things like, "The preaching is not the same to me. I don't get anything out of it anymore." But if they were mature enough to come to me and work things out, once they did all of a sudden my sermons were good again and they began to receive from me again. Not because my sermons were better but because they trusted me again.

You see – **if you want people to follow you – they must first trust you.**

That's one of the reasons that all of the recent failures of church leaders is so distressing. Not only does it affect individuals and churches, but it impacts the whole body of Christ. And it impacts our ability to reach unbelievers.

The public's trust level for members of the clergy is at an all-time low. Pastors were once among the most trusted professions in America, but now only 32% of Americans believe that pastors are trustworthy. And that number was from research done before the recent pastoral failures. So I'm sure that number is much lower now. That is so sad to me and it makes our ability to reach unbelievers much harder.

It's mind boggling to me that church leaders keep on pursuing sinful lifestyles when they see all the other leaders who are falling. **The Bible is clear about what happens to people who lack character.** Proverbs 10:9 says:

People of integrity live securely, but whoever lives dishonestly will be found out.

Proverbs 11:3 says:

The integrity of the upright guides them, but people who can't be trusted fall beneath their load of sin.

Proverbs 11:5-6 says:

Honesty makes a good person's life easier, but the wicked will cause their own downfall. Righteousness rescues those who are honest, but those who can't be trusted are trapped by their own ambition.

Trust is the foundation of leadership. It is the most important thing. Leaders cannot repeatedly break trust with people and continue to lead them. And you cannot repeatedly break trust with people and expect them to trust you.

Paul did nothing to break trust with the Galatians, but he knew that he had to reestablish trust with the Galatians.

How does a leader build trust and how do we build trust? By consistently exemplifying competence and character.

People will forgive occasional mistakes if you own up to it. But they won't trust someone who consistently lacks character.

People of character are consistent – they are who they are – whether the boss is around or not, whether anyone is watching or not. No matter where they are, who they are with, or what kind of situation they find themselves in, they are consistent and live by their principles.

You build trust by consistently doing the right things.

Being humble

Being teachable – open to correction

Being accountable

Being honest - Keep your word

Never promise anything you can't deliver. And when you say you'll do something, follow through on it. A sure way to break trust with others is to fail to keep your commitments. And **the more consistent you are, the more people are going to trust you.** The Bible says this in Luke 16:10:

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.

You know, everybody wants to do the big thing in life. They want to serve God in big ways. But God says, "You've got to be consistent with little things before you will be given more." It is in the little things in life, not the big things in life, that you prove your character; the stuff when nobody's looking.

To build trust we must also:

Keep commitments

Admit it when you're wrong

Ask for forgiveness when you mess up

Forgive others when they mess up

By the way – **there's a difference between forgiveness and trust. Forgiveness is given; trust is earned.** You can forgive someone without having to trust them.

You can lose trust in an instant, but it takes time to build it back. For example – if someone slapped me every time I was near them and they asked me for forgiveness – I would forgive them. But I would not trust them. I would not immediately get close to them again. I would keep my distance for a while and then gradually get closer. If you didn't slap me anymore – I would start to trust you again.

In these situations the offender – the slapper – will usually try to gaslight the one they hurt by saying, "I thought you forgave me." And the offended party responds, "I did forgive you." And the gas lighter will say, "No, you didn't forgive me. If you forgave me you would get close to me immediately." And the offended party should say, "I did forgive you, but I don't trust you. Forgiveness and trust are 2 different things. I will trust you again when you prove yourself trustworthy over time."

So, if you have hurt another person in some way, don't expect them to immediately trust you again. You must rebuild that trust.

Now, there are times when someone does nothing wrong and people still turn on them. That's what happened to Paul.

The Judaizers told lies about him and the Galatian churches believed them. It is a very painful thing when people you love believe lies about you. Paul had preached the gospel to the Galatians, disciplined them and raised up leaders for their churches. He never did anything but love them and teach truth to them. Yet they turned on him when outsiders came in and lied about him.

It's exceedingly difficult to deal with situations like that. It's painful when people you have loved, ministered to, prayed for, and given to turn on you. It's easy to want to just write those people off and have nothing to do with them. But Paul did not do that. Paul had to rebuild trust because others had attacked his character. And he knew the truth of Proverbs 22:1

A good name is more desirable than great wealth. Respect is better than silver or gold.

A good name means you have a good reputation. A bad name means a bad reputation. Your good name is your most important asset. A good name is about character and integrity. And a good name allows others to trust you. And without trust, you have nothing.

That's why Paul knew he had to reestablish trust up front so the Galatians would receive from him again. So he says in Galatians 1:11-12

I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

He already reminded the Galatians that he was called by God, now he reminds them that his revelation of grace came straight from God.

Paul's message was not a man's attempt to reach up and understand God; it was God's effort to reach down and communicate with man.

And Paul's relationship to this gospel was unique. God's most common method of communicating the gospel is by one person sharing it with another. But Paul did not receive the gospel from another person. He received the gospel in a dramatic revelation when He encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Paul was on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus when he was blinded by a light from heaven and Jesus spoke to him. Paul was blind for 3 days until God sent a believer named Ananias to go to him and lay hands on him to be healed and filled with the Holy Spirit.

The interesting thing is that Paul did not receive any instructions from Ananias. Paul had already been enlightened by Christ on the road.

True revelation comes from God.

He can use different ways to give us revelation. **Revelation comes mainly through God's Word**, but He also uses other people or creation or circumstances to speak to us. But Paul did not have the New Testament to read. In fact, he wrote much of it.

So the revelation Paul received was direct from God and it was pure revelation that became part of the canon of Scripture. **We still can receive revelation from God today, but what we receive is not the same level or purity of revelation that Paul received or that others who wrote the Bible received from God.**

2 Peter 1:20-21 says:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but holy men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

There is no more Scripture being written today. Some people mistakenly believe that God does not give any revelation or prophetic words anymore because that would be adding to the Scripture. But **no revelation or prophetic word that is received today supersedes Scripture. In fact all revelation and prophecies are subservient to Scripture.** If it does not line up with the word of God it is not of God!

God is not going to give you or anyone else a fresh revelation that gives a different teaching than the Bible gives.

So Paul starts rebuilding trust by telling the Galatians that the revelation of grace was straight from God. Then Paul shares his personal testimony starting in verse 13.

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Paul shares his testimony to the Galatians to let them know that he understood where the Judaizers were coming from because he had also been zealous for Jewish traditions to the point that he tried to destroy the Christian faith. And he saw the false gospel of the Judaizers as another attempt to destroy the church.

15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,

Paul wants the Galatians to know that his calling came from God. God did not choose Paul because of anything he said or did because God called him before he was born.

God called Paul through His grace, His unmerited favor. He calls us the same way.

Before Paul was a Christian, the emphasis was on what *he* had done: I persecuted... I advanced... (I was) more exceedingly zealous. After Paul became a follower of Christ the emphasis was on what God had done: God separated me... God called me... revealed His Son in me.

And that's a big difference between salvation by works or by grace. Those who think you can be saved by works put the emphasis on what they do – those who are saved by grace put the emphasis on Jesus.

The phrase “that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” is amazing. God chose a man before he was born for the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. That man grew up *hating* Gentiles and he hated Christians. But he is the one God chose to reach the Gentiles for Christ. Paul goes on to tell us what he did after becoming a follower of Christ.

16 I did not consult any man, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord's brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. 21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.

Paul proves that he did not receive the gospel from the apostles because he had been a Christian for three years before he even met Peter and James. I find that unusual. If it had been me, I think my first thought would have been to go to Jerusalem and meet with the original disciples who followed Christ. I would want to hear what they had to say. Remember, there was no New Testament yet.

But I believe that the Lord kept Paul from doing that because the church in Jerusalem was made up of a lot of former Jews who still followed the traditions of the law. Jews that still believed that the only way you could be saved was by believing in Jesus Christ and then keeping the law of Moses. That was the basic mindset of the church in Jerusalem. Then Paul says in Galatians 2:1-3

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.

The idea is that Paul went to Jerusalem by the express direction of God. He did not go because any man called him to come; it was because God told him to go.

But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.

Paul understood that another way we build trust is by being submitted to leadership. Also – we are considered trustworthy when we are open to input and teachable.

People who arrogantly go it alone in ministry or in life are not considered trustworthy to most people. This is true in churches. People want to know that their leaders are under authority not just exercising authority.

Some church leaders who have fallen in recent years did not fall because of a moral issue, but a leadership issue. They became increasingly authoritarian in their leadership style, not submitting to elders or other leaders. I always say, **“Never trust a pastor who does not have a pastor.”** In other words, there should be another leader or group of leaders to whom they are submitted.

That’s why we believe that the best biblical form of church government is eldership. Our church is not run by just me or just me and Deb. We are part of a group of elders who oversee the church. There is safety in that.

And – even though we are a non-denominational church, we are submitted to the oversight of our apostolic church network led by Pastors Olen Griffing and Kerry Kirkwood. That builds trust because it gives our church members somewhere to appeal if they think we are getting off track. We do that for the same reasons Paul submitted to the elders in Jerusalem: it’s biblical and it helps build trust with the church family.

Like Paul – we do not want to run in vain and neither should you!
Like Paul – we want to build trust in our relationships and so should you!

**The Christian life is built on trust!
First trusting God – then trusting others in the church family.**

To do that we must be trustworthy and to be trustworthy we must be:

Consistent in our character

True to our word

Humble and teachable

Accountable

Submitted to authority and responsive to correction

Quick to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes and quick to forgive others.

Doing these things consistently will build trust!