

Uniting Cultural Differences

February 1, 2026

Welcome to the Beamsville` Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled, Uniting Cultural Differences. Thank you to Geoff, Don, and everybody else who contributed to the service. The scriptures selected for this week are Psalm 41-3, Isaiah 49, 8-12, and Galatians 1, 11-18.

Galatians 1:11-18 (GNT)

Let me tell you, my friend, that the gospel I preach is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any human being, nor did anyone teach it to me. It was Jesus Christ himself who revealed it to me. You have been told how I used to live when I was devoted to the Jewish religion, how I persecuted without mercy the church of God, and did my best to destroy it. I was ahead of most other Jews of my age in my practice of the Jewish religion, and was much more devoted to the traditions of our ancestors. But God in his grace chose me even before I was born, and called me to serve him when he decided to reveal his son to me so that I might preach the good news about him to the Gentiles. I did not go to anyone for advice, nor did I go to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me. Instead, I went at once to Arabia, and then I returned to Damascus. It was three years later that I went to Jerusalem to obtain information from Peter, and I stayed with him for two weeks.

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Good morning. Thank you very much for being with us today. It's interesting that the first New Testament book that was written wasn't Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John. The first New Testament book was unique. It's the book of Galatians. It's the first New Testament book that was written was the book of Galatians, and rightly so. How does one unite two diametrically opposed cultures to come together as one and enjoy it with preconditioned religious thinking difficult to grasp? And it goes this way.

Love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and self-control. It's a wonderful book. There are two diametrically abode, I'll say it again, two diametrically opposed to one another. Jew and Gentile alike. So what I wanna do today is share a brief message that basically I think is helpful.

It begins by saying, Apostle Paul, "Grace and peace to you from our father, "himself rescuing us for our sins." And then he says this to all of us. He said, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel which really is no gospel at all. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach the gospel to another, let that person be cursed." That's pretty strong in this language. But Paul is trying to grab people's attention.

And Paul tells his own story. He says, "I want you to know brothers and sisters that the gospel that I preached is not of human [origin]" Well, how could that be? He said, "I did not receive it from any human source, for you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism." And listen to this. "How

intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism, many of my own age, and beyond that, and I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart--And I think that's us as well. God has set us apart. We're not just an accident. God knew us before we were born, and he knows us now.

And so they're coming together with cultures that are completely difficult. How do you come together with this diametrically opposed things? How do we do all of this? And so I just wanna take a look at some of these scriptures. He said this. "Before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. And then when they arrived, they backed away from it. Gentiles wouldn't eat. Gentiles wouldn't eat with others. They just wouldn't do it. We are Jews of birth, Gentiles, that a person is not just observing by the law, but by giving ourselves to all of this.

So then he begins by saying this, faith, what's that all really about? Going back into the old law was wonderful until the New Testament came and then there was some conflict. How does this work? How in the world are we gonna get Jew and Gentile to come together as one when we weren't taught that way at all? And again, we go back to the fruit of the Spirit with love and joy and peace and so forth and so on.

So there's observance of all of this. And so this wonderful book of Galatians, how do you get them all together? Years ago, the Bible that we only had was the King James Bible. And for many of us, maybe it's just me, I didn't really get the these and the thou's and all that sort of stuff. I didn't know what all those words were. But we get some newer translations. And it's just like reading a book, but we're reading not just a book. We're reading about us. And the past of how can the world, a Jew and Gentile come together as one and enjoy it and embrace it and share it? And to this day, that's what we do. We try to live our life in such a way.

Let's face it, nobody wants to hear a sermon every day, but let's hear that we know we are living as a person, believing in God and loving one another, faith and observance from the law. And so he says this, "Before the coming of faith, we were held custody under the law," Old Testament law, "locked up until the faith that was to come to be revealed. So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith." Meaning we believe it. So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by this faith.

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer (Chuckles) beyond the supervision of the law to live that way through that law. So in Christ Jesus, I love this. So in Christ Jesus, we are given ourselves to Christ away from the law. So in Christ Jesus, we are all children of God through faith for all of you who are baptized in Christ have been clothed with Christ.

Now it used to be for many years ago, a sermon wasn't really complete unless the preacher, whoever was up was asking someone to be baptized. That was basically that was in many of the churches of Christ. Go ahead and preach the sermon and invite people to come into our baptistery, to be baptized into Christ, being buried in the grave, coming up in the grave. That's for us. And we do that on occasion. But it got to the point where it was at least sometimes, oh, okay, I guess, yeah, okay, I guess I'm supposed to be baptized. No, no, no, no, no. Our baptism is the death of Christ, the burial of Christ, the resurrection of Christ for each and every one of us, no matter the culture, it's a gathering together as one.

And they just thought, this is remarkable. Because of this, before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith would be revealed. Now that it has faith will no longer be revealed faith will no longer be supervised by the law. It is faith for us. So Galatians is strong. Paul isn't backing away. He's letting it come across. Gentile, slave, neither male nor female. We are all one in Christ. We're just a big family. We're just a big family.

And so Paul has concerns about this church in Galatians. He doesn't want people to be discouraged. And so he says, it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then and do not burden yourselves again by a yoke of slavery, Old Testament teaching. Mark my words. I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be no value of you. And that was at that time important. You were trying to be justified by the law. And they've been alienated from Christ. We have fallen from grace, but faith has brought us together. And he says, there's this expressing of all of these things, but on top of all of it, it's sugared with love. It's sugared with love. And these aren't words. This is our own reality.

And so in Galatians, Paul writing these things, he's saying the most important aspect of all of this is by God's Holy Spirit expressing itself through love. And then these words, you, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge in sinful nature for the entire biting of these things, no good, my words. But the fruit of the Spirit is all of these wonderful things. Love your neighbor, help your neighbor, care for your neighbor. And so when we come together on Sundays, this is somewhat what we do, sharing with one another as a family coming together. And back in the Old Testament, it was very difficult to grasp some of these things. He says, may I never boast except through the cross of Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified. And that's strong. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule. From now on, let no one cause trouble. We can see the marks on our bodies from being accused of being a Christian and being hurt because of it all.

So this is Paul, and this is the first New Testament book coming together as one. And the message that is always in front, fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit. It is love, and it is joy, and it is peace. However, if you live the life where there's nothing like that, never really understood love or joy or peace, never had that before. Come together thousands of years in the past, and it's still relatively, wonderfully, fantastically part of us.

So Paul writes about this, Jew and Gentile, trying to come together as one, loving one another. And then I'll close with these words. He says, and this is unique, see what large letters I use, I write to you with my own hand. So if you're a person that's just writing so forth, you write, but all of a sudden if somebody says it's, wow, that's a big word, that's a large word, what's happening here? He said, I'm going to make a point. He says, may I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, anything through this. So from now on, let no one cause trouble. I bear on my body the marks of Jesus, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with your spirit. And then he says, brothers and sisters, amen.

And that's the sermon. I didn't preach it. That's just what it said. And it's this wonderful book, the book of Galatians that we don't read very often, but when you're standing back, you have a Gentile person and they're doing their thing and you do a Jewish, and they're doing their thing. It's a coming together as one. We don't always agree on everything, but with our scriptures and our

prayers and God's Holy Spirit who lives in each one of us. And I know we don't talk very often about this, for we have prayers, if we have a prayer church, we have a prayer maybe before eating dinner, anything along those lines, but no, no, there's something special about being a Christian, coming together as one, loving one another.

So may I just conclude with these brief words that we already have said. May we be people of love and of joy and of peace and of patience and of kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and control and do it again the next day and the next day. And now you get it, every day. Amazing book, the book of Galatians, we just don't read it very often. First New Testament book written. And then that book, it sure teaches us well, amen.

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