"Paul, the Apostle"
(Galatians 1:1-2)

I. Introduction.
  A. Orientation.
    1. This morning, we are beginning the book of Galatians.
      a. Actually, what we call a book is really a letter.
        (i) All together, Paul wrote thirteen of these letters.
        (ii) He wrote each one to deal with certain problems in the churches.
          (a) An apostle was not only concerned with planting churches by preaching what Jesus Christ had done to save sinners.
          (b) He was also concerned to make sure those churches continued to believe and do the right things:
            (1) That they might glorify God.
            (2) That they might eventually make it to heaven.

          (c) Remember, there is a broad path that leads to destruction – to hell.
          (d) And there is a narrow path that leads to life – to heaven.
            (1) The broad path represents false beliefs, and sinful practices.
            (2) The narrow path represents a loving trust in Christ, believing in the right Jesus to save you from your sins and doing His will.

      b. But remember as well, this letter is not the same that you or I would write; it is God's Word.
        (i) Our letters don't have this kind of authority.
          (a) If we speak as parents to our children, they should listen and obey because God says they should.
          (b) If we have a government office, those under us should listen to us because we have the authority of that office, again as God says we do.
          (c) If we speak as employers, again, employees should listen, because the Lord says we should.
          (d) But if we speak as equals, our words only have the power of advice, not the authority of office.
          (e) Unless, of course, what we're saying is God's Word.

        (ii) This letter comes with God's authority, because it is His Word.
          (a) They were to listen.
          (b) And we are as well.
          (c) Christ has also ordained that His Word be preached in His churches: therefore this sermon comes to you with God's authority: we must all listen.

    2. What was the particular situation Paul was addressing in this letter?
      a. Historically, he was writing to the Galatians to warn then against the teachings of a group known as the Judaizers.

(i) Why were they dangerous?
  (a) Did they reject Jesus Christ? No.
  (b) They believed He was the Messiah and that it was right to believe in Him.

(ii) Their problem was they couldn't let go of their traditions: those they were raised in – Judaism.
  (a) They believed that the non-Jews who were turning to Jesus (the Gentiles) needed to become Jews before they could become Christians.
  (b) One of them said at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15: "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).
  (c) He wasn't just talking about obedience to the moral commandments (Ten Commandments), which we agree everyone must obey.
  (d) He was talking about obedience to the Ceremonial Law – the Law we believe pointed to Christ and which He fulfilled.
  (e) And he meant they had to keep that Law to be saved.
  (f) Yes, the Judaizers said you must believe in Jesus.
  (g) But they denied that His work of redemption was enough to save them: there was something we had to add to it.

(iii) Peter had a great argument against them.
  (a) He had brought the Gospel to a group of God-fearing Gentiles – to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10).
  (b) God-fearers were Gentiles who believed in God, but didn't become Jews by being circumcised and observing their traditions.
  (c) Those God-fearing Gentiles believed in Jesus and were saved: "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7).
  (d) The Lord gave them His Holy Spirit to show that they were saved: "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us" (v. 8).
  (e) They were saved without becoming Jews: "And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (v. 9).
  (f) So why should they be circumcised and obey the Ceremonial Law: "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (v. 10).
  (g) They were saved by grace alone through faith alone: "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are" (v. 11).
  (h) This is the way God saves: it is by His grace alone; it is a free gift.
    (1) Christ has done it all, and He offers His salvation to us freely.
    (2) All we need to do is look to Him and receive it by faith: we must trust Him to save us.
    (3) Salvation does not come through our works: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

(4) "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom. 11:6).

b. What Peter said at the Council and what Paul says in this letter applies not only to the Judaizers, but to anyone who would include our works as the meritorious basis of our salvation.

(i) As Christians, we understand that works are important.

(a) They are necessary: James tells us that we can't be saved without them, "Faith without works is dead" (2:26).

(b) But these works don't earn our salvation; they only show that we have it. "But someone may *well* say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works'" (James 2:18).

(c) You can't be saved and continue to disobey God.

(d) If you're a Christian, it will show by the way you live: you will become more and more like Jesus Christ.

(e) You will love God, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength (Mark 12:30).

(f) You will obey God's commandments.

(ii) Works are *very important*, but they are not meritorious.

(a) They must be there, but even if they are, they do not earn your salvation or add to it.

(b) Christ has done it all.

(1) He obeyed perfectly: how can our imperfect works add anything to that?

(2) He died to forgive our sins: without His death, we couldn't have life. How can we add to this?

(3) Jesus has become the door to heaven for us. He says, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

(4) If you simply trust in Jesus, you will be saved. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).

(5) The thief on the cross didn't have time to do anything before he died, but trust in Jesus. He said to our Lord, "'Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!' And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:42-43).

(6) *A simple act of faith is all that is needed:* The thief trusted in Jesus Christ and that day he was with his Lord in heaven.

(7) This doesn't mean his life didn't show a change. The fact he believed in Jesus showed a change. The fact that he rebuked the other thief and defended Jesus' innocence showed a change of heart.

(8) Our works, our lives, show that we are trusting Jesus in a saving way, but they do not earn that salvation.

(9) To say that they do is to rob God of His glory; it is to fall from grace: This is the message that Paul is addressing in this letter.

B. Preview.

1. But why should they listen to Paul?
   a. They should listen to him, as we've seen, because what he wrote was the Word of God.
   b. But why is what he wrote God's Word?
      (i) What makes his words any more important than ours?
      (ii) It's because of Paul's divine credentials.
      (iii) Paul was no ordinary man, no ordinary officer in the church: he was an apostle.
      (iv) "Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)" (Gal. 1:1).

2. Let's consider for a moment, Paul's credentials.
   a. Paul was an apostle.
      (i) An apostle is one who is sent.
      (ii) That is what the word "apostle" means: he is one sent with a message.
      (iii) But Paul was not just sent with any message: He was sent with Christ's message.

   b. Paul was an apostle sent by Jesus Christ.
      (i) If you do a study of the word "apostle" in the Bible, you'll find that there are two kinds.
         (a) There are those sent by men or by the church: they are messengers of the church (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25).
         (b) And there are those sent by Christ Himself.

      (ii) We read in the Bible that there were twelve who were chosen to be apostles of Jesus Christ, and only twelve.
         (a) We take into account that Judas was one of the twelve, but a devil from the beginning (John 6:70).
         (b) When he betrayed Jesus, another was chosen *by the apostles* (Matthias: Acts 1:26).
         (c) But Jesus had another choice: Paul.

      (iii) These were very special men, with special qualifications:
         (a) They had to have seen the risen Lord.
         (b) They had to be personally commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself.
         (c) The Lord testified to their apostleship by allowing them to perform miracles.

      (iv) Paul had these qualifications:
         (a) Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1).

(b) He set him apart to the work of taking His Gospel to the Gentiles: The Lord said, "He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (v. 15).

(c) And the Lord performed the signs of an apostle through him: "I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles" (2 Cor. 12:11-12).

(v) Paul was sent not only through Jesus Christ, but ultimately through God the Father.

(a) He was the One who sent Jesus into the world.

(b) He was the One who raised Jesus from the dead after He had laid down His life for His sheep.

(c) And He was the One who has exalted Jesus Christ as Lord over all creation, to rule and reign over all things for the good of His church.

(d) This is God the Father's plan to save His people, by exalting His Son.

(e) And so His hand is in Paul's commission as well.

c. All this adds up to authority.

(i) Not only did God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ anoint the apostle Paul with the Holy Spirit and clothe him with authority to preach the Gospel.

(ii) He also gave His Word through him, directions to the church for all ages, which, when combined with the books of the OT, the Gospels, Acts, and the rest of the letters, combine to form a complete rule of faith and practice for the church for as long as she exists on earth: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

(iii) *No other writings have this authority*.

(iv) When Paul addresses the Judaizer's error in this letter – of adding human works to the merits of Jesus Christ – he's not just giving his opinion, he's giving us God's truth.

(v) This is Paul's greeting: he also includes the brethren who are with him in it, but he says what he says regarding himself, so that we will listen.

d. This is Paul's introduction of himself to the Galatians. This evening, we'll consider a summary of what Paul is going to say in his whole letter in verses 3-5, namely that God has done everything to save us in Christ, and so He deserves all the glory; we may not thank ourselves or any other man.

e. But for now I would exhort you to listen to what Paul has to say: this is the Word of God. If you are going to be saved you must listen to it, turn from your sins daily and trust in Jesus.

f. May God give you the grace to do so. Amen.