



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### September 17, 2023

### An answer to a letter

Recap of sermon from September 17, 2023

Scripture: Galatians 1:6-16

A few months ago I received a letter from someone who was very concerned that our church decided to have a Reconciling Sunday and celebrate the affirmation and inclusion of LGBTQ people. Most mail like this I discard, but this one was unique in two ways. It was coherent, and even though it was full of false information, it seemed to come from a place of genuine concern. Secondly, it was signed and addressed.

It wasn't from a member of our church. It wasn't from a concerned neighbor in Rock Island or the Quad Cities. It was from a self-described "former life-long Methodist" from a town 150 miles away. Why would our worship – which to everyone in attendance was quite a memorable, positive experience—bother them so much? I wondered who would take the time to write a letter to a church they have no direct connection to. This week, I realized it: Paul. Paul is someone who would write a letter to a group of people he barely knew.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is unique in a lot of ways. For one, it's not aimed at a church, but a group of churches. It is addressed to a region, not a specific group of people with whom Paul had a strong relationship. It is also one of the most pointed letters of Paul. Almost all of Paul's genuine letters begin with words of encouragement. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 is typical of Paul's greetings: *"We always thank God for all of you when we mention you constantly in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> This is because we remember your work that comes from faith, your effort that comes from love, "*

Paul's letter to the Galatians however, begins much like the letter I received. Galatians 1:6 *"I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ to follow another gospel."* My letter from a concerned former Methodist: *"I felt that your church [does] not align with what Jesus would want us to focus on during a worship service."*

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a defense against those who say that his gospel is wrong. We get to hear one side of an argument between two factions of this new movement of Jesus. Paul and his opponents agree that Jesus Christ opened up the promises of God to Abraham to the world. They believed that Jesus, as the Messiah, ushered in a new era and

allowed the world to enjoy the promise of God. They disagreed however, on how this would take place.

The opponents of Paul believed that the way for the world to enter the Kingdom of God was to follow the Law more closely.

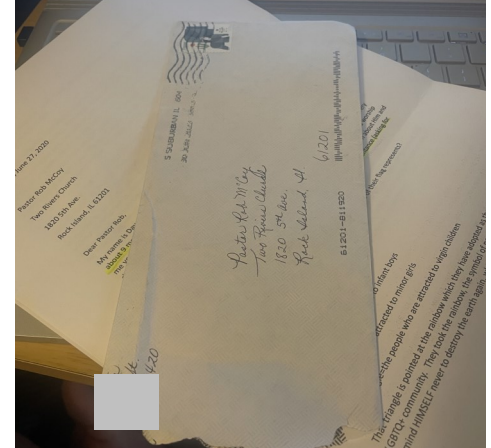
They believed that the promise of Abraham to bless the world would happen when all embraced the Law of God. Paul however, argued that the invitation to the world was opened by the love, ministry, obedience, faith, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He believed that the Grace of Christ, not the Law, was the path to redemption. Paul defends his gospel as the true "Good News" to the world, especially to the Gentiles.

Paul warned of embracing a false gospel that put undo burden upon believers. His good news was about Jesus, who freed us from bondage to the Law.

This got me thinking about my letter. The writer and I probably agree that God opened up salvation to the world through Christ. In her letter however, she talks of the wrath of God and warns against eternal punishment. My gospel however, is not about fear. My gospel is not about avoiding a reckoning, it is about embracing love.

My gospel is one that embraces freedom in Christ. It is not an "anything goes" freedom (Paul addresses this kind of cheap grace). It is the good news that we are loved for who we are, and welcomed into the Kingdom by how Christ loves, not by the gender of who we love.

Check out my blog at [Fatpastor.me](http://Fatpastor.me), a more complete response to this letter will be there shortly.



**Unfortunately, I tore off the return address, so I can't respond directly to this letter I received in late June. I might try to look up the mailing address of the person who sent it.**

**Next Week: Conflict with Paul**  
**Galatians 2:11-16**