

Part 1: Know Your Sources

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When I was in school for journalism there was one phrase we heard on repeat: “Know your sources.”

As an aspiring sports journalist, I remember writing a position paper criticizing the way sports media handled their sources. Every day, writers covering athletics would post articles describing, “sources inside the building,” they’d hear “sources say” so-and-so asked for a release. Most of these sources were singular sources, they weren’t fact checked, they weren’t vetted and yet that source was published as gospel truth.

I made the case that in no other area of news was that acceptable. If someone was writing about a major scandal at a local hospital—they had to know their source. They either had to reveal their source, or they needed to do the leg work of making sure their source was true, accurate, and honest. If someone wrote about a rigged election, those sources would have had to be cross-checked, fact-checked and investigated on their own as much as humanly possible.

But despite my undergraduate thesis at the University of Montana, in a 400-level reporting class, the world hasn’t changed. Why? To be honest, it’s because a washed-up NFL player demanding a release from his team just isn’t as important as a health care scandal or a political coverup. If the source wasn’t right—no one suffered.

But the more significant the news was—the more important it was to know your source.

If someone came to you, and they told you that unless you move out of Missoula your whole family would be destroyed—you’d want to know your source. You’d want to know that it came to you on good authority.

In a world where AI can write articles and provide realistic photos of fake events that never took place--now more than ever the average consumer needs to know their source.

Today we are beginning a new study in the book of Galatians and the title of our sermon today is just that: “Know your source.”

We are pausing our sermon series in the book of Genesis because the book of Galatians is, in part, Paul’s commentary on the book of Genesis. In a book that spans only 6 chapters, Paul interacts with Genesis nearly 15x. If Genesis is the source material for the story of salvation—then Paul’s letter to Galatians is written to help us know the source of our own salvation. He’s helping the early church and us understand what is to come in the book of Genesis.

But perhaps more pressing in our moment today—Paul is helping us understand the nature of truth. Specifically, the nature of gospel truth. If the gospel is the good news of what Jesus did to save sinners and restore us to God—then the gospel is not arbitrary gossip in the locker room.

The gospel is a matter of life and death. And Paul is writing to a people who have become unsettled because they wonder if the gospel they heard from Paul is true at all. The Galatians are worried that Paul was an unreliable source who failed to understand the way God would save his people.

Paul's opening leans into this issue right away and frames our big idea this morning: **The true gospel comes to us on good authority.** How can we be sure about Paul's gospel? We'll see this in three ways: **Authorized Authority, Authorized Community,** and lastly **Authorized Confidence.**

This Friday marks the 508th anniversary of Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. While others had laid the wire, Luther lit the fuse of what would go on to be called the Protestant Reformation. Luther contended that the faith of the Catholic Church was no longer the faith of the true Bible. He claimed they lost the truth, and had begun to preach something that used biblical language—but couldn't be further from biblical truth.

What gave Luther his determination to take such stands, and what ought to continue to fire the furnaces of Christians today was this little book of Galatians. Luther's wife was named Catherine, but Luther drew so much life from, and dwelt so often with this book that he called it, "his little Catherine." Luther completed a commentary on the book of Galatians in 1535, and said this in the preface: "I am ashamed that such a barren and simple commentary should be published on such a worthy [book]." The barren and simple commentary Luther wrote on this five-page book was 950 pages long.

Luther was passionate about this letter because Paul was passionate in this letter. We pick up that passion in the very first verse, **Galatians 1:1**, "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—"

Here we see our first point this morning: The gospel comes with **Authorized Authority.**

At first reading, this might seem to you an odd opening of a letter. But if we are honest, don't we wish this is how people communicated to us in our world of endless text messages and emails. Don't you know the horror that comes when a number you don't know texts you something, and the thing they are texting you about seems like something and someone one you should know?

Paul makes it clear who he is; this is no piece of junk mail. Paul opens identifying who he is, and what he is, *an apostle*.

I often tell preachers that their introduction is the place where you need to convince your audience that they need to pay attention to the scripture you're preaching from. But what Paul just did was something I would never tell anyone to do. In fact, if anyone takes up this pulpit and says what Paul says, I would encourage you to not listen to him.

Paul didn't say, "Listen to God's word here." Instead, he said, "Listen to me." Why? Because he's an apostle. He's saying that he writes to them not with borrowed authority like I do when I preach, but with direct apostolic authority from Jesus himself.

While the term apostle is sometimes used in the Bible in a general sense (it means messenger), it typically refers to the unique office and role of "Apostle." The Bible tells us how Jesus chose twelve men over the course of his earthly ministry to be his "Apostles." In Mark 3 we learn that Jesus picked these

men for three distinct privileges: to be with him as his closest students, to preach his gospel, and to be entrusted to act and speak as direct extensions of Jesus' authority.

These men were not Jesus. But they were with Jesus, taught by Jesus, commissioned by Jesus, and empowered by Jesus. But there's one big problem. Paul's not one of those twelve. When Judas' spot is filled after his death—it's not filled with Paul but with Matthias.

So, how is Paul an Apostle? That's the very issue the Galatian Christians are wondering. Because Paul came to their area, and he preached to them a gospel about faith in Jesus Christ. He said he was an apostle, and they believed him.

But, since that time, other people have come to them from Jerusalem and they are preaching a different gospel. When the Galatians said, "That's not what Paul said," these teachers responded, "Was Paul one of the twelve apostles? No. Did Paul see Jesus? No. Was Paul authorized with the 12 to teach on his behalf? No. Well then why would you listen to him?"

Paul addresses the elephant in the room right out of the gate, **Galatians 1:1**, "an apostle--not from men nor through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

Paul knows his source. Paul didn't ask to be an Apostle. Jesus didn't call Paul as an Apostle during his earthly ministry. Paul wasn't even called Paul during Jesus's earthly ministry. He was called Saul and he went around murdering Christians and persecuting the church of Jesus after Jesus' death.

But one day, Saul was on his way to capture Christians in Damascus and the resurrected Jesus appeared to him, saved him, and called him to be an Apostle. Jesus called Paul out of his sin and into ministry. Jesus appeared to a believer named Ananias and told him that Saul was coming to his house. Ananias, an intellectual, suggested against such a thing but this is what Jesus told him: **Acts 9:15-16**, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Jesus appointed the 12 Apostles during his earthly ministry to inaugurate the fulfillment of his covenant to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. But Jesus' goal was not just the salvation of Israel, but of all the nations and for that God called Paul as an apostle to the Gentile world.

Though Paul calls himself one "untimely chosen," his commission to the apostolic office was rooted in the truth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus rose, he called Paul. And because Jesus did rise, and Jesus did call Paul—Paul's words to the church in Galatia are words of authority. Paul is not God, but Paul has been authorized to speak with the full authority of Jesus because that's what Apostles did.

Does this truth encourage you? We can be so caught up in a subjective experience wondering if we have heard God's true words to us. But notice how Paul's apostolic authority isn't tied to his presence—it's here in his words. He's writing his words, words loaded with God's very authority, and he knows that the process of writing is able to carry that weight and that truth, but the power of the Holy Spirit to his readers.

God's word is our authority. The whole Bible is written by men who God has given direct authority, permission, and inspiration to. Which means when Paul writes this to us—we should listen. For some of

us, the message of the gospel and the authority of the Bible might seem like a restriction—but I want to contend it is a great source of freedom.

If you've ever played in sports tournaments, you know how confusing it can be when there are whistles everywhere. If you stop play every time a whistle is blown, you'll never actually be able to play. So too, the Christian needs to know which whistle governs us in all of life. We need to know God's word in a world which tries to convince us of its own word. Paul's assuming that there are others who are trying to convince you to play by another whistle—but this is the one that matters.

Paul's words come with the weight of God's words, and God's truth is weighty in your life as well. But lest these people think Paul is off on his own doing his own thing, he adds this: **Galatians 1:2**, "and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:"

Here's our second point this morning. The gospel is not only our source for authority—but it's the source of **Authorized Community**.

Paul is writing—but he wants the Galatians to know that he's not writing alone. Paul writes not just what is true for him—but his truth is validated by the believers that are there with Paul.

Think about why that might matter to the Galatians. They did hear Paul preach to them—but they were also aware that at one point Paul was a murderer of Christians. Maybe, Paul was still working against the church? Maybe, Paul intentionally fed us a false gospel to keep us from turning to God?

But Paul here says, "No! I'm writing with brothers! I'm writing with a church community behind me that knows the genuineness of my faith and who stands in the same faith with me."

He's not only affirming the credibility of his own conversion—but he's calling them to the confidence that comes with the affirmation of other believers.

I love that tension. The gospel, and only the gospel takes a persecutor of the church and makes him into an Apostle in the church. And the gospel, and only the gospel takes an Apostle and makes him a brother with everyone else in the church. The gospel believed creates a believing community.

In fact, that's exactly who Paul is writing to: "the churches in Galatia." Galatia is a broad region that stretches across what is now modern-day Turkey. He's not just writing to the church of Galatia, which might include every Christian in the whole area regardless of if they've even met each other. He's writing to the churches—the many local bodies of believers who gather together to hear the word, pray the word, sing the word and show the word.

Paul's own ministry in Galatia was rooted in the importance of the local church for the endurance of the Christians. In Acts 13 Paul visited the major cities in Galatia: Antioch Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. In each of those cities Paul found people who believed the gospel—but Paul was forced out of each area by violence and threats from unbelieving townspeople!

And when Paul finished his tour—he didn't run from these hostile cities. He revisited them. He walked back up the gauntlet of persecution. Why? Look at what Luke tells us in **Acts 14:23**, "When they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

Paul and Barnabas knew that if these Christians were Christians, and if those Christians were going to endure as Christians, then the Lord would entrust them to the care and community of local churches for their own wellbeing and for the ongoing worship of the Lord.

The churches Paul planted were not communities of those who shared the same hobbies, or who like the same preacher. They were churches of people who believed in the gospel Paul preached. When Jesus saves a Christian he places them into the incubator of the local church which is where they grow and serve in a hostile world.

While authority and salvation belong to the one Lord and one gospel—God has entrusted local churches, consisting of baptized believers, with the responsibility of defending and clarifying the gospel. Paul and those who are with him are writing to brothers and sisters in another church and reminding them of the truthfulness of the gospel they've received.

Paul says this to Timothy in **1 Timothy 3:15**, "I have written to you about how you ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and the buttress of the truth."

While the church doesn't create the gospel--the church is the pillar and buttress which defends the gospel and guards the believers from anything which would rob them of their certainty.

I want to give three quick points of application here. One, while the Christian is saved by faith alone no Christian is called to live alone in faith. Paul shows us that the resurrection of Jesus creates a new-life community into which all believers are joined: the church. Not even Paul as an Apostle found himself outside of the church—he wrote with, for, from, and to them.

Second, while the Bible alone is the authority, the historic witness of the church is a gracious guardrail that we should not ignore. Paul didn't just say: "I'm writing as an apostle," though that would have been sufficient. He says, "I'm writing as an apostle, and I'm writing with the support of the broader brothers and sisters who share the same faith."

This is why we recite the apostle's creed here. It reminds us that we don't get to decide what the gospel is in 2025. We stand in the line of what faithful churches have professed throughout the ages. Christians, genuinely converted Christians, cannot lose the gospel. But churches can. Which is why we want to be sure our church stands in the genuine gospel--a community not of convenience but of conviction, not of preference but of profession, not of worldly belonging but by biblical belief.

And third, in our social media crazed day--be careful what voices you listen to online. Know your sources. Paul was known, these others weren't. When John Owen pastored in the 1600's, even then traveling preachers with false gospels would come in. He wrote to his church warning, "Not to receive any without testimony from some of the brothers of known integrity in the churches. Such is the misery of our days, that men will run to hear those not knowing where they come from not what kind of men they are."

How much easier is such potential deceit today. Know your sources. If you want to learn something--start here. If you want a book recommendation--check out our bookstore. If you're doom scrolling for sermons--stop. Be warned of the danger of listening, reading or following someone who might not be credible.

Why? Because it's your own confidence on the line. This is our last point this morning: **Authoritative Confidence.**

Paul writes to these churches—because in listening to these other sources—they have become troubled, confused, and burdened. The gospel was no sports story. The gospel was life and death and now they didn't know if they had it. But Paul writes this so that they might have grace and peace.

That's what our world wants isn't it? Grace and peace. Grace is getting something you didn't deserve. Peace is the reward that comes from it. We want acceptance knowing that we've got issues. We want security knowing this world is often dangerous. We want a sense of stability and belonging that cannot be shaken.

But where can one find such things?

Look at where Paul directs us to find such mercies as a church: **Galatians 1:3**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

There it is. Paul wrote to a broad group of people, smattered across a broad region, and he tells them what he wants them to have and where they might find it: Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's a bold statement. You've seen products that seem too good to be true--and you're skeptical. How could this one kitchen appliance replace all my appliances. How could this one girl seem to be everything I've ever wanted? How can something this cheap save me this much money?

We're skeptical--because we are realists. I remember pursuing an area of research in seminary. I told one of my professors what I was doing, and he suggested I reach out to one of his colleagues since who himself had great knowledge in this field. So, I wrote the colleague. I explained in the email what I was doing, and why I was referred to him. Here's his reply, in full, "Tyler, I have no idea why you were pointed in my direction. Sorry I have nothing to suggest."

Misplaced confidence makes you look and feel silly. But Paul's confidence is rooted in good authority. He knows the source. What is the source of a Christian's grace and peace? **Galatians 1:4-5**, "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Paul's appeal to grace and peace in a present age of conflict, confusion, and competing truths is rooted not in temporary, fickle, or time sensitive things. It is rooted in the eternal God of all glory to whom is glory forever and ever, amen.

That's some confidence. That's something that delivers us from our present troubles, that's something that is of deep encouragement when we are presently pressed, that's something that soothes our souls when everything seems disorienting.

And how does one receive such profound confidence from such a genuine and authoritative source? Because that God sent his son who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present age and to win us back into the glory of God himself.

Why should you have confidence in what Paul is saying? Because it is Jesus, and it is Jesus alone who gave himself for your sins. That's the gospel. Jesus came and died because you have sin. There is a strong movement that has existed for a long time--but it is a movement that the Christian church of various backgrounds has always resisted. That movement is to downplay God's righteous wrath against our sin.

But pay attention to what Paul just said. If Jesus did not come to give himself for your sins--then he did come to do anything. Why did Jesus come? To give himself for your sins.

If Jesus came to make your life better--no grace, no peace. If Jesus came to give you a better community--no grace, no peace. If Jesus came to engage your mind with a moral worldview and philosophical guideposts--no grace, no peace.

But if Jesus came to give himself up for your sins--then you have grace and peace. You have it with confidence. You have it on good authority. Whose authority? The very Father who willed it.

And that Father, who has willed his Son, to work such a powerful sacrifice for your sins--delivers us from our present age. That word will show up often in the book of Galatians, "deliver." It's a word these Jewish teachers, and these early Christians would know well because it's the very Greek word uses in their translation of the Old Testament to describe the Exodus event.

When God saved Israel by the blood of the lamb--he delivered them out of slavery. Grace and peace to you--with confidence. Why? Because you are no longer a slave. You are free.

And when Jesus gave himself for our sins--he delivers us out of slavery. Grace and peace to you--with confidence. Why? Because you are no longer a slave. You are free.

You are no longer under sin's authority--though you might at times lend authority to it. But sin is no longer your master. Sin is no longer your authority. To be saved by Jesus Christ is to have it on good authority that you have a new authority--and it changes everything.

The true gospel comes to us on good authority. And here's what that does for us—it drives us to God's word for clarity and for confidence. Lots of people are talking—but God has spoken. This is trustworthy, and in a world of media—it's more necessary than it's ever been. This true gospel drives us into God's community. It's here where we don't read scripture alone, but we seek to understand it, apply it, and work it deeply into the lives of others both as a weapon against false doctrine, but also as a balm to soothe wounded sinners. The true gospel drives us with good authority into a clarity of a life that cannot be wasted. God's glory is forever and ever. And while we live in a present evil age—the God who we worship has glory forever and ever. So, we do not lose heart, we do not give up, we do not buy into the flashy life of a world which will one day pass. But instead, we give our all, and we trust our all, to him who gave his all for us. To him be glory forever and ever, Amen.