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## Chapter 1 – God's Message Sent by God

### God's Goodness Alone (vs. 6-9)

**Galatians 1:6-9:** "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

What a marvelous book this is in the sense that it reveals what a marvelous gospel we have. It's not of man. Man could not have invented this. It couldn't have been something that man did. One of the things that's going to be the emphasis of this book is that none of this is of man. That's what makes the word of God so wonderful. When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he goes, "The things I have said you received not as the words of man, but what it really was; the words of God." Think about it. We actually have the words of God. Why would I want to read anything else really? I've oftentimes thought about that. Why would I even want to read commentaries on it? Why don't I just read the source? God begins to reveal to us some wonderful things.

Paul is going to emphasize over and over again none of this is of man. If you look in the very beginning of it in Galatians 1:1,

"Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man) ..."

So, over and over again, what he's going to be emphasizing is "This is God's message; this isn't man's" and "I'm God's messenger; I'm not man's." That's something that I think every pastor has to ultimately come to an understanding of. We're here to represent God alone. There are going to be times that people get offended. I've oftentimes reflected upon Matthew 15, and in particular verse 12. The disciples come up to Jesus, and they go, "Ok, did You understand that You just offended the pharisees?" and Jesus goes, "Leave them alone. They're going to be destroyed" and you're going, "So, You really don't care about all these people that have all these degrees and pedigrees and these dignitaries?" and Jesus goes, "Nope." The thought is "Wow, you might say something that offends somebody." Oh well. We're here to proclaim

what God tells us to and Paul is wanting to make that crystal clear that this is the word of God. We're not trying to sugar coat; we're not trying to make it to where it's acceptable to you. Now, we should say it in a way that it is honorable. There's no doubt about that. Nevertheless, we should never compromise what the word says.

As we look at this marvelous book, he begins to convey that. Now, he's going to be repeating over and over again and emphasizing this divine gospel. The word "gospel" is really a compound word in the Greek. So, you've all heard this before, but let me go through the explanation again. As we look at the prefix of the word, he uses the word "eu" in the Greek which means "good;" more specifically, the word "well." It has a sense of conveying prosperity and well-being. More specifically, if I were to use this particular word, I might use it in the phrase of "You must be well-off." In some cases, somebody would think of that money wise or monetarily, but Scripture is dealing with that you're well-off and fully blessed from God. So, the word starts off with "eu;" the last part, "angelizō" is where we get the word "angel" or ultimately, it's the word "message" or "messenger." "Angel" means a messenger of God. So, he uses the word "angelizō," and that's where we get the word "angel." The point is that we have a message that is full of the goodness of God. Clearly, a messenger of God has given it to us, and that message is that which gives you a sense of well-being. It will give you prosperity; it will make you well-off in Christ. It's the greatest thing that you can ever have. So, it's good news, and that's where we get the words "good news" when we're talking about the gospel because it's basically the same thing. If you were to take "euangelizō" and transliterate it into the English, it's the word "evangelism." It is the "good news" of God. So, what is the good news of God? Well, it's clear that it's not a complicated thing. It is the love of God, and we've oftentimes used that wonderful verse in John 3:16, "That God so loved the world." Someone that was a psychologist said that the greatest thought that could occupy the human mind is that "The God of the universe loves me." Can you think of anything greater than that? So, good news: He loves you. God so loved you that He gave His Son to die for us.

I was talking to somebody not too long ago, and they said, "I just don't feel like I'm worth anything." I said, "Well, you're only worth what somebody will pay for you." Then I said, "Scripture says that you are not paid with silver and gold, but you were paid by the blood of Jesus Christ." And I said, "You must be immeasurably valuable in that economy." You begin to realize that we are tremendously loved. Good news: we're no longer of no value; we are greatly valued by God. So, you can't say, "I don't mean anything." You were purchased by His blood.

So, the marvelous, good news is this wonderful love of God. It is the one thing that throws man off track and when you think about religion, it sends the other message. In fact, the deception of that which twists our gospel and one of the things that Paul is clearly concerned about is that somebody is going to twist this message.

If you'll drop on down with me in Galatians 1:6, he's amazed that they're already being turned from Christ. It is an amazing thing when you hear the wonderful message of God and how He loved you so much that He gave His life for you; that He literally is going to forgive you of all your sins; to remember them no more; to remove them as far as the east is from the west. Talk about good news. All your guilt is gone. Your chains fell off; your heart was free. How wonderful this is.

(Galatians 1:6) "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you..."

The very fact that God would call us. He uses a particular word in the Greek, "*kaleō*," which seems to convey that He literally calls you by name. In other words, He knew who you were. I like the way that it's put in 2 Timothy, "The Lord knows those who are His," or how about in John 10, "My sheep hear My voice and they come." As it's oftentimes referred to, a shepherd literally calls his sheep by their name; as they hear their name, they begin to come. So, what a wonderful passage that He begins to convey to us that He loved us so much that He knew who we were; He called us directly by name.

It says in Galatians 1:6, it was by His grace or by His lovingkindness that He did this. The best way to describe the word "grace" is "merciful lovingkindness." You didn't deserve it, but God loved you; not only loved you, but He gave you everything. Scripture actually says that we're joint heirs. Think about that, joint heirs with Christ. What does Christ own? Everything. So, what an amazing thing, and I'm deserving of nothing. So, it's clearly His mercy. Why would somebody leave that place of God's love and God's interest in us?

The way he ends this, "...for a different gospel." Now, when he uses the word "different" here within the text, "*eteros*," it is making reference to not only the fact that it's not like the gospel, but it's referring to it being diabolically opposed to the gospel. In other words, different in the sense of against the gospel. The context of this is that there was an influx of the Jewish legalism. In particular, probably the Pharisees coming in with their laws, and saying, "You've got to jump through these hoops in order to be accepted by God." I remember even in times past that the Catholic church had what was called "selling of indulgences." It means that in order for your sins to be forgiven, you had to dish out some money. Even now, there's this thought, "I've got to go through and say so many things in order for God to forgive me," but the wonderful thing is that our sins have been forgiven through Jesus Christ. Why would I then subject myself to the rules, obligations and the regiment of man? Why would I be pressured to do that?

So, it goes on and says,

(Galatians 1:7) "which is really not another..."

That is to say, there's actually not another "good news." I would say, if you're following something that's diabolically opposed to this gospel, it's not gospel; it's not good news because there is nothing like our good news.

"which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you..."

Agitating you or making you anxious.

"... and want to distort the gospel of Christ."

How do you distort good news? How wonderful it is that we have this good news. Yet, it's being distorted. Can you imagine that?

It goes on and says this,

(Galatians 1:8) "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"

He's going to say this again in case you missed it.

(Galatians 1:9) "As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

That's pretty clear.

Now, he injects the whole issue of angels in here because as Paul writes in Colossians, man has a tendency to worship angels. So, he's saying, "Even if an angel..." You say, "Well, angels are like angels..." Well, let's see, Satan was an angel. (Ezekiel 28) We know that angels fell. (Revelation 12) So, if in fact there's a different gospel, it's not God's message. So, they're bringing a message, but it's not God's. The emphasis is "I don't care who it is. I don't care what degree they have. I don't care how important they are."

In fact, one of the things that he states in Galatians 2:6 is "But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me..."

In other words, reputation is a non-issue because the gospel is the power of God. It cannot be marred or distorted. The church needs to uphold it. What a wonderful message we have. Clearly, our message is about all glory given to Christ; not to us.

That's why you have verse 5 in the text, "to whom be the glory forevermore..."

Who is that? Jesus Christ; who God the Father has given us as sacrifice. All glory to Him.

I oftentimes think of that passage in Revelation 5:9. The setting is that it's a picture in heaven and for lack of a better term, you have the title deed of the universe at stake. The question is "Who is worthy to take hold of this?" John begins to see this unraveling in the heavens, and he

begins to weep because nobody is worthy. Then, a lamb comes out as if slain. What an amazing picture. The best way I can describe it would be a lamb, small, diminutive; you have a lamb walking up with its throat slashed, and he starts heading towards the throne and grabs the title deed. So, a song breaks out in heaven, and the song is this,

(Revelation 5:9) “... ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

(Revelation 5:10) You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God’...”

(Revelation 5:12) “... ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.’”

Our message is “Not to us, O Lord.” If you hear a different gospel or message from any church, I don’t care what church it is, that is proclaiming “It is the goodness of man;” that’s not good news. I’m going to tell you why it’s not good news, it’s because you can’t be good enough, and you’ll never get there. So, you better hope it’s not the goodness of man. It’s the goodness of God, and we proclaim that message. God preserves this and it is a message sent by God regardless of what man does.

I like in Acts 4 in which you begin to realize just how sovereign God is in this. The thought is that Jesus was a victim of Pilate, Herod, and all those. I like the wonderful message that’s given in Acts 4:24 as the disciples had been thrown in jail and now are released. How did they get released? Obviously, God must be more powerful than man.

(Acts 4:24) “And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, ‘O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.’”

In other words, “You’re the One in control.”

(Acts 4:25) “‘who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?’”

“What? You’re trying to kill God? Who's thinking?”

(Acts 4:26) “‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’”

(Acts 4:27) ‘For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

(Acts 4:28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

In other words, “They didn’t have anything to do with this. This is Your gospel; You’ve orchestrated this from day one.”

Jesus puts it this way in John 10:18, “I laid down My life; I have the power to take it up.” It’s all Him. It’s a magnificent message. The fact there is a force that wants to distort the truth is obvious. We see it distorted all the time. The thought is that the worse lie we would have to deal with is how man denies the legitimacy of God’s existence. I’ve oftentimes thought about that because there are some men that will deny the existence of God. Scripture has a pretty easy answer for that one. The way that Scripture deals with it goes, “Only a moron would do that.” The way that the psalmist says it is, “The foolish says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” The Hebrew word that’s used is just somebody that’s senseless and has no perception. You go out and see the stars, and you go, “I think I had something to do with that.” Obviously, that’s not a really bright person.

When you look in Romans 1:22, we know God exists and we see the signs externally, as well as internally. We have a sense of right and wrong; the law written in our hearts, a conscience as Romans 2 says. Even when we know these things, it says, “Professing to be wise, they became fools.” Just for your information, the word that is used there is “*mōrainō*” where we get the word “moron.” So, I didn’t just say that off the cuff. It is the denying of those things, and that particular word is described in such a way that it literally is talking about somebody that thinks in an absurd way; they’re fundamentally twisted. The reason why they’re twisted is they have no reverence for God. Thus, there’s no manifestation of thinking skills; which there’s obvious things that are given. The thought is that “We will just get people to deny the existence of God.” Once again, that’s not really a legitimate argument, but the greatest argument that goes against our gospel; attacks the very foundation of the gospel is that “God is not good.”

What’s interesting to me, when you go into Genesis 3, you have Satan and he’s the most wily. He’s the one that knows how to do these things. He’s what is called the “twisted serpent.” So, what is he twisting? How does he do this? What he says is, “Ok, I know God exists” because he starts off with, “Has God said...” So, he comes in with the pre-knowledge of God’s existence. Satan goes, “We’re not going to question that. A moron would do that.” Even Satan is smarter than that, but he goes, “What we’re going to tell them is ‘He doesn’t love you.’” So, in the garden, he goes something like this, “Has God really said that? Let me tell you what I think He’s doing. He’s trying to keep good from you. He’s trying to withhold because He knows in the day that you eat this...Oh, He’s holding you back.” You can hear the underlying message, “He’s not good” and man goes, “Maybe He is holding something back.” The very fact that man would even consider that, and Satan is giving you a picture that God is deceptive and He’s desiring to deprive you of good. What a horrible picture that is of God. That’s a different gospel; that’s not

who He is. Unfortunately, religion has even piggy-backed on this where you oftentimes walk away feeling, "God is really angry, and He's mean, hostile and hateful." And that's not true. John will say in 1 John, "God is love." Now, how could all those other things be true if that's who He is? So, that's where the attack is going to come.

Now, within the setting of this writing, you begin to realize that he's writing to people that have already started to turn. In fact, we mentioned this last week, but if you go to Galatians 3:1,

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you..."

Like you're under a spell. He's conveying that we're drawn away from the foundational message of God's goodness somehow. "God is good." We'll even say it to ourselves, "I know God is good," but the very next minute, we'll go, "Why did He do that?" I sometimes find myself saying after I wash my car, "Oh yeah, it's going to rain." Until you stop and think, "Who's in charge of the rain? If God caused it to rain, it was for good in my life." So, you begin to see just how fast you leave this state of thinking.

There's an interesting psalm, Psalm 86, in which the psalmist banks on the goodness of the Lord. It is this message that the whole gospel is about. He writes about the fact that he's afflicted and he's going through difficulties.

He cries out to God in verse 2, "Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man."

Now, he's not saying that he's righteous and he's not saying that he does things good all the time. "Godly man" is making reference to the fact that he's god-fearing. In other words, "I fear God."

"... O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You."

For God so loved the world that He gave...whosoever believes..." That's the same word "trust." If you'll put all of your trust in Him. So, why would you trust in Him? Because He's good.

I've found that if I was in trouble, I'd probably run to my mom when I was a kid; if I wasn't in trouble, I'd probably go with my dad. There are just certain people you know that you can run to and that they're not going to clobber you.

Then he goes on and says this in verse 5, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive..."

Isn't that great?

"... And abundant in lovingkindness..."

Religion seems to make righteousness a competitive thing. Have you noticed that? Religion seems to create a hostile environment in the sense that they're going to tell you that you must pay for your sin; in order for you to be accepted by God, you need to work for His affection and

hope for the best, but that's not true according to this text. God is good and ready to forgive. He is abundant in lovingkindness. Isn't that what it says? Yeah.

It says in verse 11, "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name."

(Psalm 86:12) I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever."

Why?

(Psalm 86:13) "For Your lovingkindness toward me is great..."

If you drop on down to verse 15, "But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth."

(Psalm 86:16) Turn to me, and be gracious..."

What is he banking on? All the way through, you begin to realize that he's banking on God's goodness and graciousness.

Revelation 2:9 talks about the "synagogue of Satan" which refers to the Jewish influx that was really beginning to torment the small church of Smyrna in that particular area. He will use the same term again with the church of Philadelphia as they are shutting them out and saying, "You can't come close to God because this is the holy place, and you guys are just like foreigners." What does he call that church "The synagogue of Satan?" That's pretty interesting because not only is it a hostile religion, but it's also shutting people out from the kingdom and it's distorting that God is love. It's proclaiming that He doesn't love you; that His love is based on some kind of works and esoteric hierarchy. "If you can be like up here, you can be wonderful too, but you'll never make it because we're already there." That's why Jesus was so hard on the Pharisees in Matthew. When you come into Matthew 23, he talks about the pharisees, and they love this chair of Moses and how they love to put heavy burdens on people, but they're unwilling to lift one finger to help.

"I come to You, and I know that You're full of lovingkindness." "If you'll just believe that God so loved you." That's what the message of the gospel is.

When you go to 2 Thessalonians 1:8, it says that if people perish, they'll perish for one reason. You want to know why they perish? It's because they do not obey the gospel. That's literally how it's worded, "They do not obey the gospel." What does the gospel say? "Believe." "Believe" what? "Believe the good news." What's the "good news?" "God loves you." God is a loving God.



As it goes into 2 Thessalonians 2:10, it reads, "If you receive the love of the truth, you will be saved." The truth is that God loves you. Unfortunately, religion is all about hypocrisy and usury. What they use as weapons are position, power and guilt and all these kinds of things; recognition, reputation. They begin to use these things as their weapons to subvert the gospel. There is a force that is behind this, and that force started in the garden. It said, "God is not good." To me, the big question is not necessarily even that there is a force that goes against the gospel; it's "Why would I acquiesce? Why would I go along with somebody that would be telling me that God is not good. Why would that thought even pop into my head?"

I'm going to show you two reasons. We're not going to have time to show you any more beyond that, but if you look with me in Psalm 73. It's a familiar Psalm, we've gone to it a number of times. You realize that in this particular text, one of the things that's being revealed is how we have a tendency to look around at what everybody else is doing and what they have. You'll find very few people that will say something like, "You know, I'm really envious of the people in Switzerland" but if somebody gets a new car or something in their neighborhood, "I'm really envious of that." Why? Because it's right in front of you or around you. So, there are things around us that we're drawn to, and we begin to look at. I'd like to say that we're not influenced or intimidated by the things that people are doing around us, but it's just not true. Peer pressure is a big thing. We really care about how we look, and because of that, we allow these feelings to come in. This Psalm starts off in a very interesting way,

(Psalm 73:1) "Surely God is good..."

Now, from this point on, he'll talk about how it seems like He isn't. The whole point is he'll go onto say, "My feet came close to slipping. I know what the truth is, but I'm not feeling is because..." I think one of the things that I'm wanting to show you is just what makes us vulnerable to the lie that says, "He's not good." It's that we begin to love the wrong things. It starts with the intimidation and the influence of people around us. That's the number one issue that Paul's going to be dealing with in Galatians. He's talking about, "This didn't come from man, and we don't care about reputation, right?" He keeps emphasizing this. "We're not listening to them anymore, right? We're free in Christ, right?"

He says in verse 3, "For I was envious of the arrogant  
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

"They have it pretty good. They don't seem to have any pain or suffering." Of course, once again, we only see it from the perspective of where we're from, but we come up with this wonderful conclusion which is "obviously a fact because it's on the internet."

(Psalm 73:4) "For there are no pains in their death,  
And their body is fat."

(Psalm 73:5) They are not in trouble as other men,  
Nor are they plagued like mankind.

(Psalm 73:6) Therefore pride is their necklace;  
The garment of violence covers them.”

They literally seem to get away with murder; their imaginations run riot.

As you go through the passage, they’re mean to people; they speak oppressively. (Psalm 73:8)  
“Yet, I did the right thing and what good did it do?” “I have this miserable life. I have a lot less money than they have.”

The way he puts it in verse 13 is “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure...”

Now, we’ve come a long way from “Surely, God is good...” to now, “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure...” He’s conveying that all these things begin to allure him. This is what the world does; it begins to allure us by the influence of man, and we begin to see this pseudo prosperity and people in these positions; they have dignified names, and they have all these possessions. Our thought is that “I’m a nobody.” Once again, we’ve defined ourselves based on possessions rather than character or relationship.

He goes on in this particular Psalm and he says, “Then, I came into the body of believers...” (Psalm 73:17) We’ll put it that way. “...into God’s sanctuary.” Then, he says, “I realized I was off in my thinking.”

That’s one of the reasons why you come to church, to get your head back on straight. The world is telling you all this garbage, and you’re going, “Man, I’m the loser” and God goes, “No, no. You’re the winner. They’re upside down.”

He comes to this ultimate conclusion, if you look in verse 25, “You know what, I have You. What else matters?”

“Whom have I in heaven but You?  
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

(Psalm 73:26) My flesh and my heart may fail,  
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

What’s my good?

(Psalm 73:28) “... the nearness of God is my good...”

“Surely, God is good.”

Really, through the absence of many things in our life we begin to put our trust in Him, and we're drawn near to Him. Through difficulties, we're drawn near to Him. Through sorrow, we're drawn near to Him. Through those things, God brings us closer to Him. What do we have that's of any value? We're near to God. Could anything else compare to that? Not only that, but "He will never leave us or forsake us." As Paul will say, "I know He will bring us safely home." How wonderful that is.

Then, I want you to look at Psalm 77. In Psalm 77:2, we have the setting.

It reads this way, "In the day of my trouble..."

So, this is a day of trouble; a day of difficulty. Obviously, he was so troubled according to verse 4, that he couldn't even speak.

When he thought about God (verse 3), he says, "I am disturbed." So, he doesn't see God as the source of comfort. Scripture is telling you that oftentimes when things are very difficult in your life, you have a hard time thinking, "God is good." That's what it's telling you. We know He is, but because of our circumstances, we start defining His love based on how we see things from where we are.

So, the question in verse 7 is "Will the Lord reject forever?  
And will He never be favorable again?"

(Psalm 77:8) Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?  
Has His promise come to an end forever?

(Psalm 77:9) Has God forgotten to be gracious,  
Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?"

What's talking, according to verse 10? His grief. "It is my grief" that is talking. Oftentimes in our sorrow, we become vulnerable. There are those that say, "You need to do this" or "You need to do this." "You're trusting in God, but don't trust in God. You're oversimplifying. This is what you need to do..." They begin to put you in some sort of bondage. In other words, we become receptive to the lie when we're in our most vulnerable state. We need to ultimately come to the point, as Scripture begins to reveal, that God is taking you through the waters. Isn't that how this particular passage ends? In fact, God saw us in our grief, and He begins to move the waters out of the way.

You realize according to verse 19 and 20,

"Your way was in the sea  
And Your paths in the mighty waters,  
And Your footprints may not be known."

(Psalm 77:20) You led Your people like a flock  
By the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Scripture is telling us that we can trust in Him. We're saying that in this context, there are those that will come into your life, and will begin to tell you that this simplified faith thing is not going to work. They'll put you in all kinds of other realms of trusting in all kinds of other things. Scripture is saying, "There is no other gospel." Your thought is, "Maybe there's help here; maybe there's good here." There is no other good. God is good and does good. Even in the difficult times, God is doing good.

That's why James will say in James 1 in the midst of telling the people that they're going through suffering, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above." This is a gift from God; He's doing good in your life. He's growing you and doing wonderful things. So, the point of the passage is that it's taking us to a closer relationship with God. What's the good in my life? The nearness of God. You keep pulling Him close to you in this. Don't throw away this gospel. Don't ever think, no matter what happens to you, that God is not good because this gospel is not only what saves us; this gospel is what keeps us. It will literally be the gospel that keeps you sane in the midst of a terrible world that we're in. God is good. Don't ever forget that.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today, and we believe in the good news. There is no other gospel. There's no man that's good; only God. So, we come believing that. We put all of our trust in You; all of our hope in You. We surrender our lives to You because we believe that whatever You tell us to do is nothing but good. Even in the midst of the storm, You're doing something miraculously good as You begin to draw us closer to You. I mean, I could have lived my whole life and barely known You, but You had something far better for me than that.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you not to leave the gospel. Don't listen to anything else. It is the power of God. There is no greater power. You keep proclaiming the goodness of God. Don't compromise the message. Keep it simple, "That a child might come." Give God thanks for the simplicity of this and stop listening to people.