

**There Is Only One Gospel**  
**Galatians 1:6-12**

This Week's Prayer  
Requests:

**Memory Verse:** Galatians 2:21: "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

**Text:** "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you brethren that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."

**Monday**

Have you ever had an experience with a false teacher? What happened?

When I lived in Northwestern Arkansas, several years ago now, there was one thing that I noticed that was very striking, compared to anywhere else that I've ever been in the United states. It was the absolutely incredible number of fire flies. It was so amazing that while we were there, Eve and I began reading about fireflies.

We learned some very interesting facts about them. For instance, we discovered that different varieties of fireflies flash their lights in different patterns. We also learned that only the males fly around, and the females just sit in one place flashing their signal so that the males can find them. This is a good system - one staying in the same place while the other flies around looking. It's a good system not only for fire flies, but it's also an excellent plan for humans if they happen to get separated at the mall and don't have their cell phones handy. And this, in fact, is the way that male and female fireflies find one another in order to have little firefly families.

Unfortunately, we also discovered that it isn't all that simple and lovely in the firefly world. Because you see, sometimes female fireflies will intentionally flash false signals to attract other varieties of male fireflies. And what do you think they do if they succeed in luring one of these unsuspecting males close enough? If they succeed in luring one close

enough, they attack, kill and eat him.

What are the marks of false teachers?

What's the point. Much like fireflies flashing false and deceitful lights to lure the unsuspecting to their death, the Bible teaches us that there are false teachers who lure people into the clutches of their false doctrine. And if a person continues in their doctrine, it will result in their utter ruin and the loss of their eternal souls. Paul in confronting one such teacher in Acts 13:7-10 says to him, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?" In that rebuke the apostle reveals four characteristics of false teachers: they are deceitful, they are children of the devil, they are enemies of true righteousness, and finally, they are perverters of the Gospel.

What are the dangers of false teaching?

It was just such false teachers and their teaching that Paul was confronted with in writing the book of Galatians. They had caused great confusion in the churches of Galatia, by coming in after Paul had left and distorting the Gospel of Christ. They taught that male Gentiles must become like Jews through the ceremonial act of circumcision before they could be truly saved; and after that all, Christians, men and women, Jewish and Gentile alike, could only remain righteous before God if they continued in and remained bound under the Mosaic laws, regulations and ceremonies, particularly dietary restrictions. They were, therefore, called Judaizers.

This week we continue with the text of Galatians chapter 1, verses 6-12, and in this text Paul gives us several reasons to reject those that teach a false Gospel.

What does the word "Gospel" mean?

The truth that underlies this passage is that there is only one gospel. This text does not define the gospel. The rest of the book does that. So our focus this week will not be on the content of the gospel but on its cruciality, its critical nature, why a person should never reject the true Gospel to follow one that is false. But get this, the underlying truth of the passage is there is only one gospel. In verse 6 Paul says that the Galatians are starting to turn away to a "different gospel." Then in verse 7 he corrects a potentially wrong impression. He did not mean to say that there are several possible gospels or even two possible gospels and that they have simply chosen another acceptable option. In verse 7 he carefully says, "which is not another." Or you could translate it: "Not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel." This verse is very clear: There is *no other*

How many Gospels are there? How do you know?

*gospel* than the one he preached to them and which they received. There is no other place to find GOOD NEWS from God, that's what the word Gospel means. There is no other source, than the good news taught in the Scripture. To be sure, as verses 6 and 7 make plain, there are people presenting their own ideas as gospel, but these are perversions. They are not really good news, but in truth they are bad news, false lights that will lure you to your death, if you are fooled by them.

## Tuesday

What are the implications of there being only one Gospel?

The implications of this text for our day are very important. This text is a radical and forthright denial of a pluralism which says that we are all on different roads to heaven but our destination is the same. Universalism is very popular, Beloved, but it is not Biblical. There is no Biblical teaching that a person can go on rejecting the true faith and still be saved. There are other religions besides Christianity and there are other leaders besides Jesus Christ, but there is no other gospel, no other good news of salvation. They are false.

Compared to other religions, how different was the Judaizer's Gospel from Paul's?

And what makes that underlying truth in this particular text so powerful is that the "different gospel" being taught in the churches of Galatia was not a religion from a foreign land. It was not the Greek worship of pagan idols. But this falsehood, was a very close counterfeit to the real thing. The people in verse 7 who were perverting the gospel were professing themselves to be Christians. This "different gospel" was not on the order of Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam. It was an in-house distortion. It was promoted by men who called themselves Christian "brothers" (2:4).

So another implication of verses 6 and 7 for us is that doctrinal maturity is not a luxury. It is a necessity. If a "different gospel," which is no gospel but only a perversion, can spring up inside the church, then surely we must make it our aim to become rigorous and discriminating in our doctrinal knowledge. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:20, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil but in thinking be mature." Galatians is one of the best books in the Bible for helping us refine and clarify what the heart of the gospel is, which cannot be replaced or altered.

How critical was this difference?

There is a tragic idea in many churches, that we shouldn't bother about clear doctrine. Clear doctrine requires thought, and thought is sometimes seen to be the enemy of feeling and good goose bump religious experience, so it is resisted. It's right, not if it's what the Bible teaches, but if it gives me a shiver in my liver. The result, then, is the emergence of a people whose understanding of Biblical teaching is so

How would you respond to a person that didn't believe clear doctrine was all that important?

hazy and imprecise that they are sitting ducks for the Galatian heresy. It arises right in their midst. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:30, "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." But O Church, God desires for us to love Him with heart, soul and MIND. Incidentally, I'll tell you a secret: Right doctrine and in-depth study do not decrease or kill joy in Christ, they actually increase it.

So the underlying truth of the passage (Gal. 1:6-10) is that there is only one Gospel, no others. And the two implications we need to hear from that truth are that universalism is wrong (there are not many roads to heaven, but only one) and that rigorous attention to doctrinal clarity and faithfulness is crucial in the long run to church life.

### Wednesday

With the background of Monday's and Tuesday's reading, let's begin looking at the reasons given in our text for rejecting any false Gospel. The first reason is this:

Have you ever heard a peace of news that was just plain stunning? What was it?

#### **1) Embracing a false Gospel is a personal rejection of God (vv. 6-7).**

Paul says, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon **from Him** who called you in the grace of Christ...."

You are turning away from, you are deserting **Him** who called you. You are not just turning from a doctrine, or an idea, Galatians. Don't fall prey to the notion that a concern for doctrine is somehow impersonal to God, some sort of mundane and disinterested academic pursuit. No it is very personal to God and the gospel is the *very personal* good news of God's call to you. If you turn to a different gospel, you turn away from God, and that is completely astonishing.

Why is it so stunning to Paul that the Galatians would turn away from God?

Paul simply marvels at it. It is a turning away from the gift of God's grace. Paul is simply stunned that so soon after his beautiful portrayal of Christ crucified for their sin they would begin to turn to another gospel. He says in 3:1, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"

You can picture Paul back in Antioch listening in stunned silence to the reports that the churches of Galatia are turning away from God and away from the grace of Christ. He puts his head in his hands and wonders if his work was all in vain, as he will say later in this letter. He wonders whether any of them were ever truly saved at all, because those who are

truly saved will persevere in the true faith. It was astonishing then; and, it is astonishing today that anyone hearing the best news in all the world -- God's offer of full and free forgiveness and glorious hope -- would turn to a different gospel, which is *no gospel at all*.

To embrace a false gospel is to embrace a perversion according to verse seven, and this amounts to a personal rejection of the One true God who gave Himself to deliver you from this present evil age.

You will notice that Paul does not marvel that false teachers came into the churches and preached a false Gospel. This was not such a strange thing. He marvels, rather that the Galatians are actually listening to such teaching. Why do you think this is?

### Thursday

What is the terrifying prospect of those who reject the Gospel?

The second reason to reject any false gospel given in our text is this:

#### **2) Embracing a false gospel makes one devoted to destruction (vv. 8-9).**

Verses 8 and 9: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

Is the "destruction" Paul speaks of simply for a moment and then it is past, or is it something else?

So critical is this that Paul says it twice. The word repeated here is *anathema* (accursed). It means literally "devoted to destruction," bound over for it, set apart for it. When a person is an anathema, he is cut off from Christ (Rom. 9:3) and doomed to eternal punishment. In 2 Thess. 1:9 Paul said that those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." When a person rejects the gospel, the free gracious gift of God's forgiveness and kingship, then he remains under the divine curse for his sin -- a terrifying prospect because of its torment and unending length. The reason I say this curse abides on anyone who rejects the gospel and not just on the false teachers in these verses is that Paul uses the same word in 1 Cor. 16:22,

When was the last time you thought about hell? Is it good or bad to meditate on this subject?

“If anyone does not love the Lord let him be accursed.”

Paul does not have a cotton candy concern for the gospel, Beloved. He does not offer sugary smiles in the midst of controversy and say, “Well you know, to each his own.” For Paul the gospel of Christ is the point at which the awesome life of God touches the life of this foul world of sin. **And when that offer of eternal grace to utterly unworthy creatures like us is rejected or perverted to satisfy our pride somewhere someone must rage at the heinousness of the crime.**

Why might it be healthy for us to spend time in meditation on verses like 1 Corinthians 16:22 and Galatians 1:9.

How we need to meditate on the horror of rejecting the gospel. Satan does his best with television and radio to create in us a mind that is so trivial and banal and petty and earthly that we find ourselves incapable of feeling what a terrifying reality it is for a person to be lost and without Christ, an anathema before God, devoted to destruction. Oh How we need to guard ourselves from the barrage of eternity-denying entertainment! We need to cultivate a pure and childlike imagination that hears a word like *anathema* the way a child hears his first peal of thunder, or feels his first earthquake, or sees his first funnel cloud passing over his house out his window. The Bible does not reveal to us the eternal curse of God that we may yawn and turn the page. The wrath of God is revealed to shake unbelievers out of their stupor and to take the swagger out of the Christian’s walk and the cocky twang out of his voice. Don’t skim over verses 8 and 9 quickly. There is much humbling and sobering to be done here in the hearts of us all.

Make it personal, Beloved. The Mormon or the Jehovah’s witness at work: devoted to destruction. The professing Christian who believes baptism and personal holiness are the means of attaining salvation – Jesus plus works, rather than simple faith in Christ alone: devoted to destruction. The professing Christian, who believes that salvation is based on taking the mass or performing certain religious rituals, sacramentalism: devoted to destruction.

All of these, their hope is in human effort, in human works. They are modern day Judaizers. They teach a perverted Gospel, which is not another. They are devoted to destruction. The neighbor next door who believes she will be alright with God because she is basically a good person. The Hindu, the Muslim, the Buddhist, all of them: devoted to destruction. “Broad is the way that leads to *destruction*,” Jesus says, “and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

## Friday

A third reason to reject a false gospel is this:

What are some of the dangers of being a people pleaser?

### 3) Embracing a false gospel pleases men not God.

Verse 10, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

In verses 8 and 9 Paul has just said something that will not win him many friends. If you believe this same truth and teach it and speak it to others, then you won't be very popular either. It doesn't please most people to hear someone pronounce the sentence of eternal damnation. It doesn't please most people to hear a person rejecting pluralism or denying the basic goodness of humanity. This is not the Oprah Winfrey way!!! Neither is this displeasure new, Beloved. It was just as unpopular in Paul's day as it is in ours.

What is at stake when we try to please men and not God.

So what Paul does in verse 10 is give an account of why he is willing to talk this way. He is willing to talk this way because pleasing people is much lower on his list of priorities than pleasing and serving Christ. Two things are at stake when the gospel is perverted: One is the glory of Christ; the other is the salvation of sinners. If the gospel is twisted, the all-sufficiency of Christ's work is dishonored, the glory of Christ is demeaned and belittled. Second, the way to salvation for sinners is blocked.

Therefore, in order to serve Christ -- to advance His glory and achieve His saving purpose -- Paul must oppose the perversion of the gospel with all his might, whether it pleases people or not. For the glory of Christ and for the good of those who may yet believe the gospel, Paul is willing to speak unpleasant truth. And so must you and I and all who truly represent Christ hold to and speak when necessary the stark unpleasant truth. We must do so for the glory of Christ and the good of the lost that desperately need to understand and know their desperate need for the Lord Jesus.

Does speaking unpleasant truth, necessitate being unpleasant?

However, let me point out for some that the lesson to learn from verse 10 is *not* that the more people you can displease the more spiritual you are. It was never Paul's aim to alienate people. On the contrary, in 1 Cor. 10:31-33, he says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that

they may be saved.”

In other words, it is good to please people by being gracious and courteous and loving with the longing that they might be saved and edified and God glorified in them. But in Galatians 1:10, Paul is not talking about your conduct, your attitude and the way you carry yourself in conversation. He is talking about truth, the truth that you hold to and speak to others. You simply cannot compromise truth, the truth of the Gospel or any other truth of God, in order to please men and get along with others. You must rather speak the truth in love. You must speak it with grace, with wisdom, with sensitivity, with compassion, with longing and yearning in your heart for the other person. **But you must speak it without compromise!!!**

What is the benefit of only having to be concerned with pleasing one person?

And let me add something. One of the most thrilling implications of verse 10, Beloved, is this: The absoluteness of Christ's Lordship is gloriously liberating. It frees me from having to worry about pleasing one person here and another person there. It brings unity and integrity to my life. When you live to please only one person, everything you do is suddenly and beautifully integrated because it relates only to that one person. Shall I go to this movie? Read this book? Make this purchase? Take this job? Go out on this date? Marry this person? What a freeing thing it is to know that there is one person who is to be pleased in every decision of life: Jesus.

Sometimes pleasing him will please others. Sometimes it won't, and that will hurt. But the deep joy and simplicity of a single-minded life is worth it all.

One final reason given in this text for rejecting a false Gospel is this:

#### **4. Embracing a false gospel rejects the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

Verses 11 and 12 read, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We will say more about these verses next week, but let me close with this thought from Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).