

## The True Gospel

Galatians 1:6-10

Key Verse: 6

*"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel"*

We live in an interesting period of history when everything has become relative. So if it works for you, great but it doesn't mean that it works for me. You may have your personal truth, but I have mine and neither one is greater. Another strong influence in our time is "universalism." Universalism claims that all people will be saved, no matter what they believe, as long as they live with integrity and sincerity. Not only that, we live in America, a multicultural society with many people of different beliefs. We understand this especially on this campus, where some people joke that IIT stands for India Institute of Technology and there exists a student club for neo-pagan men who love men. In a multicultural society, with many different beliefs we must practice mutual respect to coexist. It's important to respect others, because God created us in his image. However, in the course of living, we can not fall into the trap that all things that claim to be true are equally valid. The gospel is the unique truth of salvation from God. And just because someone is sincere in what they believe, that doesn't make it's any more true it just means they are sincerely wrong. There have been times when I have sincerely believed something that was false and in the end, I was sincerely wrong. However, through this passage, Paul insists that what we believe really matters. And he challenges the Galatians, and consequently us, with the fact that the gospel is unique. There are many things that claim to be true, but there is only one gospel, the gospel of Christ. And it's by this gospel that we are saved.

In most of Paul's letters, after he greets the readers he thanks God for working in them and he offers words of appreciation for them. Even in writing to the problem-filled Corinthian church, who were like Christians gone wild, he thanks God for working among them and admits that they are a very gifted community. (1 Cor 1:4-7) But he doesn't do this with the Galatians. Instead, right after greeting them he begins to rebuke them. And even in chapter 6 v11, we find out that Paul is writing this letter with his own hand and not using a scribe like he normally does. He's doing this because the matter is so urgent that he wants to get to the point right away. Because he loves them and he is deeply concerned about them. And so we wonder what could be so important that would make Paul change his writing style and put him at such a rush. Let's read verses 6-7. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — <sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ." Here we see the problem. Paul says they are "deserting the one who called you," who's he talking about? God. Paul says they have deserted God; they have turned to a different gospel; they are confused by some people who have come and have perverted the gospel. Paul is like a parent who sees his kid running for the street. So Paul begins yelling at them, out of concern, and they're response is like, "stop yelling at us," but Paul's like, "But there's traffic!!" To help us understand the seriousness of this, what we need to is compare "the gospel of Christ" that Paul preached with the "different gospel" that the Judaizers preached. We have to look at where each of these gospels will leads us. But before we start who knows what gospel means? We use this term a lot and it sounds very Christian but what does it mean? It simply means good news. So whenever you hear someone say the word "gospel," you can replace it with "good news." So when we look at each of these gospels, we have to find out which one of them is really good news. We have to weight them - like on the scales of justice.

As we learned last week from Mike, Paul had preached the gospel of Christ to the Galatian believers on his first missionary journey. The Book of Acts tells us how the Holy Spirit led Paul and Barnabas to Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Ac 13-14). While the context of his message differed from place to place, the main point of Paul's message was that Christ died for our sins and God raised him from

the dead. Whoever believes in Christ receives forgiveness of sins and is justified by God (Ac 13:26-41). Many Gentiles accepted this message and received eternal life through Christ. Paul and Barnabas would appoint elders, pray for them and commit them to the Lord. They did this for each of the churches and then returned to Syrian Antioch.

However after Paul left some people called "Judaizers," who were Jewish Christians, came into the churches in Galatia. They taught these new Gentile believers that faith in Christ wasn't enough. They said that unless the Gentiles were circumcised, and obeyed Moses' law, they wouldn't be saved (Ac 15:1). This is what Paul calls "another gospel." This is what we are going to put on one side of the justice scale and see where this "other gospel" will lead us. The Judaizers added an element of human work to the work of Christ as a matter of salvation. At first glance this may not seem like such a serious matter. But it's a sweet lie wrapped in a good news package so that they would swallow it. The Judaizers didn't deny Christ; they claimed to believe in Jesus but they added something to the gospel. For example: how does this sound if they say, "Jesus is good, we accept him completely, but you can be even more holy if you hold to these other things too, like circumcision, after all didn't God say to Abraham, 'My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'" (Ge 17:13-14) You don't want to be cut off from God do you? Don't you want to have God's covenant? Then you should be circumcised." It sounds believable but it's a lie that begins to load Christians down with one thing after another and before you know it all the joy of salvation is crushed out of them because they are worried about trying to maintain all these rules and regulations. And then they started to question their own salvation. They thought, "Hey maybe, I do have to do all these things to be saved? I better do them just in case." And to Paul, this was such a serious matter that he called it "perverting the gospel."

And what happens is that over time, every little rule that is put upon us adds up until you eventually can't maintain them. Jesus pointed this out. He said how do you reconcile this: You must keep the Sabbath holy and don't work and you have to circumcise a new born baby boy on the eighth day. What happens if the eighth day happens to be a Sabbath day? How do you maintain both laws when they are in conflict with each other? (Jn 7:22) (I'm paraphrasing of course.) They ended up having so many rules that it made life confusing. The Ten Commandments said don't work the Sabbath. So they made up their own rule for what work is. They said, "if you carry anything heavier than two fig leaves then you are working." As a result if you brought your Bibles to church today, you would be guilty of sin and have to be punished. And this goes on to this day. I worked with a guy who was a practicing Jew. And as I got to know him we talked about his religion. And I found it to be the most burdening thing because he had to make sure he kept all these rules. For example he was allowed to eat Oreo Double Stuff cookies but he couldn't eat regular Oreos. I asked him why? He said because the regular Oreos crème filling was made with animal fat and because we are not sure what kind of animal, it can't be pork, we better not take the chance. But the double stuffs have synthetic crème filling so that ok. So you have to be careful what is Kosher or not. And Jews are allowed to walk up stairs but they can't ride elevators. So in one case a family with kids had to carry their stroller up several flights of stairs on the Sabbath because they didn't want to violate the Sabbath law by taking the elevator because pushing the button was considered work. (OMG are you kidding me? ) You can see how quickly it would stink if you have to keep track of all this. Where is the joy in that?

And if you were somehow able to maintain all these rules, which would be quite hard, what happens is that you become proud of your accomplishment. This is what happened to the Pharisees. To become a Pharisee, you had to go through tremendous training. You had to keep all the laws and memorize the first five books of the Bible. And so when they finished their training it was quite an accomplishment. I got to hand it to them, they did a tough job and they deserve recognition. But that's just it. They felt that they deserved it too and they became proud of themselves instead of becoming closer to God. So in the end you have a lot of proud people keeping a bunch of strict rules all living together. Talk about an upright

bunch. And if you make a mistake and miss one of those rules... whoa you better watch out because all those self-righteous people who keep those rules are going to come after you. Can you imagine living in a place like that? Does this sound like good news to you? Of course not that's why Paul says in verse 7 that's it's no gospel at all because it isn't really good news.

And do you know what, that isn't even the worst part. When you add to the gospel of Jesus by adding a human element, some kind of task that we have to accomplish, what we are saying to God is that we think that we know better than God and that we want a little bit of credit for our own salvation so we end up stealing from God's glory. And this makes God angry. And who wants the Almighty creator angry at them? Who wants the wrath of God directed at them? It's like a crazy guy waving a golf club in a lightning storm. You don't want to stand next to that guy.

Now we have to look at what's on the other side of the scale, the gospel of Christ that Paul was encouraging them to remember, the one that he preached to them in the first place. This is the real gospel. God created the world. He made it wonderfully with us in mind and for us. He gave us one rule to follow, not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, but Adam disobeyed and thus he sinned because of his disobedience. This sin continued throughout history until our present day. The evidence of this is world we built. It is full of evilness. That's why we; have locks on our cars/houses, passwords on our accounts, that's why we sign contracts and don't walk in certain neighborhoods after dark. The world we built actually reflects our heart; evil. But God in his great mercy, didn't wipe us out, instead he saves us by sending his own son to die on the cross paying the price for our sin and rises from the dead and thus rescues us from this evil age to give us hope to have eternal life with God our father in heaven. This is a summary of the gospel of Jesus and this is good news for all people.

Here we must realize that salvation comes totally from what Christ has done for us, not from anything we have done. All we do is believe in Christ. There is nothing we can add to the work of Christ. Remember a few weeks ago when we studied John 19 when Jesus on the cross said, "it is finished?" He completed everything required for our salvation. There is nothing left for us to do. So we cannot claim any credit for our salvation. All the glory belongs to Christ, and to God the Father who sent him. However, in our times, there are people who add something to the gospel. It may or may not be stated directly but in any case it is implied. Some claim that a specific spiritual experience must accompany salvation for you to be saved for example: unless you are baptized in their church, and fully immersed, you are not saved. That's adding to the gospel. We are not saved because we have a fancy title or position in the church, such as pastor, elder, missionary, shepherd, fellowship leader, or prayer servant. We are not saved because of anything we do. Some think they will go to heaven because they donate money to charity, volunteer at homeless shelters, pray at certain times of the day, skip meals, make pilgrimages to holy sites, or spare the lives of insects. We are not saved because we write testimonies, eat Daily Bread, deliver messages, teach the Bible, evangelize students, go as missionaries, or endure UBF training for many years. While these things can be very helpful in our spiritual lives, they are not required for our salvation. They can be very helpful to us, but we have to always look at the motive behind what we do. Do we do them because we love Jesus and want to get closer to him, or are we doing them to show off to others how great we are? Do we serve others because we genuinely love them, or do we want to make them feel indebted to us and get them to do what we want them to? We must always examine our motives for our actions for God did not accept Cain's offering because his motives were not right. The main point is that we should remember that we are sinners, nothing but sinners, helpless to save ourselves. Yet God, in his great mercy, saved us through Christ by his grace. We are saved by Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, for the glory of God alone. When we receive the gospel of God's grace it makes us thankful; it makes us humble; it fills us with love and inspires us to love God because he first loved us.

The temptation to magnify what we do along with Christ is so strong. It is also very deceptive. While sounding good, it leads people away from the gospel of Christ. And when we glorify our polluted works

God is greatly offended, perhaps more than any other sin that we can commit. That's why we have to really watch out for the wickedness that it is. So in verses 8-9 Paul gives a strong warning. He says that no one can change the gospel of Christ, not Paul, not an angel from heaven, not anyone. What do you call an angel from heaven that gives a different message than the gospel? A demon. Anyone who tries to change the gospel of Christ will be cursed by God and eternally condemned.

In verse 10, Paul revealed his motive in preaching the gospel so clearly. It was to please God. Again it comes back to what your agenda and does it match with God's agenda. Paul rebuked sin in sinful men, magnified the grace of Christ and the mercy and love of God, and challenged people to repent and believe. This did not please people. In fact, it sometimes made people angry. However, this gave glory to God. When God was glorified, Paul was satisfied. Paul knew that salvation comes only from God, only through the gospel of Christ. So he preached it clearly, regardless of how people responded. This applies to us in our time. Remember at the beginning of the message I mentioned that we live in a multicultural society with different beliefs, because of this if we preach that Jesus is the only way people in other religions are going to be offended. However we should not disrespect them, or look down on them because they are our fellow human beings. We must sincerely love them. But that doesn't mean we should compromise the truth. We have to learn the right way to love them without condemning them so that they can see Jesus for who he is and believe in him and have eternal life. The gospel of Jesus is good news because it gives life and joy. When we look at where other religions, where do they lead us? Are they really sure of their salvation? In all other religions there is a human part to salvation, but you can never be sure that you've done enough good deeds to outweigh your bad ones. The only way you find out is to wait and see, when you get to the judgment. But it's like a really tough final exam. Did you get enough questions right? You think you answered them right, at least you hope you did, but you are never quite sure until you get the graded exam back. And its only good news if we pass. But in Jesus, you know for sure because there is nothing good in us, but when we hold on to Jesus, he is good and because of him we are saved. And what about heaven. What do other religions say about heaven? Buddhism and Hinduism both talk about reincarnation but it depends upon how good you've been as to what you will come back as. In Islam you are promised 72 virgins, that sounds good for the men, but I'm not sure about the women. And for the Vikings their version of heaven, they fight to the death only to have it restart over again the next day. However in Christianity we get to spend eternity with our heavenly father in his wonderful kingdom. Thank God for his grace to us to give us his word and shows us what good news really is, it is the gospel of Jesus.