

Introduction

Opening Scripture: [Psalm 118:5-9](#) “5 Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. 6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. 8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. 9 It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.”

Personal reflection

Does the modern church preach the truth of the gospel? Most church-goers are not concerned with that question. *How do people choose a church?* We attend the church that has **music** that we like. We attend the church that has **children and youth** programs that entertain our kids. We attend the church that encourages us that we can follow Christ **without giving up anything**. As if the thing we need most is our preferred music style, entertained children, and faith that costs nothing. Rarely to modern church-goers evaluate whether the teaching of the church aligns with Scripture. It is not a major concern.

Main idea

[Galatians 1:6-10](#) may be one of the most needed Scriptures for the modern church. Modern churches are concerned about meeting perceived needs, counting responses, and maintaining attention, but are rarely concerned with truth.

The letter of Galatians was written to churches that had compromised the message of the gospel. Teachers within the churches insisted on devotion to the Mosaic covenant, that is, salvation and eternal justification by works. The result was a rejection of the new covenant, a rejection of Christ Himself. [Galatians 1:6-10](#) argues that **there is only one gospel**. Therefore, it warns, **Do not reject God by accepting false gospels**.

The gospel

What false gospels are taught in modern churches? First, many churches teach that faith in the gospel is merely a **profession, without a changed life**. “Repeat this prayer. Ask Jesus into your heart.” They lead people to say words, but not to devote themselves to Christ. Second, many churches teach that salvation must be accomplished by a **combination of grace and works**. “God does not save you until you change your life. If you don’t continue in good works, you lose your salvation.” They lead people to depend on themselves, not in Christ alone. Third, many churches teach that we should believe in Jesus for what we gain from it. If you have faith, you will be **healthy and wealthy**. That is a gospel of idolatry, exalting prosperity over God.

What does Scripture teach is the true gospel? God is eternal and the Creator of all things. He made man in His image, with the capacity for sin and righteousness. Like Adam, we all sin; that is, we reject God, His will, and his authority over our lives. The consequence of our separation from God is eternal condemnation and death.

But God is gracious and merciful. Because of His great love for the world, Christ, the eternal God became a human, suffered temptation without sin, and died to bear the guilt of God's people. God saves those who repent of their sin by submitting to Christ in faith. Genuine faith is a work of the Holy Spirit who transforms us into new creations, who love God and are devoted to Him. Genuine faith is proven by a heart and life changed by the Holy Spirit.

Overview

If we stray from the biblical gospel, then we turn away from God. With [Galatians 1:6-10](#), *I want to encourage you - **There is only one gospel**, so **Do not reject God by believing other gospels**.

Only one gospel

Most of Paul's letters begin with a prayer of thanksgiving for what God has done in the church or person to whom he is writing. In Galatians, Paul jumps straight to defending the gospel. These churches were in **danger** of turning away from God by accepting different gospels. The letter begins with a **warning**. **False gospels lead us away from God**.

Be astonished by false gospels

What did Paul think about the churches turning to variations of the gospel? First, he wrote that he was **astonished** they turned to other gospels so quickly. [Galatians 1:6](#) "6 I am **astonished** that you are so **quickly** deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel."

There is a lot of debate about when Galatians was written. [Galatians 1-2](#) gives a lot of details about Paul's life and ministry, which aligns with Luke's details in Acts. The major debate is whether Galatians was written before or after [Acts 15](#), where Paul and Barnabas debated in Jerusalem over the very issues discussed in Galatians. Although I tend to think that Galatians was written **after** [Acts 15](#), this does not diminish Paul's shock that their turn happened quickly.

As an example, consider how appalled we are in modern Christianity that so many churches have embraced things that are accepted by culture, but condemned by Scripture (such as homosexuality or transgenderism). Many of those changes have come within less than a generation. Regardless of whether Galatians was written before or after [Acts 15](#), **in less than a generation, they had begun accepting other gospels**.

Paul wrote that he was **astonished** by this change. We would do well to follow Paul's example. I can be a member of a church and have fellowship with people who disagree with me on theological topics. It is a shame when churches divide over differences of **eschatology, music** style, or even more trivial matters. There are some theological topics that churches must agree on for membership and fellowship, such as **infant baptism**, but I would not consider someone who disagreed with me on some of those topics to be an unbeliever.

However, there are some theological truths that should **astonish** us. Some false teachings should drive us to condemn the teachers and churches who espouse them. When someone denies the **Trinity**, we should be astonished, because they are denying the one true God. When someone denies the **inspiration and authority of Scripture**, we should be astonished, because they are denying the truth of God's word. When someone **distorts the gospel**, we should be astonished. They are leading people away from God.

Other gospels reject God and His grace

Why was Paul so astonished by these churches accepting wrong gospel teaching? Why should we be astonished when churches accept and teach the gospel wrongly? Those who change the gospel are rejecting more than a creed; they are **rejecting God**. [Galatians 1:6](#) "6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting **him** ..."

Faith in the gospel is more than expressing belief in a set of **doctrines**. Faith in the gospel is more than receiving **forgiveness** and eternal life. Faith in the gospel is **relational**. My faith is in God; He saves me. My faith is in Christ; He gave Himself for my sins. **Those who profess faith in the gospel but do not love Christ or commit themselves to Him do not believe the gospel**. In the same way, whenever we tolerate variations of the gospel, we are rejecting **Him**.

Notice how verse 6 describes God's call. [Galatians 1:6](#) "6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who **called** you in the **grace** of Christ ..." By turning to a different gospel, they were rejecting God who **called** them. Most of the time in Paul's letters, "**call**" refers to our salvation. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, convinces us of the truth of the gospel, and empowers us for faith in the gospel.

As we read through Galatians, it is clear that one aspect of the false gospel teaching was that works (obedience) was necessary for our redemption. Notice that [Gal 1:6](#) says that God called us "in the **grace** of Christ." If we rely on ourselves for the effectiveness of the gospel, we reject the grace of God. Either **you** contribute to your redemption or **God** contributes ([Rom 11:6](#)).

Other gospels are not the gospel

Why were these churches embracing these false gospels? Why were they choosing works over grace? There were false teachers in the churches. [Galatians 1:7](#) “7 not that there is another one, but there are **some who trouble you** and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

The false teaching in the Galatian churches arose from men within the church with false beliefs. Specifically, they were attempting to bind believers to the old covenant, which we often call the **Mosaic covenant**, God’s covenant with Israel through Moses.

This should be a warning that churches should be careful whom they appoint to teach. We should be careful whom we appoint as overseers; they are the ones the church entrusts with guarding the truth of Scripture and the gospel. We should also be careful whom we appoint to teach classes. False teaching rarely arises from outside the church.

What does this kind of false teaching do to the gospel? [Galatians 1:7](#) “7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to **distort** the gospel of **Christ**.” False teaching about the gospel **distorts** Christ’s gospel, meaning that whenever we **add to** or **subtract from** the gospel, it is no longer the **gospel of Christ**.

Notice that verse 7 says that there is **not another gospel**. This is the reason we should guard the gospel and openly oppose false teachings of the gospel. Only the gospel of Christ restores us into a relationship with God. **Every other gospel message leads us away from God** ([Matt 23:13-15](#))

False gospels

Someone may ask, *why does it matter which version of the gospel we believe?* It matters because our goal is not be reconciled to men, but to be reconciled to God. When we treat our response to the gospel as a **work**, such as repeating a prayer, we reconcile people to the church, but not to Christ.

We know the gospel through God’s revealed word

Whose gospel teaching should we reject? Paul gives two extreme examples to show that the messenger is not the basis of our faith. [Galatians 1:8](#) “8 But even if **we** or an **angel** from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Paul gives two examples of messengers with authority. First, he writes “even if **we** ... should preach to you...” ([Gal 1:8](#)). This is significant in light of [Galatians 1:1](#) “1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—” Paul begins this letter by **defending his apostleship**. He was appointed an apostle by God. His apostleship is the basis of the authority of this letter. God had appointed Paul an apostle in part for the purpose of inspiring Scripture through him.

Second, he writes, “even if ... an **angel from heaven** should preach to you ...” ([Gal 1:8](#)). [Galatians 3:19](#) mentions that God revealed the Law, the Mosaic covenant, through angels (cf., [Acts 7:53](#); [Heb 2:2](#)). These two examples are important in the letter of Galatians. The angels represent the revelation of the old covenant; the apostles represent the revelation of the new covenant. This is the major issue at stake among these churches, not moving from the old to the new covenant.

The point here is that apostles and angels are just **messengers**. Their authority only extends to the degree to which they accurately communicate the truth of God’s word. The same is true for anyone who speaks of God and Scripture. For example, God has appointed **pastors** to lead and teach in the church. A pastor’s authority in the church only extends to the degree that he accurately communicates God’s word.

To what does Paul encourage these churches to compare these new gospel messages? He reminds them that they have **heard and believed** the true gospel. [Galatians 1:8–9](#) “8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the **one we preached** to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the **one you received**, let him be accursed.”

Compare these verses to [Galatians 1:11–12](#) “11 For I would have you know, brothers, that **the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s** gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through **a revelation of Jesus Christ.**” The gospel Paul had preached in Galatia was **God’s gospel**; the gospel of Jesus. Whenever we hear the gospel preached, taught, or described, we should always compare it to the gospel message in **Scripture**. Our faith should be in God’s gospel, not man’s gospel.

How strongly should we react to these false gospels? I suspect few of us would go as far as Scripture’s response in [Galatians 1:8–9](#) “8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, **let him be accursed.** 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, **let him be accursed.**”

Accursed is the word, ἀνάθεμα, which you will often read in writings of church history. The word means to be cursed, often describing something or someone who is devoted to destruction. For example, the city, people, and possessions of Jericho were ἀνάθεμα ([Josh 6:17-18](#)); they were cursed by God and devoted to destruction. That is what [Galatians 1:8-9](#) says of those who teach a different gospel.

How often do you hear someone teach the gospel wrongly and pray that they would be destroyed by God? We are typically more passive than that. We hear someone instruct people to repeat a prayer, ask Jesus into your heart, believe without repentance, believe so that you may prosper, and our response is often, “that’s not quite right, but at least people are responding in faith.” If that is the gospel message people hear, they are **not responding in faith**. They are rejecting Christ and the grace of God for a false gospel. Those who teach these things are leading people away from God, not to Him.

We please God through faith alone in the true gospel

Notice the contrast that Paul makes to conclude this rejection of false gospels. He contrasts pleasing God and pleasing man. [Galatians 1:10](#) “10 For am I now seeking the **approval of man, or of God?** Or am I trying to **please man?** If I were still trying to **please man**, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Many of the false teachings of the gospel that are present today are attempts to please men. It is far easier to **explain** “repeat this prayer” than to spend time correcting a person’s misunderstanding of the gospel. It is far easier to **respond** to “repeat this prayer” than to sacrifice your family, friends, or life to devote yourself to Christ. It is far more convincing to tell people that faith in Jesus makes them **wealthy** than to tell them that faith in Jesus may **cost** them everything.

We see this in the responses to false teachings of the gospel. I visited a church a couple of years ago that stated they had 30+ professions of faith in the first service. The gospel was not truly proclaimed that day; however, the pastor asked those who were interested in being forgiven of sins to repeat a prayer. Afterwards, they celebrated the numerous new professions of faith in that service. They did not question whether those people were willing to **give up their sin** to follow Jesus. They did not question whether those people believed that Jesus was any **different than Muhammed**. Yet, 50+ people left that church with a false sense of assurance that they were right with God because of a **work** they had done. They had repeated a ritual prayer; therefore in their minds, God had forgiven them. It is far better to see **one person** come to genuine faith in God through the work of the Holy Spirit than to usher a **thousand people** into hell while proclaiming they have “peace and safety” with God ([1 Thess 5:3](#)).

How then do we please God? Notice how Paul describes himself in [Galatians 1:10](#) “10 For am I now seeking the approval **of man, or of God?** Or am I trying to please **man?** If I were still trying to please **man**, I would not be a **servant of Christ.**”

Notice the change of Paul’s life: “am I **now** seeking the approval of man,” “If I were **still** trying to please man.” Paul was a new creation because of his faith in the gospel. He was a **servant** of Christ. Genuine faith comes from the conviction and regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Genuine faith produces devotion to Christ. God is not pleased by our works; God is pleased by our faith. [Hebrews 11:6](#) “without faith it is impossible to please him ...” My good works are not my good works; they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit in me.

Closing

Summary

[Galatians 1:6-10](#) warns us, **Do not reject God by accepting false gospels. There is only one gospel.** If we believe any other gospel, we reject God and His grace. Those who teach false gospels are not making it easier for people to come to God; they are leading people **away** from God. The only way to know God is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Response

If you are visiting today and do not know God, I want to encourage you to give your life to Him by faith in Jesus. God is **worthy** of your life. Although you are a sinner, God is **gracious**. He will have **mercy** on those who **devote themselves to Jesus in faith**.

Church, compromising the gospel grows churches, but it does not reconcile people to God. I pray that we would seek the approval of God, not men. It is not in our hands to increase the church, God gives the increase ([1 Cor 3:7](#)). May we be a church that proclaims the **truth of the gospel**. If people reject it, then may they reject **truth**. If people believe it, then may they believe **truth**.

Closing Scripture: [1 Corinthians 2:1-5](#) “1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”