

## Lesson 2 – Galatians 1:6-9

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### Review/Introduction

One of the major issues of the early church was the integration of Jew and Gentile into one body. The Jews had been taught from childhood a salvation by works because they valued human tradition over Scripture. Scripture alone should have led them to Christ.

<sup>6</sup>And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. <sup>7</sup>‘But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ <sup>8</sup>Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” <sup>9</sup>He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. ... <sup>13</sup>**thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down**; and you do many things such as that.” (Mark 7:6-13)

<sup>15</sup>and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

<sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:24)

The Jews taught a lifestyle of obligatory works which they equated with being a follower of the one true God. This thinking moved into the early church when some Jews who had believed were teaching a gospel of Christ plus works.

<sup>1</sup>Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1)

<sup>5</sup>But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” (Acts 15:5)

This controversy was addressed in Judea and Syria with the First Jerusalem Council. But north of Syria around the Mediterranean (in Galatia), the controversy lived on. So, Paul wrote a letter to address the issue following the Jerusalem Council. Shortly after writing the letter, Paul will set out on the second missionary journey. Part of that effort was to follow-up his letter with a personal visit. Thankfully, Paul’s efforts resulted in strengthened churches.

<sup>36</sup>After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are.” ... <sup>40</sup>But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup>And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:36-41)

<sup>4</sup>Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. <sup>6</sup>They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; (Acts 16:4-6)

The threat of legalism is as real today as it was in Paul's day. Christ plus rules for salvation (in the fullest since which includes sanctification) is a heresy that puts people on the path to hell. It must be rejected. Salvation is by grace alone, through saving faith alone, in Christ alone. This is what Paul is writing to defend and to exhort the Galatians (and us) to hold fast to the true gospel.

### **Introduction – Reason for writing (1:6-9)**

#### 1. The Galatians deserting the gospel (1:6-7a)

<sup>6</sup>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7a</sup>which is *really* not another;

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<sup>6</sup>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— <sup>7a</sup>not that there is another one, (ESV)

Paul normally commends his readers before launching into the main subject of his letter, but the letter to the churches of Galatia has no commendation. Its absence is conspicuous and stresses the seriousness of his readers' error and the urgency of Paul's appeal.

“Amazed” means to wonder, marvel, be struck with admiration or astonishment, be greatly amazed and astounded, to be overcome with awe. It is in the present tense signifying Paul is continually amazed. It denotes incredulous surprise and is used sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

<sup>27</sup>The men were **amazed**, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matthew 8:27)

<sup>9</sup>These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be **marveled** at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

<sup>6</sup>And He **wondered** at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching. (Mark 6:6)

Here Paul obviously is using it negatively as a rhetorical device. The Galatian's entertainment of a false gospel is incredulous to Paul and he rebukes them in his first words with “I can't believe what you are doing!” Other versions use “shocked” (CEV). The ESV's “astonished” perhaps gives a little better sense of the rebuke.

“Quickly” means quickly, shortly, speedily, hastily, rashly, suddenly. Paul sometimes uses the word positively (like coming “soon” in 2 Timothy 4:9). But also uses it negatively (1 Timothy 5:22).

<sup>22</sup>Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* **hastily** and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. (1 Timothy 5:22)

Here again he is using it negatively with the sense of hastily, rashly, suddenly. The addition of “so” adds emphasis to the adverb. The Galatians were not undergoing significant persecution which was leading to their process of deserting Christ. Instead, they were deserting Christ alone for people's idea of works. Not only that, it had only been months since Paul was there.

“Deserting” means to transpose two things; to change from one place to another. The word was used in classical Greek of a turncoat. It could mean altering one’s opinion or becoming of another mind, but also of desertion or revolt. Its usage here speaks of the Galatians being in the process of deserting (present tense) and that they were doing this themselves.

This is an important point that bears contemplation. The Judaizers were teaching a not-gospel gospel. They bear condemnation for that (James 3:1) and Paul will address that later. But, while the Judaizers were influencing the Galatians, the Galatians bear the responsibility for their actions.

❖ **Do you take responsibility for your beliefs/walk or do you blame others?**

The Galatians were in process of deserting “Him who called you by the grace of Christ”. This is the Father. Paul makes it clear that there is only one way to God. By deserting the gospel of the grace of Christ, they are deserting God. They are not getting closer to God by grace plus works. They are getting farther away.

This is another rebuke on the beliefs of the Jewish false teachers and the Galatians individually for their process of desertion. Think how they would have felt hearing Paul say they were actually getting farther from God instead of closer.

❖ **In what ways might you “desert” God in your walk?**

“Called” literally means to speak to another, to attract their attention, to bring nearer either physically or in a personal relationship, or to call a person for a definite purpose. When used in the NT epistles, it always refers to God’s efficacious call to salvation.

In eternity past, God sovereignly and unconditionally chose those whom He would save (Matthew 22:1-14; Romans 3:10-13; 8:27-30; 9:6-24; 1 Corinthians 1:18-19; Ephesians 1:3-11; 2:8-9; 2; Acts 13:48; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:10; 2:13).

<sup>48</sup>When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** (Acts 13:48)

<sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup>just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup>He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

<sup>4</sup>knowing, brethren beloved by God, **His choice of you**; <sup>5</sup>for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5)

<sup>9</sup>who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to **His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity**, (2 Timothy 1:9)

Then at a point in time, God individually calls His elect into a saving relationship with Christ.

<sup>14</sup>A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the **Lord opened her heart to respond** to the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

<sup>28</sup>And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and **these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.** (Romans 8:28-30)

<sup>13</sup>But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. <sup>14</sup>It was for this **He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

<sup>12</sup>so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the **God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.** (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

The usage here of “called” means “called once and for all”. Throughout the epistle Paul assumes them to be believers. However, if the desertion would become complete, then he would know that they were not believers to begin with.

<sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. (1 John 2:19)

<sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup>for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Paul contrasts the “grace of Christ” with a “different”, not-true gospel.

Remember that “grace” is God’s omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

The true gospel is how an infinitely holy God supernaturally intervenes in the hopeless and helpless situation of sin and does only what He can do because the sinner is dead.

#### ❖ **Do you view your situation in salvation and sanctification as helpless?**

The opposite is a “different”, not-real gospel. “Different” means another of a different kind; a strange one. A good rendering would be opposition or alternative. There are not two (or more) gospels. There is only one gospel. Something called a “gospel” that is not all about grace is not a gospel at all. It is a non-gospel of works.

The gospel must be grace alone or it no longer is grace.

<sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. <sup>5</sup>But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, (Romans 4:4-5)

<sup>6</sup>But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Romans 11:6)

Religions are about how sinful people try to get to a holy God; the gospel is about how a holy God intervenes to save to sinful people. The ESV's "not that there is another one" captures the sense well.

❖ **Do you live like salvation (including sanctification) is about anything but grace?**

As we have seen, the gospel is the good news of salvation from sin by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

<sup>3</sup>**Grace** to you and peace from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**, <sup>4</sup>who gave Himself for our **sins** so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, **according to the will of our God and Father**, (Galatians 1:3-4)

We see this throughout the Scriptures.

<sup>1</sup>Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died** for our **sins according to the Scriptures**, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that **He was raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ... <sup>8</sup>and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

<sup>1</sup>And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup>Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. <sup>4</sup>But **God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us**, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup>**not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

The gospel:

Every single person has sinfully rebelled against their Creator and is therefore deserving of eternal death, eternal separation from God (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Isa 59:1-2). The corruption of sin extends to every aspect of your being (Rom. 1:18–3:20) including intellect (2 Cor 4:4), conscience (1 Tim 4:2), will (Rom 1:28), and heart (Eph 4:18). You are therefore unable to enter a personal relationship with your Creator on your own initiative (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3).

But God loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, the Christ, the eternal, uncreated second person of the Trinity to willingly died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for your sin (John 10:15; 3:16; Rom 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24). Christ paid the penalty for your sins. He died the death that you deserve. He rose from the dead to validate His identity, confirming the truth of all He said (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10). Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) – the only way to the Father (means of salvation) (John 14:6).

Christ offers salvation from sin (Col 2:13-14) to all who exercise the gift of true saving faith (John 3:16), turning from their sins (Heb 6:1) and surrendering their life to Christ (Luke 9:23-26; John 10:27-28), trusting only in Him for salvation from sin (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19); forsaking any merit of good works, organizational membership, religious observance, or heredity.

Upon exercising true saving faith, you enter a personal relationship with God, you are born again (made new), the debt of sin is forgiven, and the power of sin over you is broken. Salvation from sin is completely and wholly the work of God.

False “gospels” are those messages that corrupt/distort any part of salvation from sin by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Unfortunately, in our culture, the gospel has become muddled and confused among and by heretics and many professing Christians alike. The message has been softened to make it palatable to not offend.

God did not send Christ into the world to meet your felt needs, give you your “best life now”, make you healthy and wealthy, fix your broken emotional state, fix your self-image/esteem, become your “friend”, or bring social justice. Man’s greatest need is freedom from the penalty and power of SIN. This is why Christ came.

Salvation from sin is not by faith plus something or instead of something. It is not by being a good person, doing good things, baptism, obeying commandments, going to church, giving money, praying, doing penance, surrendering to an organization, serving mankind, etc. Salvation is only by God’s supernatural, powerful intervention in your life as He calls you to himself giving you the gift of grace and faith.

### ❖ **Do you get the gospel right?**

You must get the gospel right, for yourself and those you WILL preach to.

## 2. The false teachers disturbing and distorting the gospel (1:7b-9)

<sup>7b</sup>only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>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! <sup>9</sup>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!

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<sup>7b</sup>but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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. (ESV)

Paul had already said the Galatians bear the responsibility for being in the process of deserting Him who had called them by the grace of Christ for a false gospel. Now he addresses the false teachers who are corrupting the true gospel. These incur a stricter judgement.

<sup>1</sup>Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

“Some” points to the group who is presenting a false gospel of works. They must be convincing since they are “disturbing” the Galatians. The Judaizers will be a problem throughout the early church. A false gospel of Christ plus works will lead people to hell until Christ returns.

<sup>6</sup>For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, <sup>7</sup>wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. (1 Timothy 1:6-7)

<sup>10</sup>For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup>who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain. (Titus 1:10-11)

“Disturbing” means to agitate and stir up. Figuratively it means to deeply disturb, unsettle, throw into disorder, experience inward commotion. They are continually causing inward turmoil. The usage also pictures the false teachers doing this as a definite choice.

The gospel corruptors were “wanting” to distort. Wanting indicates a continual desire, motive, and even resolve to distort the true gospel. The false teachers had elevated their own ideas over the Scriptures (at this time the apostolic teaching of Paul) which resulted in a corruption of the gospel of grace.

“Distort” means to turn about or turn around, transform into something of an opposite character, corrupt, pervert, reverse. The usage pictures a complete perversion of the gospel of Christ (grace). Any change to grace results in a complete corruption of the true gospel. By grace through saving faith in Christ plus anything is a false gospel.

### ❖ **What ideas of salvation or sanctification have you not subjected to the Scriptures?**

False teaching that is steeped in demonic argument can unsettle the mind of the immature. The mature have the word of God as their defense.

<sup>2</sup>like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, (1 Peter 2:2)

<sup>12</sup>For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup>For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Our defense is also qualified elders whose job it is to protect the body from false teaching.

<sup>28</sup>**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

<sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:9)

<sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

Paul now gives the condemnation of those who present a false gospel. The gospel is a treasure that must be guarded. Even those who start well can become corrupted.

<sup>14</sup>Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*. (2 Timothy 1:14)

### ❖ **Do you view the gospel as precious and protect it?**

Paul starts the conditional clause as a rhetorical device by looking at the apostolic team and angels. This is a hyperbole (an exaggeration to encompass the false teachers to make a point). Even if the two groups who will never change their message of the gospel of grace, change, do not believe them.

“Preach” means to announce or bring good news. One commentator says that “The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate. It is an announcement.”

“Contrary” signifies against, contrary to or without regard for. The is the different “gospel” which is no gospel at all.

“Accursed” is the Greek “anathema” meaning condemned to hell forever, devoted to destruction. This is delivering the false teachers who preach a false gospel to divine wrath. If anyone perverts the gospel of the grace of Christ, they are to be accursed. Paul is speaking in strong terms to show the Galatians the folly of their deserting process.

Interestingly, this is what the Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared for those that believe in justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Roman Catholic Church maintains this today.



Canon 9: “If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.”

Canon 24: “If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.”

“As thousands of former Catholics will testify, Roman Catholic doctrine and liturgy obscure the essential truth that the believer is saved by grace through faith and not by his own works (Eph. 2:8-9). In a simple sense, Catholics genuinely believe they are saved by doing good, confessing sin, and observing ceremonies.” “Is Roman Catholicism Biblical?” by John MacArthur on the GTY Website

Paul speaks in verse 8 to hyperbole. Verse 9 speaks to the those that are disturbing the Galatians and distorting the gospel.

Verse 8 (hyperbole)	Verse 9 (reality)
But even <b>if</b>	As we have said before, so I say again now, <b>if</b>
we, or an angel from heaven, <b>should preach</b> to you a gospel	any man <b>is preaching</b> to you a gospel
contrary to <b>what we have preached</b> to you	contrary to <b>what you received</b>
he is to be accursed.	he is to be accursed

The Galatians had already received the gospel as from God. They had received the gospel from a true apostle. They had been changed and demonstrated salvation. Paul is striving to ensure they do not ultimately demonstrate that salvation never occurred.

<sup>12</sup>The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Corinthians 12:12)

<sup>13</sup>For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

In the strongest terms, Paul pronounces eternal condemnation on those that distort the gospel of grace and preach a non-gospel masquerading it as the real gospel.

❖ **Are you sure you are preaching the true gospel?**

**Conclusion**

Paul is writing to those who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Galatians bear the responsibility for entertaining a different gospel. But the false teachers who distort the true gospel by adding works and turn grace into non-grace and the gospel into a non-gospel, Paul condemns to eternal destruction.

## **Additional Study**

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today's Questions
  - Think about your salvation. What is different now compared to before grace? How has God moved you from what you were to what you are now? Spend some time thanking God for His work in you. If nothing has changed, then what should you think of that?
  - Think about your theology of salvation and sanctification. Are there areas where you do not feel you understand as much as you should? How might you change that?
  - Are there teachings/ideas that you have been exposed to that are not in line with Scripture that disturb you?
  - Have you been involved with churches or groups that speak authoritatively about the Scriptures, but do not teach the Scriptures? How do they explain the difference? What should we do in such cases?