

Galatians 2 – A Different Gospel **Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC - 9-8-2024**

We are in a new sermon series through the book of Galatians called Freedom Through Christ. The letter to the Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches in a Roman province in Asia Minor, which is now Turkey. Paul visited these churches 3 times, but at some point, some false teachers called Judaizers began to influence the believers in Galatia.

The word **Judaize means to embrace the customs and beliefs of Judaism**. The Judaizers taught that Gentiles who became Christians must observe the rituals and regulations of the Law of Moses. **The main point of their teaching was that to be made right with God, it is not enough to have faith in Jesus Christ; one must also obey the Law of Moses. This is the main issue Paul addresses in Galatians.**

The Judaizers also declared that Paul was NOT an apostle, that he had had NO personal revelation of Christ. They wanted the Galatian churches to submit to their authority and their so-called revelation. So Paul challenges this right from the start of the letter by saying in Galatians 1:1-5

***Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead—and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

Paul established his authority by stating that he was an apostle called by God, not by men. Paul also **establishes the priority of grace over works. This is the main theme of the gospel and of the letter to the Galatians.**

When Paul says God will rescue us from this present evil age, he is not just talking about when we go to heaven after we die. Yes, that is the ultimate rescue, but God wants to deliver us from this present evil age even while we are still in it!

In the next verses **Paul reveals how upset he is with the Galatian church**. Paul usually praised the churches he wrote in his opening words. You can see that in his letters to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Colossians and the Thessalonians.

But **Paul gave no praise to the Galatian churches**. Instead he immediately and directly confronted them, which shows the severity of their problem. Galatians 1:6-7 says:

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— 7 which is really no gospel at all.

My sermon today is entitled **A Different Gospel**. When Paul said he was astonished, it means he was shocked. The Greek word translated astonished includes an element of intense unbelief. **Basically, Paul is saying, "I can't believe you are doing this!"**

This is the same word Jesus used when He could do no miracles in His hometown because of the people's unbelief. Mark 6:6 says:

And He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Just as Jesus was astonished by a lack of faith, Paul was astonished by how quickly the Galatians were turning away from God and deserting the true gospel of grace for a false gospel of works.

The word deserting carries with it the idea of willfully forsaking one's former belief and embracing another.

Paul's use of the present tense suggests that the process of desertion was still going on, and not yet complete. so it was still possible to turn the Galatians back to the truth.

The object of the desertion is not some doctrine or teaching, but the One who called you, referring not to Paul but to God Himself. They were turning *away* from a Person (from Him who called you) and they were turning *to* a different gospel – a false gospel. **To turn away from the true gospel is to turn away from the Person of Jesus Christ.** The Galatians were turning away from God and His grace to a different gospel, which was actually not a gospel.

The Greek word used for different here means not of the same nature, form, class, or kind. **The Judaizers were not just preaching something that was only a difference in emphasis, they were teaching a totally different gospel.**

Those who promote a different gospel usually say things like, "We know our message is different than Paul's message. He has his truth, and we have ours. He has his gospel, and we have ours." But Paul totally rejected the idea that their message was a legitimate alternative gospel in any way.

The word **gospel literally means "good news."** The good news of what God has done through Christ on behalf of all men. Paul is saying that the message of the Judaizers was not good news at all! In fact, it was bad news! **The whole emphasis of the letter is that the Good News says that salvation is made possible by the free gift of God through Jesus Christ as opposed to trying to earn your salvation through your works.**

A message of salvation-by-works is not good news to a lost sinner. That message puts the burden of salvation on the sinner who has zero ability to earn his own salvation.

Yet there is something about that message that appeals to people because it appeals to their pride. It appeals to their desire to earn salvation. But the true gospel says you can never earn salvation. You are saved by looking not to yourself and saying, “I did this” but by looking to the cross and saying, “Jesus did this!”

Paul rebuked the Galatians for turning from the One who called them by His grace. And the only way to enter into that grace is not by bringing to God the works of your own hands but by emptying yourself of any thought that you can do anything to save yourself!

It means you go to Jesus like a beggar with empty outstretched hands saying, “I have nothing to add to what You did on the cross! I repent – turn from – any faith in my ability to save myself and I totally trust in Your ability to save me! That is the pure gospel! That is the good news!”

But the Galatians were turning to a gospel diametrically opposed to the message of grace, and the results were not good. They were abandoning the grace that gives life and were putting themselves under law which could only result in death.

7 Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Different translations say some people want to trouble you, disturb you, or bewilder you. The Greek word means, “to stir or agitate.” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon says it means to cause one inward commotion, take away his calmness of mind, to cause worry and doubts that result in anxiety, distress or fear.

So Paul had preached the gospel of salvation by grace and the Galatians had received it. But the Judaizers came in with a false gospel that said, “Do you really think you can be saved by grace alone? Don’t you think it will take some effort on your part? Don’t you still have to obey the Law of Moses to be made righteous?”

And that caused confusion and fear to rise up in the Galatians. What if Paul is wrong? What if salvation really is by works rather than by grace? What is really the truth? Those are the questions Paul is addressing in his letter to the Galatians.

Paul said that these false teachers want to pervert the gospel of Jesus. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon says the fact that they want to means that this is their purpose and they are resolved and determined to accomplish it.

The word pervert means "to reverse, to change to the opposite." The purpose of the Judaizers was to so change the gospel of grace that it would be the reverse of what it was, a message of salvation by good works instead of a message of salvation freely received by faith. Their goal was to transform it into something completely opposed to what it was originally, into something of an opposite nature.

It is hard to understand why someone would want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But there are a couple of possibilities here. First – these Judaizers were Jews who expressed a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, but they wanted to hold on to all the rituals, feasts and requirements of the Law of Moses that they grew up with. They wanted to syncretize grace and the Law.

Syncretism means to try to unite different beliefs or practices; especially the fusion of two or more different religions. In Galatia, this meant the fusion of Christian grace and Jewish legalism.

And today we have people who want to pick and choose from various belief systems to make up their own. In our age of tolerance, the message is that “one religion is just as good as another.” Many people today try to take the best from different religions and make up their own private religion. But putting together you own homemade belief system never works. It didn’t work in Galatia back then and it doesn’t work in America now!

It never works to try to add something to Jesus! The true gospel is Jesus plus nothing! The cross plus nothing! Grace plus nothing!

But another reason the Judaizers wanted to pervert the Gospel is that there something about the true gospel that is deeply offensive to human nature. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 says:

18 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

When we understand how offensive the true gospel is to human nature, we better understand why someone would want to pervert it.

- **The gospel offends our pride.**

It tells us we need a savior, and that we cannot save ourselves.

It gives no credit to us at all for our salvation; it is all the work of Jesus on our behalf.

- **The gospel offends our *wisdom*.**

It saves us by something many consider foolish — God becoming man and dying a humiliating, disgraceful death on a cross.

- **The gospel offends our *knowledge*.**

It tells us to believe something which goes against scientific knowledge and personal experience — that a dead man, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead in a new body that would never die again.

The gospel of Christ offends people and causes them to stumble. Romans 9:30-33 says:

The Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame."

The offensiveness of the true gospel can cause some to pervert it. So, Paul gives an extremely strong declaration against those who pervert the truth of the Gospel. Galatians 1:8-9 says:

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! 9 As we have said before, I now say again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!

Wow! These days people usually say, "It's their right to interpret the Bible the way they want to so just leave them alone." But Paul pronounces curses on them! The Greek word for cursed is anathema, which means to be banned, to be devoted to destruction.

Notice that Paul even said it about himself if he ever preached a different gospel. Listen closely – **just because someone has a supernatural experience or says that they have a message from God does not mean that it's true. That's why you need to be rooted and grounded in Christ and the truth of God's Word so you can develop spiritual discernment.**

If someone with a supernatural experience tells you to believe something that is contrary to the word of God – refuse it. If someone gives you a prophetic word that is contrary to Scripture – don't receive it. If someone has a dream or vision that doesn't line up with the Bible – reject it or that dream will be a nightmare!

Even if an angel tells you something that is contrary to the word of God – refuse it, resist it and rebuke it in Jesus’ name!

For example, the whole Mormon religion is based on revelation Joseph Smith supposedly received from an angel named Moroni. He called Moroni an angel of light. But that false revelation includes the belief that the Bible had been corrupted and the Book of Mormon was God’s way of fixing that. It includes a false gospel combining grace and works. It includes belief in a different Jesus who was born a man and became divine just like Mormons believe they can become gods. But 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 speaks of false revelation given by angels:

Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Hear me closely – I am not against supernatural experiences like dreams, visions, prophecies and angelic visitations. I’ve experienced most of those things myself - but I don’t seek them. They are by-products of seeking God. The key is staying connected to Jesus. Stay in the word and prayer and worship. That’s how you grow and mature in your faith! That’s how you develop discernment to keep you from believing lies.

When some people read that Paul pronounced curses on false teachers, they think, “Where was Paul’s love?” I’ll tell you where it was: Paul’s love was for God, the truth of the gospel and the souls that were in danger of hell.

If a gospel is false, and not “another good news” at all, then it cannot save the lost. Paul looked at this false, perverted gospel and said, “I will do everything in my power to warn the people I love not to believe a false gospel.”

There are many believers today who believe that it is not loving to tell people the good news that will save them from hell. Many do not even believe in hell. But if hell does not exist, why is Paul warning the Galatians?

Listen – **not telling people the truth is not love.** That’s putting what people think above what God thinks. That’s why Paul goes on to say in Galatians 1:10:

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul is saying that **our first obligation is to please God - not to please people.** He refused to shape his message just to please his audience. He was more concerned about pleasing God.

There is a big temptation for preachers to preach what people want to hear. Now, people give me sermon ideas, and I don't mind that. But I will never let people determine what I preach. I seek the Lord earnestly about what to preach. Listen – you don't need to hear what you want to hear or what I want you to hear! You need to hear what God wants you to hear! 2 Timothy 4:3-5 says:

3 For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.
4 They will reject the truth and chase after myths.
5 But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

One of the reasons many pastors are people pleasers is because they want to build a bigger church and they compromise to keep people. There's nothing wrong with building a bigger church, but there is something wrong with compromising the truth of the Word.

We've had people attend here because they see our name is Grace but when they see that we don't teach the hyper-grace message they want to hear, they leave. We don't change our message to keep them.

We've had people attend because we support Israel, but when they tell me we must follow Jewish dietary laws and keep the feasts, I say keep the feasts if you want to and don't eat bacon if you don't want to, but those are not biblical requirements for Christian believers. So they usually leave and we don't change our message to keep them.

We must choose faithfulness to God and His Word over popularity! We must choose pleasing God over pleasing people!

Like Paul I say that if my goal was to please people I would not be the servant of Christ – I would be the servant of people. So I don't just pick topics I think people will like and preach on them. I don't go online and find a popular sermon and preach it. I agonize in prayer to hear from God about what He wants me to preach.

And we stick with the true Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross.

The true gospel is based on Christ and Christ alone.
It's based on grace and grace alone.
It's based on the cross and the cross alone.
All other gospels are false gospels and must be rejected in Jesus' name!