

Galatians #3

August 11, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: The One True Gospel of Grace; Galatians 1:6-10

If you look at how Paul opened the letter to the Galatians, you can't help but sense an urgency in his writing. And although he does not include his customary expressions of thanksgiving for them and gratitude for their unmistakable witness for Christ in the world, he is not uncaring. Most people notice the absence of commendation in the opening of the letter, but we should not mistake that as meaning that they don't have evidence of being Christians. The problem with the Galatians, and this is probably why Paul did not commend them—the problem was that these Galatians were leaning more and more on their *works of law* and less and less on the Gospel of Grace. So, commending them may have simply confused the issues at hand. So, Paul gets right to it, digging into the problems facing these churches in southern Galatia.

By the way, this is most likely Paul's first letter. I think it was written after the Jerusalem Council, which we can read about in Acts 15, and probably while Paul was in Corinth for 18 months, as we read in Acts 18:11. If that is the case, then the incident Paul records in Galatians 2:11ff concerning his rebuke of Peter, probably took place after Paul had returned to Antioch at the end of the first missionary journey. We can read about this in Acts 14:26-28 where it says that Paul stayed in Antioch of Syria "a long time." I think that it is likely that Peter visited Antioch during this time and was present in Antioch when the "men came down to Antioch from Judea" and began teaching the brothers a doctrine of works/righteousness very similar to what we will see was being taught and accepted in the Galatian churches.

Why is this important? Why all this concern with the timeline of events?

First, the confrontation in Antioch with the Judaizers led to a trip to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas in order to find out what was the position of the Council of apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-2). I think Peter's reaction of breaking fellowship with the Gentile believers in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-13) when the Judaizers came to town preaching and teaching that their salvation was not completed in Christ "unless [they] are *circumcised, according to the custom of Moses,*" caused Paul great consternation as he no doubt wondered exactly what Gospel the apostles and elders in Jerusalem were preaching and endorsing.

Second, with the confrontation occurring with Peter in Antioch followed by the decision of the Council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem being settled, Paul's letter to the Galatians carried more weight, especially as Paul confronts these churches in Galatia with the severe warning that anyone who preaches a gospel other than the gospel they received is under God's curse (Galatians 1:8-9). This warning ripples throughout the whole letter and is noticeable as Paul leverages his confrontation with Peter as a means to argue the point that no one—not Paul himself, not his ministry companions, not angels and not even the esteemed apostle Peter falls outside of the severe consequences that will befall anyone who preaches a false gospel.

So, this letter, absent of polite greetings, is a weighty letter issuing from Paul's deep love for God and His gospel of grace and his concern for these believers.

As we look at these few verses in Galatians 1:6-10 we must notice Paul's overarching theme, which emphasizes that there is only One True Gospel of Grace. To do that he does what many Christians today find very objectionable. 1) He rebukes them for their unfaithfulness (1:6). 2) He exposes the radical activities of the false teachers (1:7). And 3) He expresses his apostolic indignation toward the false teachers (1:8-10).

l) (1:6-7a) Paul Rebukes the Galatians for Their Unfaithfulness.

- A) Paul addresses the church: "I".
 - 1) An apostolic address follows.

- B) "I am astonished"
- 1) Bewildered, flabbergasted, appalled, shocked, etc.
 - (a) I can't help but think that he is angry, but yet full of love and deep concern. So, we have to be careful not to portray Paul as "washing his hands" of them.
 - (b) Ample evidence in Galatians supports the position that Paul believes them to be born again.
 - (i) As having the Spirit: Gal. 3:2-3, 5
 - (ii) Sons: 4:6
 - (iii) They are known by God 4:8-9
 - (iv) Called Brothers by Paul: 1:2, 11; 3:15; 4:12, 31; 5:13
 - (c) Paul is deeply concerned for these believers who are sons of God and like sons and daughters to him.
 - (i) **He rebukes them but does not reject them** as we will see!
- C) "Quickly deserting"
- 1) Quickly= speedily; almost as soon as they heard a different message they gravitated toward it.
 - 2) Deserting= changing sides; falling away; **turning to another**= A turncoat.
 - (a) This further indicates that they had rec'd The True Gospel of God. Yet now they are abandoning the precious message of the gospel of grace alone through faith in Christ alone!
- D) "The One who called you by the grace of Christ"
- 1) Not Paul, but God! God is the One who called them. It's God's gospel. It's His free grace given in Christ!
 - 2) "Called": God's call is effectual accomplishing salvation for those He calls!
 - (a) Calling **effectual**: becoming and remaining the Children of God: Romans 8:30
 - (b) Calling **accomplished**: the Christian life being lived out: 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-9
- E) "A different gospel"
- 1) (1:7a) no gospel at all.
 - (a) A counterfeit \$100 bill is not a \$100 bill. It is made of paper and it looks like it; but it is not!
 - 2) Compare the True Gospel and the "No Gospel"
 - (a) **True Gospel=Christ + Nothing**. The True Gospel exults in Christ and His finished work alone!
 - (b) **The "No Gospel"= Christ + anything else**.
 - (i) The false gospel incorporates the following damnable errors:
 - (a) For the Galatians: Circumcision and law of Moses must finish Christ's work.
 - (b) Christ + your efforts of law keeping in order to be saved.
 - 3) **PRN: Gospel Truth: "If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! (Gal. 2:21)"**
- F) Application:
- 1) Remember Paul rebuked them but did not reject them. Just like Hebrews 12:5-6 reminds us that the Lord disciplines those He loves, so to Paul is applying corrective word of rebuke to spare the Galatians from completely deserting the True Gospel.
 - 2) Paul had to defend the True Gospel at the risk of hurting feelings. Sometimes the truth hurts.
- II) **(1:7b) Paul Exposes the Radical Activities of the False Teachers.**
- A) The force of the words: "throwing you into confusion":
- 1) Striking the spirit; casting commotion in your spirit; disturbing.
 - (a) Read also Galatians 5:10: "The one throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty..."
 - (i) Evidently the churches overflowed with agitation. The "some people" were *agitators* (5:12) whose message was producing bickering and strife within the church body (5:15)
- B) The false teachers were causing great unrest and uncertainty within the church.
- 1) But the True Gospel produces eternal life, peace with God, brotherly love and the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.
 - 2) The False gospel, the "no gospel" produced all that is contrary to grace.

- (a) Where there is no True Gospel there is no “fruit of the Spirit”.
 - (b) Where there is no True Gospel there is no true brotherly love produced by the Spirit.
 - (c) Where there is no True Gospel there is no peace with God.
 - (d) Where there is no True Gospel there is no eternal life.
- C) Paul adamantly defends the True Gospel of Christ because it is God’s one and only Gospel.
- D) Application:
- 1) There is only one gospel to defend. And defend it we must **dogmatically**.
 - (a) John Calvin said, “A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God’s truth is attacked and yet would remain silent.”
 - (i) And as we are about to see, Paul bites the enemies of God’s Gospel with sharp teeth.

III) (1:8-10) Paul Expresses His Apostolic Indignation Toward the False Teachers.

- A) Paul has established through his introductory argument that the doctrine of the True Gospel is an unquestionable truth, an immovable doctrine. Now he bites, and he bites hard.
- B) Paul’s indignation is expressed in the strongest of terms.
 - 1) First, notice that Paul is not attacking the believing, yet gullible churches of Galatia.
 - (a) He rebuked the Galatians but did not reject them.
 - (i) In Jude expresses a godly, Christ-like, gospel informed attitude toward those believers who have been beguiled. He writes in Jude :22-23:
 - (a) “Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”
 - 1. The same principle applies toward the Galatians and should be our attitude toward erring believers in our day.
 - (ii) These Galatians, like many Christians today, were like the Corinthians Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 who were building on the foundation of Christ using worthless things such as wood, hay, stubble and straw. And they were described as those barely escaping the flames. But they were dear to Paul. And those who are building on anything other than Christ need to be firmly, but lovingly rebuked.
 - 2) Second, notice that Paul does not spare anyone from the threat of God’s curse.
 - (a) Anathema is an eternal curse from God upon anyone who preaches a false gospel.
 - (i) (1:8) Anathema would include angels, Paul and the men accompanying him, even Peter as evidenced in Galatians 2.
 - (ii) (1:9) Paul reiterates what he must have told them in a previous visit—anyone who preaches a false gospel (Christ + anything else) would be subject to an eternal curse.
- C) Why did Paul take such a strong position concerning the Gospel and why should we?
 - 1) The glory of Christ was at stake. Anything added to Christ’s work that implies or declares that His work was incomplete is degrading to Christ and His holy work of salvation.
 - (a) As Paul said in Galatians 2:21, it makes Christ’s cross and His death useless and of no consequence. In that case the True Gospel has been compromised and undermined.
 - 2) The souls of men are at stake. To cause someone to stumble over Christ... Jesus said, “it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and thrown into the sea.
 - 3) It widely unacceptable for Christians to have strong opinions. But the gospel is a hill to die on!
 - (a) Be careful how you respond when anyone voices another Way to God.
 - (i) If they are simply in error, gently correct them. Lead them to the True Gospel.
 - (ii) But if they willfully preach or proclaim a false gospel, you must take a courageous stand for Christ, clarifying the True Gospel of Grace, which is Christ + nothing = Everything!
 - (a) 2 John 10-11: “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wickedness.”