

Message #3

Galatians 1:6-9

I begin tonight by telling you a story that was told many years ago by H. A. Ironside. A woman was traveling on a train with her little baby from the west to a city in the east. It was a very cold and wintry day and sleeting snow was blowing and drifting and covering everything in sight. In fact, the snow was so bad that a snow plow actually went in front of the train to clear the tracks. The woman was supposed to get off at a small train station where she was to be met by friends. The woman was very nervous because she could not see so she asked the conductor to be sure to let her know when she got to the right station. The conductor agreed to do it and he told her to stay right where she was until he came and got her and told her to get off. The woman said, "You won't forget me will you?" He said, "Trust me, I'll tell you when it is time for you to get off."

Well a business man was sitting across from the woman and overheard the conversation and said, "I see you are nervous about finding your station?" He said, "I know this country well and your stop will be the first stop after this particular city. Sometimes these conductors are forgetful, so I will see to it that you get off at the right spot and I'll help you with your luggage." The woman was relieved and she thanked the man. After a while, they came to the city and the man said, "Your stop will be the next one." The train came to a stop and the woman looked for the conductor but he was nowhere to be found. The business man said, "He obviously forgot" so he got her baggage and opened the door and he stepped off the train and helped the woman and her baby get off the train. He climbed back in and took off with the train.

A few minutes later, the conductor came and said, "Well that is odd, there was a woman here who wanted to get off at this station and she wanted me to tell her when to get off." The man said, "Yes, she was here and you forgot her so I saw to it that she got off at the last stop." The conductor turned pale—he said that last stop was an emergency stop to check the tracks. He said you have put that woman and her baby out in wild country in the middle of a blizzard. The train immediately started backing up and it backed up for several miles and the woman was found frozen to death with her dead baby in her arms. This horrible event happened because of one little bit of wrong information.

As terrible as it is for this to happen in this physical and temporal world, it does not even compare to what can happen to the soul in the eternal world. Wrong information will not put you into a snowstorm; it can and it will put you into fiery hell.

The Bible is flexible in many areas; but not when it comes to the saving grace Gospel. There is no flexibility. The Bible, and especially the Apostle Paul, makes it clear that what saves is faith alone in Christ alone. Faith plus nothing. No works save; no religion saves; no keeping the law saves; no human merit saves; only faith in Jesus Christ saves. **The true Gospel of God is a pure Gospel of grace. This theme is stressed over and over again in this epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18).**

In fact, Paul said in Romans that the entire grace system is a non-works system and if you mix works into grace, it is no longer grace (Romans 11:6). That point is dogmatically developed here:

IF ANY PERSON COMES TO YOU PRESENTING ANOTHER GOSPEL OTHER THAN THE PURE GRACE OF GOD, HE IS TO BE ACCURSED.

Years ago, a famous minister was being interviewed by Larry King and he was asked if there were such a thing as a curse. The minister said no, there is no such thing as a curse. Well there are many curses and even though this answer pleased Larry King, it was not true to the Word of God.

The whole world lies under a curse and if someone comes preaching or teaching another message other than pure grace found in Jesus Christ, he is accursed and we are to pronounce the curse on him. The same apostle who encouraged people put various curses on people. This to me is so interesting because **Paul's big concern for the church was not numbers or dollars or programs; it was faulty doctrine and teaching and preaching.**

Paul did not cut any slack for a false teacher. He did not cut any slack to one who messed with grace. He saw them as dangerous agents of Satan and that is the way he wanted the church to see them. You don't fellowship with false teachers. You do not associate with false teachers. You do not eat with false teachers. You do not befriend false teachers. You curse them.

Why is that? Is Paul a mean man? He is a man who is interested in people going to heaven. False teachers will not get you to heaven by their codes and works system. They lead you straight into hell. So Paul says let them be accursed. In all reality, "let them go to hell"; "let them be damned."

In these opening verses there are three sharp points Paul wants to drive home. In most of his epistles Paul starts off with something positive and commends people, not the Galatians. He starts out swinging hard. This is serious business. Grace is not some tolerant system that just loves everybody, no matter what they believe. Grace is serious business; it is not some free-for-all system.

SHARP POINT #1 – Paul was amazed by the quick defection and desertion of the Galatians from Grace. **1:6**

Paul does not begin Galatians in some flattering way. He certainly is not out to talk in a way that is politically correct to most people. He is not interested in telling people what they want to hear. He is a truth-setter. He preaches truth and he tells the truth.

Now he begins in **verse 6** by saying, "I am amazed." This is an indicative mood, present tense verb.

What that means is that Paul was continually amazed and baffled by the fact that these Galatians could be so quickly swayed to the point that they would desert the wonderful Gospel of pure grace.

The adverb “quickly” has to do with quick speed. Paul was continually amazed that this group of people, who were saved by God’s grace, could so quickly be convinced to turn away from God’s grace to some law-coded legalistic system of righteousness. But that is precisely what had happened.

These people were not just fuzzy in their thinking; they were “deserting” the whole grace system found in Jesus Christ. In fact, the verb “desert” is present tense, middle voice, which means **these Galatians were in the continual process of allowing themselves to be swayed from the grace Gospel that saved them.** The middle voice puts all of the blame on the Galatians. These Galatians were a bunch of “religious turncoats.”

Make no mistake about this point. It does not take long for someone to mess up your doctrine and pull you away from grace. Listen to some smooth-talking religious leader who is not fully grounded in grace and he can and will mess up your theology.

Listen to the wrong person and it can affect you. Children desert parents. Husbands desert wives. Wives desert husbands by listening to wrong advice given by wrong people. But the most dangerous of all is to desert grace and desert God and be pulled back into law.

SHARP POINT #2 – Paul points out the distorted message proclaimed by the deceivers. **1:6-7**

Whenever someone starts tampering with the pure grace of God, it is more than just a difference of opinion; it is a demonic and dangerous assault on God’s revealed truth designed to pull people away from true salvation. Whenever someone mixes law or traditions or rule-keeping with grace, that one is presenting a false gospel.

Dr. Bruce Barton said the false messages takes on various forms (*Galatians*, p. 17):

- 1) Some weaken the message—downplay the depravity of man and the evil of sin.
- 2) Some dilute the message—try to make the cross inoffensive or more palatable.
- 3) Some distort the message—grace plus something else.
- 4) Some blend the message—grace fits nicely blended into man’s religion.
- 5) Some poison the message—elevate man and his works and deny Jesus Christ’s work.
- 6) Some deflect the message—promote their own religious ideas, not solely the Bible.

But regardless of how men do this, they are all false messages and they are all distortions that will lead you away from grace.

In **verses 6-7** Paul brings out four facts about one who tries to mingle any works or O.T. law into grace:

Fact #1 - Any mingling of works or O.T. law or legalism with grace is a “different” gospel.

1:6b

The pronoun “different” here is the Greek word “heteros,” which means another of a different kind or quality. Paul’s point is that any mingling of any works or law into grace is a different kind of message other than what God revealed.

Paul said in Romans 11:6, “But if it is by grace it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Do not miss this. Any message that interjects any works of any kind into the message is a different message other than grace. It is not the grace message.

If someone says it is faith plus trying to keep the O.T. law, it is a different message.

If someone says it is faith plus your works, it is a different message.

If someone says it is faith plus obedience to our system of religion, it is a different message.

Any insertion of anything into grace is not grace.

Fact #2 - Any mingling of works or O.T. law or legalism with grace is not the same gospel.

1:7a

The pronoun “another” used here is allos, which means another of the same kind. Paul wanted to reinforce and drive home the point that not only does mingling something into grace present a different gospel, it is not the same gospel at all that Paul taught. Augustine said concerning the grace Gospel that “Any other gospel is no gospel.”

Paul wants all to see that there is only one pure grace Gospel and any message that does not present the good news of the fact that salvation is solely by believing in Jesus Christ with no works, no law-keeping, no merit, no promises, is a completely different gospel. It is not the same saving and sanctifying Gospel of God if it adds any human works or rules or laws to it in any way.

The Gospel is very narrow. There are not multiple ways to get to heaven; there is only one way. That one way is by faith in Jesus Christ. Now many will tell you “all religions are good.” This is a satanic lie. Most religions will send you into hell. Only Jesus Christ can save you. Place your faith in anything other than him and you are not believing the same Gospel that was clearly revealed to Paul.

Fact #3 - Any mingling of works or O.T. law or legalism with grace is a disturbing gospel.

1:7b

The participle “disturbing” is present tense meaning that a false gospel, presented by false teachers continually troubles, perplexes, disquiets and disturbs the faith and the minds of the people.

Anything other than grace will trouble you greatly. Why? Because you will continually look at yourself and be troubled by the truth that you have missed the mark of God and not measured up thousands and thousands of times. Grace is not troubling because you don't look at yourself; you look at Jesus Christ.

When people listen to a false teacher present some false system that is just a little off, it will not strengthen their faith; it will disturb it. Take for example the concept of Lordship salvation. It does not strengthen people; it disturbs them because it is just a little off.

Let us take the matter of altar calls, which are man-made. Now let us say you are in a church and they are always giving altar calls as part of the Gospel. In other words, they are saying if you want to be saved, walk forward. Walk the aisle. Come to the front of the church. I missed that in studying Paul. But many churches will tell you this. That is not the grace Gospel. But suppose you are in a church where they are always saying that and teaching that. You will begin to look at yourself and be troubled by it if you haven't walked forward. Why is that? Because you are looking at yourself in response to a message that is not even the Gospel. Add anything to grace and it is disturbing.

Fact #4 - Any mingling of works or O.T. law or legalism with grace is a distortion of the Gospel. **1:7c**

The word "distortion" is one that means to change by corrupting and perverting and turning something around. When you add anything to grace, you pervert grace and change the whole message.

Grace says, "you believe" in Jesus Christ for everything. Whenever someone adds to that something "you do," it perverts grace.

If you put one drop of poison into a drink, you change the drink from something good to something that can destroy you. If you add one drop of works or one drop of O.T. law to grace, you poison grace and it can destroy you and your faith.

SHARP POINT #3 – Paul presents the attitude we are to have toward grace polluters. **1:8-9**

If anyone presents another gospel other than pure grace "let him be accursed." This is a present imperative, meaning this is a continual command. You do not play patty-cake with someone who is trying to add something to grace. You do not go to their religious gatherings to hear their nice little messages—you let them be accursed.

Paul says I don't care who it is, how good the person looks or sounds or how heavenly or holy he pretends to be. If "any man"; if a person starts propagating another gospel other than pure grace, let him be accursed.

If a person tries to tell you that going to heaven is contingent upon your works or your keeping the O.T. law or your obedience, let him be accursed. Let him go to hell.

False teachers are very polished men. They can be eloquent, emotional, intellectual and entertaining. But know this; they are satanic. Satan motivates them to be zealous about their religion. Listen to the chilling description given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:15—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." **Jesus Christ calls these false teachers "sons of hell."**

Paul says let these false religious men be accursed. The word "accursed" is not the word "excommunicated." It is much stronger. This is the Greek word "anathema." This particular word means let him be the recipient of the condemnatory wrath and curse and destruction of God. As S. Lewis Johnson said, this is really saying "let him go to hell." Paul says in **verse 9** this is not the first time I have said this. I have said this before. I have told you about the danger of false teachers. If any man, I don't care how polished or religious, comes to you and presents to you a message that says you can be saved by your works, or by keeping the O.T. law or by following their denominational codes, let him be accursed. Tell such a person you are going to hell trusting in your religion and trusting in yourself.

Now some would say today, well Paul, you are getting all worked up. Just tone it down a bit. Paul says when it comes to dangerous heresy you do not tone it down. Let heretics be accursed.

If you have believed in Jesus Christ, you never have to worry about the condemnatory wrath of God. If you have Jesus Christ in your life, you do have the responsibility to spot false teachers and get away from them.