

**Galatians 1: 8 and 9; “St. Paul’s Apostolic Curse”, Message # 4 in a series entitled –  
“Christ has made us free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

The false teachers who had come to the churches of Galatia must have been very persuasive men for these young Christians in those churches to have turned so quickly away from the gospel. Just think of their initial joy of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of His precious work of redemption as a free gift. There were no works of their own that could have ever merited salvation, no matter how good those works were. Truly then, when a person comes to know and to feel the guilt of their sins, and they come to see what they righteously deserve from God because of them, that is, the eternal punishment of hell, how precious and wonderful it becomes to them, to know that all of their sins were forgiven, when they first believed in Christ.

And now think with me about how it was with these people in the churches of Galatia. Here were these false teachers, who were coming to them, who were telling them that this glorious gospel that Paul had preached to them was a mistake; that they couldn’t be saved by it, that they had to have something more of the ceremonial law, or their own obedience to the moral law, added to Christ’s finished work, in order for them to truly be saved? This was what was so troubling to Paul. And it was this that led him to place his apostolic curse on these false prophets, and he does so here in no uncertain terms, repeating it twice. This is what I want us to look at more closely at this time; this Apostolic curse. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – We want to know what is meant by this Apostolic curse? And 2<sup>nd</sup> – We need to know, who it is that this curse applies to. I pray that each of us will see just how important it is to hold fast the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – What is meant by this Apostolic Curse?**

“But even if we, (Paul and his co-workers) or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” I believe that this particular curse is Paul’s announcing by his Apostolic authority that God’s just and eternal wrath and His judgment would be upon those persons who were perverting the gospel. There is no doubt that he was faithfully representing God and Christ in doing so. It was not a personal curse. It was spoken in this denunciatory fashion, to both warn and to declare to them, and to anyone else trying to tamper with the truth of the gospel, that they would most certainly come to know the everlasting woe and misery of being punished in hell, if they did not repent of it.

If a false prophet or teacher knew the truth of the gospel, and then he deliberately tampered with it, he had no hope that he would ever be saved. He had done this willfully. He had not done it ignorantly, as the Apostle Paul himself did, before his conversion. Let’s think about 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 1, verse 12. “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” So, Christ had mercy on Saul (Paul) before his conversion, opening his eyes and giving him grace, because God was intending to save him as one of his elect people. He was going to be a chosen vessel, a chosen instrument of God’s in preaching to both Jews and Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But where Paul differed, humanly speaking, from these false teachers who had come to the churches of Galatia was that he persecuted Christians and preached a false gospel ignorantly, not realizing that the true gospel was really true. These men who came to the churches in Galatia knew the true gospel, and they were masquerading themselves as true Christians and true messengers of God. But actually they were “angels of darkness” disguised as angels of light. They were adding insufferable burdens to the pure grace of the gospel of Christ; burdens which no one could bear. They added circumcision and the ceremonial works of the law, to the gospel. It was like poisoning the well of truth, and Paul knew that it would spiritually deceive and it would damn all those who drank from it. This was the reason for the Apostolic curse. We need to see the strength of Paul’s

Holy Spirit taught convictions in this regard to his Apostolic curse. “Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed.” Those who do consciously deceive others in this way of adding something to the true gospel, of salvation being by grace alone through faith alone in Christ, are already under the sentence of damnation from God, if they knowingly preach a gospel which adds anything to Christ’s finished work. If a person adds anything to faith in Christ’s finished work, as the basis for a person’s being saved and justified in the sight of God, it is a false gospel. If a man knew the truth which the 12 Apostles and Paul taught, and were still wicked enough to think that something more needed to be added to it, something of the law, they fell under this curse.

But we also need to see another usage, by Paul, of this word “curse”, so that we might understand Paul’s great desire for the salvation of his fellow-countrymen, the Jews. So I would have you to turn with me over to Romans Chapter 9, verse 1. “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.” “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.” “Amen.”

Here we see that the Apostle had great sorrow and continual grief over the judicial blindness of mind and heart that had been placed upon the Jews, by God, because they had rejected their Messiah; the vast body of them. He wished that he himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren according to the flesh. What does he mean by this? Does he mean that he was wishing that he could die and go to hell for them, so that they might be saved? Some have thought that this was what Paul meant. But I do not think so. Would a true Christian ever be content to be eternally separated from Christ, and everlastingly banished from His presence, and never enjoy sweet communion with Him ever again, in order that others of his kinsmen might be saved? I do not think so.

This was not something which could ever take place, or come to pass because of God’s righteousness. It is impossible that God would approve of such a thing because although it would prove Paul’s love for his kinsmen, it would only demonstrate his love for them to be greater than his love for Christ, in wishing this thing. He would be wishing to be parted from Christ for their sakes which could never be, because it is inconsistent, as John Gill says, with the principles of both nature and grace. It is contrary to the principles of nature, for a man to desire his own damnation upon any consideration whatever; and it is contrary to the principle of grace, which always strongly inclines to be with Christ, and not to be separated from him. Gill goes on to give a very helpful explanation of what Paul was really wishing for, in relation to his desire for the conversion of the Jews.

This is what he says: “Now let it be observed, that the word *αναθεμα*, here translated “accursed”, answers to the Hebrew word *חרם*, which, with the Jewish writers, is one sort of excommunication in use among them, and the greater sort; the form of it, as given by them, is very horrible, and shocking.” “And so we may observe the word “anathema” here used is mentioned as a form of excommunication in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:22; of all such as love not Christ and his Gospel, and makes it appear by their principles or practices, or both, that they do not, and so ought to be removed from the communion of churches.” “Now, taking the word in this sense, the apostle’s meaning is, that he could wish to be excommunicated from Christ; that is, from the body of Christ, from the church of Christ, Christ mystical, as the word “Christ” is used, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12; *that is*, to be deprived of the ordinance of Christ’s house, to be degraded from his office in it, and not to be so much as a member in it.” “He saw that these branches, the people of the Jews, were going to be cut off, and no longer to be of the church of God; and such was his affection to them, that he could have wished rather to be cut off himself, that they might be spared; and this was an instance

of *his* great love to them, since, next to Christ, the church and the ordinances of it were exceeding dear unto, and highly valued by the apostle.” (end of quote) So, we see, the sense of this text in Romans 9: 1-5, of the word “accursed”, is that it means to be cut off; to actually have the privilege to suffer and to die for his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Jews, if they could possibly be saved by it. The sense of accursed in the text that we are studying tonight is that the false teachers would be cut off from all hope of salvation and perish forever in hell if they knowingly and willingly perverted the gospel.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Who is it that this curse applies to?**

“But if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” The Apostle Paul places this curse hypothetically upon himself and any angel who would attempt to preach any other gospel than the true one. And he places it upon anyone else who preaches any other gospel. Why should Paul hypothetically place this curse upon himself? To show that he himself needed to hold fast to the true gospel and not compromise it one iota. He knew that it was possible to make shipwreck of his labors for the faith if he did not hold fast to the doctrinal truth of the gospel. Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1, verse 15. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Now that is the gospel. There is no admixture of meritorious law works with gospel grace in order to be saved or justified in God’s sight.

Indeed he warns against a wrong use of the law in chapter 1 of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, verse 8. “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” So, we see here that the law is not made for a righteous man; either to justify himself before God, or to be sanctified by it. Its purpose is to point out sin to people, and to show them the perfect standard of righteousness which God has; which is a good guide for our conduct, but it has no power to give to us in order to keep it. Only Christ, through the Spirit, has that power to give us grace, so that we will love the law, and use it to rightly to inform ourselves of our duty. We go about to keep God’s commandments by faith in Christ; not to justify ourselves.

Look at 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 18-20. “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and good conscience, which some having rejected have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” So we see here that Hymenaeus and Alexander had suffered shipwreck because they did not make conscience of holding fast the faith; that is the doctrines of the gospel. In their case it was probably the doctrine of the resurrection. (2 Timothy 2: 17) In this case here, there were two men who were professed Christians, and they were blaspheming Christ by not preaching in Jesus the resurrection. This was departing from the faith; that is, they were departing from the doctrines of the gospel and faith in Jesus only, and then teaching others the same.

Paul used his Apostolic power to “deliver them over to Satan”, to deliver them over to the torture of the evil one upon their bodies (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5: 5), that they might repent and their souls be saved in the Day of Christ. This, too, was a form of the Apostolic curse. No man or pastor has the power to do such a thing in our day. The church’s power is excommunication. But, you can see from this, that a person can make shipwreck of their faith, and yet later on realize, by the power of the Spirit’s convincing them, that they were wrong. In that case they prove themselves to be true Christians. Spiritual shipwreck does not always necessarily end in damnation. Paul was physically shipwrecked 3 different times and lived through them all. But we need to see that there is also a

shipwreck of faith which a man cannot come back from; a shipwreck which does not result in those persons who have departed from the gospel, coming to their senses, and finally finding repentance from false doctrine, and the self-justifying dead works of the law. That kind of shipwreck is fatal finally to their souls and they perish and end up in hell.

Why does the Apostle speak hypothetically of an angel from heaven preaching a false gospel in verse 8? Because it is possible to be deceived by evil angels posing as true angels from heaven who attempt to persuade self-righteous people that there is more that is necessary to be justified in God's sight, than faith in Christ. Think about 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11, verses 12-15. Paul says here – “But what I do, (preaching the gospel of salvation in Christ, for free) I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.” “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into an angel of light.” “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

### **Conclusion and Application**

So, what is the conclusion and application of all these things that I have been saying to you? It is that we should hold fast to the true gospel of Jesus Christ; that salvation is not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. One application which I think will be helpful in this time of the coronavirus, that I will close with. In God's holy law, the first commandment is that you shall have no other gods before God. It will be very important in this time and in the days to come, in relation to the judgments of God upon our nation and other nations, that we as Christians do not compromise the truth by saying that there is any other way to know God or to find salvation except through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we live our lives before people around us saying that it is perfectly all right for them to worship other gods besides the only true and living God of the Bible, we are preaching and sharing another gospel.

For there is no other name under heaven, by which we must be saved, than that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us preach the uniqueness of Christ among men; that He is very God of very God, and yet also a perfect Man. He is the only perfect One, the only Righteous One, and for us to act as though He were any less, or that any of the gods of the false religions of the world are on the same level with God and His Christ, does no service to our great God and King. Neither will it help further Christ's kingdom, to in any way to accept or to promote the false gospel of men's works as the way of salvation which is what the false religions of the world are all about. The Devil would like nothing better than for those who call themselves Christians to compromise at this point. He knows that there is only one true and living God, but he would promote many gods in the name of people loving one another and accepting each other in their sins. But God would save you from your sins, and free you from your false misconceptions of Him and the truth. He made you for Himself, to love Him and to serve Him with your life and strength. You will not, however do that without believing in the true gospel of Christ.

Yes, we have freedom of religion in our nation, but it is not to promote ideas which are false and damning. The truth is found in the Bible, and the Bible contains the gospel in the New Testament Scriptures. If you will not heed it and you want to decide for yourself what true religion is, it is like saying – I will just change the sign to read – The way to eternal life what I or some other man has decided is true. I will promote my way and make up a new sign. The meaning of life is found in my way, which is not believing the Bible, but some selfish or false religion that I make up. What is happening is, that actually you will not receive the sign that God has already put up. You will find yourself directing people to a road which ends at the edge of a cliff. And yes, if you go on that road you will perish, and you will take others with you. You have put up your own sign. You thought that you were wise, but you will fall into the bottomless Pit. May it not be so for anyone listening to this message today. Be wise, and fear God by believing in the truth of His word the Bible, which always directs all men in the right way, to eternal life.

