

# “No Other Gospel”

(Galatians 1: 6-10)

## Introduction

➤ The Scriptural passage we are studying this morning from the New Testament book of Galatians is very similar to an Old Testament story found in the book of Exodus:

**Ex 32:1-11** ~ “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, ‘Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ <sup>2</sup>So Aaron said to them, ‘Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ <sup>3</sup>So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ <sup>5</sup>When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.’ <sup>6</sup>And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

<sup>7</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. <sup>8</sup>They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” <sup>9</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.’

<sup>11</sup>But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, ‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?’”

**Ex 32:19-24** ~ “And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. <sup>20</sup>He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it. <sup>21</sup>And Moses said to Aaron, ‘What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?’ <sup>22</sup>And Aaron said, ‘Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. <sup>23</sup>For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ <sup>24</sup>So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.’”

**Ex 32:26-28** ~ “then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, ‘Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.’ And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. <sup>27</sup>And he said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’” <sup>28</sup>And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.”

**Ex 32:30** ~ “The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’”

➤ This grave and violent Old Testament story is similar, in many ways, to the passage we will be studying from the New Testament this morning. Like Moses before the Israelites, the apostle Paul has found the “churches of Galatia” (1:2) to have “quickly” (1:6) abandoned their true and pure faith in the Lord God. Like the Israelites, the Galatian Christians were guilty of departing from the Lord shortly after being delivered by the Lord. Like Moses, Paul is angry at the fact that these professing believers were so easily led astray by false teaching. And like Moses, Paul is not afraid to harshly confront and correct them for their error.

In Paul's day, however, the people did not fashion a golden calf and worship it. But make no mistake, the sin of the Galatians was severe and spiritually deadly. They were guilty of embracing and proclaiming a false gospel. And, as Paul made clear, this is absolutely unacceptable as it is a form of idolatry.

*The true Gospel is a salvation by God's grace alone  
through faith alone in Christ alone.*

➤ After the initial salvific salutation (vs.1-5), Paul launches into his defense of the Gospel and his admonishing these Christians for being deceived by a false gospel.

**Gal 1:6-10** ~ "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>7</sup>not that there is another one, 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. <sup>10</sup>For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

### Dangers of believing a false ("different") gospel:

➤ In warning Christians against believing a false gospel, the apostle Paul gave four severe dangers to consider. These warnings can be summed up in four strong words.

#### **1. DESERTION (vs.6)**

➤ The apostle Paul was flat-out frustrated and flabbergasted that these Christians were so easily influenced away from the truth Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote, "*I am astonished*" (vs.6). The Greek word translated "astonished" (*thaumazo*) means to wonder or marvel at, to be struck with astonishment or admiration. It can carry either a positive or negative connotation (i.e. being impressed or horrified). Paul's meaning here is the latter – he is not impressed, but rather negatively shocked by their willingness to accept a false gospel.

At the end of verse six, Paul explains that his astonishment comes from the fact that they are "*turning to a different gospel*" (vs.6). As we will see, this so-called "gospel" is "different" from the one they originally heard and believed from the apostle Paul (see vs.8).

➤ Paul expressed his dismay, and perhaps even outrage, in possibly the severest of terms: "*that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ*" (vs.6). We cannot miss the connection that Paul is making here: To embrace a false gospel is tantamount to deserting God! Paul's words could hardly be more blatant or forceful. He was not just accusing them of believing a false gospel, but accusing them of walking away from God the Father (see vs.1). The word "deserting" (*metatithemi*) rightly connotes a military image of deserters as traitors and turncoats. We must understand that doctrine is neither impersonal nor inconsequential.

In believing a false Gospel, these Christians were in danger of committing apostasy (i.e. the abandonment or renunciation of their Christian beliefs) [note: the verb "deserting" is in the present tense, middle voice]. They were willfully forsaking the God who saved them by grace – "*him who called you in the grace of Christ*" (vs.6) – and enslaving themselves again to the law of Moses.

✓ **Illust:** "These Galatians were true believers who had come to salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit (3:3, 5; 4:6, 8-9). They were Christian brothers (1:2, 11; 3:15; 4:12, 31; 5:13) who had become seriously confused" (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*; 1:6).

**Gal 3:1-6** ~ "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup>Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being

perfected by the flesh? <sup>4</sup>Did you suffer so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup>Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith – <sup>6</sup>just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’?”

**Gal 4:8-11** ~ “Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. <sup>9</sup>But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? <sup>10</sup>You observe days and months and seasons and years! <sup>11</sup>I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.”

**Gal 5:2-4** ~ “Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. <sup>3</sup>I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup>You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”

➤ Notice that Paul was also astonished that the believers had deserted God *“so quickly”* (vs.6; a word that can mean easily or rapidly, or both). Paul was not surprised that false teachers had come and taught a false gospel, but shocked that the Galatian Christians so readily accepted the false teaching of a false gospel. It seems as though the false teachers came in as soon as, or shortly after, Paul had left. Paul was stunned at how fickle (unstable) these Christians were – how easily they gave in to a false gospel.

We must be constantly on guard against any false teaching; not judgmental or negatively critical, but knowledgeable and discerning. Christians cannot afford to be ignorant or gullible. We have been warned repeatedly to beware of false teachers – even within the church – and to not think that we are somehow immune to, or beyond, being deceived (see 1Cor.10:12).

**Matt 7:15** ~ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

**Matt 24:24** ~ “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”

**Acts 20:28-30** ~ “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

## 2. **DISTORTION** (vs.7)

➤ Notice that Paul is quick to assert that there is only one true Gospel: *“not that there is another one”* (vs.7). It should be clear that any “gospel” other than the true Gospel is a false gospel. Once the true Gospel is edited, nuanced, altered or replaced it is no longer the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is why the Galatians’ embracing of “another” Gospel was so severe – as we’ve seen – they were abandoning the one true Gospel and therefore believing a false gospel.

➤ False teachers had infiltrated the “churches of Galatia” (vs.2) – no doubt as “wolves in sheep’s clothing” – teaching that a person needed to obey the laws of Moses (specifically circumcision; see Gal.5:2-6; 6:12-15; cf. Rom.2:28-29; Col.2:11).

**Gal 2:4** ~ “Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in – who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery”

**2 Peter 2:1-2** ~ “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup>And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

**Jude 4** ~ “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

- A Paul described these false teachers as those *“who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ”* (vs.7). The Greek word translated “trouble” (*tarasso*) literally and figuratively means “to stir” (see Jn.5:7; 11:33; 12:27; 14:1). This same exact word was used by Luke in the book of Acts to describe the work of false teachers in Berea:

**Acts 17:13** ~ “But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.”

Similarly, false teachers had come to Galatia in order to stir deception and confusion – and they were successful. These Galatian Christians were not strong or stable in their faith to withstand, or discern, the teaching of a false – legalistic, works-based, self-righteous – gospel. Consequently, they were in deep and serious trouble.

✓ **Illust:** “Paul calls the false apostles troublers of the church because they taught circumcision and the keeping of the Law as needful unto salvation. They insisted that the Law must be observed in every detail. They were supporters in this contention by the Jews, with the result that those who were not firmly established in faith were easily persuaded that Paul was not a sincere teacher of God because he ignored the Law. The Jews were offended at the idea that the Law of God should be entirely ignored by Paul and that the Gentiles, former idol-worshippers, should gratuitously attain to the station of God’s people without circumcision, without the penitentiary performance of the law, by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus” (Martin Luther; *Luther’s Commentary on Galatians*; Gal.1:7).

- Paul outed these false teachers as wanting *“to distort the gospel of Christ”* (vs.7). Although “distort” is a good translation of the Greek word (*metastrepho*), it may not be strong enough. For the original word means “to turn something into its opposite.” In other words, these false teachers have utterly corrupted, perverted and destroyed the true Gospel. They are, in effect, attempting to supplant the true Gospel with a false gospel.

✓ **Illust:** “To paraphrase this sentence: ‘These false apostles do not merely trouble you, they abolish Christ’s Gospel. They act as if they were the only true Gospel-preachers. For all that they muddle Law and Gospel. As a result they pervert the Gospel. Either Christ must live and the Law perish, or the Law remains and Christ must perish; Christ and the Law cannot dwell side by side in the conscience. It is either grace or law. To muddle the two is to eliminate the Gospel of Christ entirely’” (Martin Luther; *Luther’s Commentary on Galatians*; Gal.1:7).

- Once again, the true saving Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be nuanced or altered; it cannot be reduced or enlarged, downgraded or upgraded, expanded or diminished. To change the Gospel is to renounce the Gospel. To claim that God’s free saving grace must be earned by law- or ritual-keeping, is to reject the Gospel. To distort the Gospel is to lose the Gospel. Adding even a single drop of legalism to the Gospel results in a complete distortion of the Gospel.

### **3. DAMNATION (vs.8-9)**

- Paul then underscored that it is the Gospel message that is ultimately important, not the messenger. *“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”* (vs.8-9). The truth of the Gospel is not dependent upon a person’s charisma, intelligence or eloquence (see 1Cor.1:17). Therefore, the credentials or talents of the messenger are essentially irrelevant. What matters is the right proclamation of biblical truth.
- Apparently, the Galatian Christians were swayed by the impressive status, and persuasive words, of these false teachers. To expose the absurdity of such reasoning – that the messenger is equal to or greater than

the message – Paul (hypothetically) implicates himself and those who preach with him: *“But even if we ... should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed”* (vs.8).

He doubled down by stating that *“even if ... an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed”* (vs.8).

And, if there were any who were still unsure of what Paul was saying, he added: *“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”* (vs.9). The point should be abundantly clear: anyone who preaches/proclaims a Gospel other than “salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone” is proclaiming a false gospel.

✓ **Illust:** “... the apostle was reaching for the most fanciful possibilities imaginable to make his point that absolutely no messenger, no matter how seemingly godly and good, should be believed or followed if his teaching does not square with God-revealed apostolic doctrine. The truth outranks anyone’s credentials, and every teacher or preacher must be evaluated on the basis of what he says, not who he is” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*; Gal.1:8-9).

➤ Notice, in each and every case, Paul concluded with a statement of damnation: *“let him be accursed”* (vs.8, 9). The word “accursed” (*anathema*) is used to describe those who are cut-off from God; cursed or (eternally) condemned by God. The word is used six times in the New Testament (Acts 23:14; Rom.9:3; 1Cor.12:2; 16:22; Gal.1:8, 9). Here it could be aptly translated, “let him be condemned to hell!” (NET). The severity of this expression is justified as those who preach a false gospel are culpable for their false teaching – a false teaching that could effectively give unbelievers a false assurance of salvation (see Matt.18:6; Lk.17:1-2).

✓ **Illust:** “Satan does his best with television and radio to create in us a mind that is so trivial and banal and petty and earthly that we find ourselves incapable of feeling what terrifying truth is in this word *anathema*. Oh, how we need to guard ourselves from the barrage of eternity-denying entertainment. We need to cultivate a pure and childlike imagination that hears a word like *anathema* the way a child hears his first peal of thunder, or feels his first earthquake, or suffers his first storm at sea.

The Bible does not reveal to us the eternal curse of God that we may yawn and turn the page. The wrath of God is revealed to shake unbelievers out of their stupor and to take the swagger out of the Christian’s walk and the cocky twang out of his voice. Don’t skim over verses 8 and 9 quickly. There is much humbling and sobering and sanctifying to be had here” (John Piper; sermon: “When Not to Believe an Angel”; Feb.6, 1983).

➤ The one who proclaims a false gospel – i.e. distorts and/or perverts the true Gospel – is under God’s just wrath, and possibly His eternal condemnation.

#### **4. DISSIMULATION (vs.10)**

➤ Dissimulation is a form of deception in which a person attempts to conceal the truth; to hide under a false appearance or to pretend to be someone they are not. Often this duplicity occurs in an attempt to avoid something painful or unpleasant, or the means to gain favor, fame or fortune.

The Christian’s highest goal is to please God – to honor, obey and glorify in everything. The true saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is supremely and centrally based on the pleasure of God. Conversely, every form and degree of a false gospel is supremely and centrally based on the pleasure of man – either seeking to satisfy one’s one personal/sinful desires, or an attempt to gain the favor of others.

➤ In defending his biblical stance on the Gospel, and as chiding questions to those who are wavering, Paul asked: *“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (vs.10). Here Paul is exposing the potential motive behind the Galatians’ abandonment of the true Gospel – willingness to say and do anything to be accepted (and not rejected) by others. These introspective questions highlight the fact that we, as Christians, are to forsake all if need be – even family, friends and our very own lives! – in our pursuit of Christ and Christlikeness (see Eph.6:6; Col.3:22; Lk.14:26, 27, 33)!

**1 Thess 2:3-4** ~ “For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, <sup>4</sup>but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.”

➤ The truth is, some people are easily swayed by the opinions of others. For some people right/sound doctrine is not as important as strong or many friendships. Some people (Paul is speaking specifically of Christians), would rather have “*the approval of man*” rather than the approval “*of God*” (vs.10). The apostle Paul was no people-pleaser, and he certainly was not about to pervert the eternal truths of the Gospel for the temporal benefits of human approval.

**Gal 5:11** ~ “But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.”

**Gal 6:12** ~ “It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

**Gal 6:17** ~ “From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”

➤ In verse ten, Paul is asking questions that every Christian should ask themselves: “*am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?*” and “*am I trying to please man?*” (vs.10). So often, even subconsciously, we are tempted to do/say something (or not do or say something) because of our fear of people, or our desire to please others. The ongoing challenge for the Christian is to do everything for the glory of God, and to not worry about what others think. I call this “a holy indifference to human opinion.”

**Matt 15:12** ~ “Then the disciples came and said to him, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’”

**Matt 11:6** ~ “And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

**Luke 12:4-7** ~ “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! <sup>6</sup>Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. <sup>7</sup>Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

**1 Cor 10:31** ~ “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

➤ Paul then gives this extremely sobering conclusion: *If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ*” (vs.10). More often than not, a person cannot be pleasing to God and to humans at the same time. This is because the sinful desires, wisdom, principles and pleasures of this world, are diametrically opposed to the desires, wisdom, principles and pleasures of God (see Matt.6:24; Rom.6:16).

**James 4:4** ~ “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

**1 John 2:15** ~ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

**John 12:42-43** ~ “Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup>for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”

➤ Therefore, we all must make a choice to either be a people-pleaser or “*a servant of Christ*” (vs.10). As Christians, we are called to a supreme unwavering allegiance to Jesus Christ. This includes biblically affirming, declaring, living and defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ – no matter the negative consequences that may result.

**1 Kings 18:21** ~ “And Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ And the people did not answer him a word.”

1 Kings 18:21 ~ “Elijah approached all the people and said, ‘How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If the Lord is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!’ But the people did not say a word.”

**Josh 24:15** ~ “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

## Conclusion

➤ The question we all must be asking ourselves is this: Am I believing, and living according to, the true Gospel of Jesus Christ – salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? If you answered ‘yes’ to this question, then you resolve to live for the glory of Christ in everything you say and do.

If you answered ‘no’, then I earnestly urge you to study the Scriptures (seeking wise counsel) to discover the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And I encourage you to prayerfully consider your utter sinfulness before God, and your absolute need of the sinless and righteous Savior Jesus Christ.