

**Galatians:
“Justification By Faith Through Christ ALONE”**

**Part 2: 1:6-9: “Introduction”
Wednesday, October 11th, 2023**

- Good evening, Welcome to Bitterroot Valley Calvary Chapel. For those of you joining us online, welcome!

[PRAYER]

Ok, so last week, we started the letter that Paul wrote to the Galatians, which wasn't an INDIVIDUAL church; it was a group of 4 churches that Paul and Barnabas had planted during Paul's 1st missionary journey. And we'll recap why it was that Paul had written this letter as we go. So let's get into tonight's text. We're in Chapter 1 and tonight we'll read Verses 6-9. So let's read those together now. And I'm reading from the English Standard Version:

Galatians 1:6-9:

[6] *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—*

[7] *not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*

[8] *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.*

[9] *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.*

Intro:

So remember from last week, one of the things we noted that was different in this particular letter than from the others that Paul wrote was the lack of commendation or encouragement to the believers he was writing to. There was this sense of urgency and disbelief on his part about what was happening in the Galatian churches that he forgoes any niceties in the introduction and goes STRAIGHT into a very strong rebuke. And his whole reason for writing this letter was his deep concern about what was happening and his astonishment that these believers were actually TURNING AWAY FROM THE GOSPEL OF GRACE and beginning to embrace the slavish yoke of legalism from a totally false gospel. These false teachers were perverting and undermining the gospel of Christ; the very gospel that Paul had so faithfully preached to them when he was ministering to them some time earlier. And it so deeply grieved his heart that these believers who he had taught so carefully, were now - so suddenly - entertaining and embracing the false teachings of these Judaizers who were telling them that they had to become more Jewish in order to become Christians. In other words, Paul taught them the gospel of grace and now they're walking back into a system of works! Remember that they were being taught that they needed to become Jews surgically and ceremonially - and THEN they could become Christians. And all Christians had to obey and honor all of the Jewish laws, festivals, ceremonies, and traditions in order to not only obtain - but also MAINTAIN righteousness before the Lord. Blasphemy!

And in these 4 verses that we'll be looking at tonight, Paul uses some terrifyingly heavy language. Especially with regard to those who're guilty of spreading this absolutely heretical, false teaching in those churches. These people, these Judaizers, were people that Paul will ultimately warn the church to have NOTHING to do with. Because these people are what Paul says are to be "accursed". And the term "accursed" is an extremely powerful word as we'll see. It's not a casual term that you just throw around lightly.

Probably the most prominent feature, the main hallmark of Satan and his agents is deception. There are lots of examples in Scripture where they're described as such. For example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Paul says that the Antichrist will come "*...by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*" In Matthew 24:24, Jesus warns us that there will come a time that "*...false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*" In the book of Revelation (12:9), John says, "*And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...*" (all underlining in scriptural refs. added by me). Those are just a few examples that underline how Satan and his agents are hallmarked by deception. And normally, that deceptive work is done through people - particularly RELIGIOUS LEADERS. And among such religious leaders are those who pose as Christians who Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 as those who are "*...false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness*". And in terms of highlighting the deceit of Satan that's worked through humans, Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, "*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.*"

So, Satan's bread-and-butter, with regard to his deceptive work, is done through false teachers who pose as God's spokesmen. It was false teachers, claiming to preach the gospel who were the most successful in weakening the early church, epitomized by these legalistic Judaizers who were wreaking spiritual havoc on these churches in Galatia. There wasn't anything more disconcerting to Paul than false doctrine within the life of the early church. He didn't spend a lot of time talking about the sad state of his various imprisonments. He mentioned some of his

troubles from time to time, but he didn't go on and on about them - dedicating chapters of his letters to them. But he DID spend the overwhelming majority of his time, his energy, and his life dedicated to and focused on proclaiming the gospel and teaching sound doctrine. He was all too aware that faulty or flat-out FALSE doctrine gave rise to ungodly behavior. He had such a deep sense of care and concern for the people of God that what he wrote to the Corinthian church is just as timely for us TODAY as it was for them back then. In 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 Paul wrote, *"But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough."*

And for those of us who preach the gospel and are called to shepherd Christ's flock, Paul's deep concern was equally as profound. To the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30, he said, *"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. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."* Do you see that? I have to ANSWER for what I do and say up here. He's called foolish people like me to watch over HIS flock. YOU - who He paid for WITH HIS OWN BLOOD. This is no game. I am no performer. I'm not an actor. I'm not putting on a show. I will be called to ACCOUNT for how I handled His word to HIS people. This isn't some motivational speaking gig. This is the proclamation of CHRIST CRUCIFIED. This is a DEADLY serious thing.

And of ALL people, Paul knew that. And he was filled with a compulsion to stay faithful to his calling. And anyone who preaches the gospel and teaches sound doctrine had better be sure to remember that there is NO room for anything other than truth. And especially, more than

ANYTHING, is the truth about SALVATION! Because Satan's primary target for false teaching is the doctrine of salvation. Because guess what? If people are confused about THAT, then they have no way of coming to God in the first place. And in that case, they're still under Satan's influence and control. Satan and his agents teach all SORTS of lies about the church. About Christian living. About the coming of the Lord. About the truth of Scripture. About LOTS of things. But for him, the most important thing to focus his attacks on is the heart of the gospel. His chief goal is to undermine the truth about the gospel. And the gospel is that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And *denying* this gospel truth, *denying* the sufficiency of Christ is actually the MOST destructive of ALL heresies. Even Peter warned the church in 2 Peter 2:1-2 saying, "*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. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.*"

False teachers and false prophets are also more interested in popularity than in truth. It's far more important to say things that won't make people feel uncomfortable than it is telling them the truth about their condition. The false teacher serves himself. He teaches from a pulpit because he loves the adoration and the praise that he can get from people. He's not interested in serving God. He's doing it for approval. The false teacher is intoxicated by the validation he receives from those who hear him. And drunk with the applause he gets from people, he intentionally avoids the whole counsel of God. He leaves things out. He skips over the "tough parts". He's looking to keep people mesmerized and comfortable. He wants a following for himself. He's selfish and greedy. He's in ministry for the prestige, the appearance of authority and power, he's in ministry in order to take wealth from people. In the end, he's energized by Satan and his own flesh.

Peter writes describes false teachers like this: in 2 Peter 2:12-15, he writes *“But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing...”*. It was false teachers like these Judaizers who were plaguing the Galatian churches that were to be - as Paul put it - ACCURSED.

Verse 6:

So with all of that, let's go through and break down the text at-hand. Now, looking at Verse 6, Paul writes *“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—”*. Paul couldn't BELIEVE that the believers in Galatia were ALREADY walking away from the gospel that he so faithfully taught them. That word “astonished” - or some of your translations have “amazed” - is a strong word. It comes from a Greek word that means dumbfounded or bewildered. Like shock but mixed with confusion. Paul couldn't get his mind around or comprehend why on earth these people were so quickly walking away from God who called them in the grace of Christ. How could this be?

And the word Paul uses there in Verse 6 for “quickly” when he says “quickly deserting” is a word that means “easily” or “readily”. In other words, Paul was so astounded that they walked away with such little resistance to these false teachers. It showed how unstable and weak these believers were in their loyalty to Christ and His gospel. That they came under the influence of such heretical teachings SO QUICKLY just blew Paul's mind. It was unthinkable!

I mean imagine: the Galatian churches had the privilege of being taught by the greatest Apostle to ever live, the most profoundly amazing teacher that the Church ever had - apart from Christ. That God would bless them with such a thorough, faithful teacher. Yet they so easily walked away and rejected the gospel of grace that they learned from Paul. In almost EVERY SINGLE MESSAGE that I deliver from this pulpit, I am careful to include the central teaching of the gospel of grace, through faith in Christ. You will almost NEVER hear me deliver a message from this pulpit that does NOT include a clear, gospel presentation. The gospel isn't just for non-believers; it's for believers, too! There is ALWAYS an urgent need to continually and repeatedly preach and teach the central truths of the gospel. Look, it's possible even for longtime Christians to fall into apathy and to lose their firm grips on those truths and become totally weakened and perverted by concepts and ideas that seek to try and "improve" on the pure and plain teaching of Scripture.

We'll see as we go on through this letter in the weeks to come that these believers in Galatia were these kinds of believers. They had come to a saving knowledge of Christ. They were brothers in the faith. But they had been weakened, they'd become apathetic, and they'd become seriously confused by these false teachers. And in their confused and weakened confidence in the sufficiency of the grace of Christ for their salvation, the Galatians were actually "deserting". It's an interesting term that Paul uses. It comes from a Greek word that's synonymous with the type of desertion that a soldier might take part in. It indicates that this desertion is not only serious, but it's also done totally voluntarily. And that's important because the King James Version uses the word being "removed" as though this were a passive removal. But that's not what the Greek indicates. This was an act of volition. Of the will. They were willingly, actively walking away. They were removing themselves from the gospel of grace. While it's certainly true that these false teachers were accountable for leading these believers astray, it was also true

that the Galatians were accountable for being SO EASILY MISLED in order to follow after legalism.

And look, for them to desert the gospel of grace was not just a minor doctrinal issue. They weren't deserting the DOCTRINE of grace - Paul says that they deserted GOD Who called them to salvation through Christ. The only gospel of God IS the gospel of grace! It's the gospel of divine redemption by GRACE - a redemption that comes from GOD and is only offered APART from the merit or works of man. Paul says emphatically in Ephesians 2:8-10 that "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **not a result of works, so that no one may boast**. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*" (bolding & underlining added by me). We continually STAND in grace, as Paul says in Romans 5:2 ("*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"). From the MOMENT of our salvation, we stand and walk in the grace of God. We HAVE to. Because if that grace ever stopped, then we'd lose our totally undeserved salvation and we'd perish in our sin. The grace of Christ (as Paul puts it, at the end of Verse 6), is God's totally free and Sovereign act of love and mercy in providing our salvation, our redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ, apart from ANYTHING that you and I can ever do, And to add to that amazing truth, it's is HIS SUSTAINING **OF** US that keeps us saved all the way through our sanctification and all the way to our glorification, where we'll be with Him forevermore. It is the absolute HEIGHT of foolishness and absurdity to embrace a gracious salvation and then to TURN from that in order to try and maintain righteousness through our own efforts, our through our participation in religious ceremonies and rituals.

Now this is an important point. Keep in mind that these Judaizers that were wreaking havoc on the early church, were teaching a lot of doctrine that WAS orthodox. For example, they must

have recognized that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They must have acknowledged the value of His death at Calvary (otherwise the early church would never have let them in and allowed them to teach in the first place). They likely claimed to believe in many other truths that other Christians believed. But here's the insidious part: they didn't overtly REJECT the gospel - rather they were trying to "improve" on it by adding additional requirements, ceremonies, and standards of the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. That's important. Because anything ADDED to grace only destroys it just as anything that's REMOVED from it. In Romans 11:6, Paul says that when the law is added to God's grace - even God's Law - then it stops being grace. And what these Judaizers were promoting was a different gospel entirely, as Paul says at the end of Verse 6. It's not only contrary to the gospel of Christ but this false, twisted gospel of works that they were promoting is totally ineffective as a means of being in right standing with God.

Verse 7:

So let's continue that thought of Paul's from Verse 6 by looking now at Verse 7. There, Paul continues, "*not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*" What these Judaizers were selling to these believers was a false bill of goods. It's what Paul calls a different gospel in Verse 6 but then here in Verse 7, he quickly reminds us that there IS NO OTHER gospel at all. There's only ONE message of Good News - and that's the gospel of salvation by God's sovereign grace, working through faith in Christ. And any message that either adds or subtracts from the Good News of Christ isn't good news at all!

As I said, the Judaizers were teaching many things that DID line up with the truth of Christ. For example, they no doubt affirmed that He was the Son of God, that He was the predicted Messiah who was to come. They would have affirmed that He worked many miracles. And they would have said that salvation demands that a person has to believe in Him. But... they also

taught that in order to become saved (and to STAY saved), a person had to maintain their righteousness through conformity to all the laws of the Old Covenant. And by adding works to salvation, they undercut and undermined God's sovereign, saving grace. And they called THAT good news. But that's not good news at all! Because we CANNOT maintain our righteousness with God through self-effort and good deeds. We produce good works as a RESULT of God's saving grace and power working IN us. But those good works don't ADD to our salvation - they are only the necessary fruit as a result **OF** it.

Look, false teachers (like these Judaizers) are so much more dangerous to the church than atheists or pagans are who openly deny that Jesus ISN'T the Messiah. Why? Because those who openly deny the Gospel are easily dismissed for what they are. But false teachers APPEAR as though they're leading people to Christ when in reality, they're just raising additional barriers to salvation by grace. See, by adding even the LEAST BIT OF LAW to the gospel of Christ, you reverse its character and you turn it into the very thing which is CONTRARY to God's gracious provision of salvation and sanctification based ENTIRELY on the merits of Christ; the sinless sin-bearer. The Law doesn't just muddy the waters of grace - it reverses and destroys it! As a means of salvation - you cannot possibly HAVE more opposites. Grace and the Law cannot coexist. Grace can be destroyed but it cannot be MODIFIED. You can REJECT grace but you can't CHANGE it. Again, the worst enemies of the church, of believers, aren't those who just OPENLY contradict Scripture and deny Christ. The WORST enemies are those men that profess to speak for God, and who profess Christ with their mouths, but who sneakily and subtly undermine and distort the true gospel of Christ by replacing it with - or adding to it - a system of works-based righteousness.

Verse 8 & 9:

Ok, so now we come to the last part of tonight's text with some very frightening, very troubling language. In Verses 8 & 9, Paul writes, "*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. 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.*" Now, although this particular heresy that these false teaching Judaizers were spreading was ultimately a form of legalism, Paul's warning here is no less severe for anyone that would teach an equally perverse heresy at the opposite end of things which is something called "antinomianism". It's a big word - I know, and I'll do my best not to repeat it too often. But it's actually a very important concept - at least in the sense of something that we should be VERY careful to avoid. But "antinomianism" is just a fancy word that describes the total removal of ALL standards of morality and righteousness, and it does so under the GUISE of grace and freedom in Christ. It's a distortion - really a perversion - of grace where it says, "Hey, anything goes. Sin, go nuts - do whatever you want because grace covers it all". It's really a form of lawlessness but not in the legalistic sense - more in the basic standards of Christian living sense. And that's equally as bad as what the Judaizers were teaching because whether it's restrictive legalism or a license to just do anything you want, ANY teaching that adds or takes away from God's clearly revealed truth of salvation by grace is a distortion of the gospel and perverts the nature and work of Christ.

And against any of those things, Paul declares here that if anyone - even an angel - should preach a gospel contrary to the one he preached, then he is to be **accursed**. Now obviously, Paul was speaking hypothetically when he said "even if an angel". Because he would never change his teaching and he knew that an angel from heaven would never change the gospel either. It's just that Paul is reaching to the height of extreme, hypothetical possibility to illustrate his point that the nature of the gospel of Christ is unchangeable. And no matter what kind of messenger comes preaching a gospel different from God's revealed gospel of grace, whether it

was an Apostle (even Paul himself!) or an angel from heaven, that he was to be accursed. In other words, the truth of God outweighs EVERYONE'S credentials. And any teacher, preacher, or pastor should be judged against what he says about God - not on the basis of who he says he is (in terms of authority).

So many false systems attract people because they appeal to our emotions, our need for love, our desire for brotherhood and unity. And so many false teachers are popular because they look and sound so warm and so innocent and so reassuring. They usually claim to have a love for God and for others. And it's precisely because distortions of the gospel by these deceptive types of people are so appealing that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. We are so easily emotionally manipulated. It's why we have to stick to TRUTH, not how we FEEL! We have to walk in the Word of God, not in our emotions. Our emotions lie to us constantly about Who God is.

But back to the text, Paul goes from using a hypothetical extreme to illustrate his point, to the ACTUAL as he reiterates his point in Verse 9. He says, "*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.*" His repetition in verses 8 & 9 show his emphasis and passion for the gospel truth. Where Paul says, "*As we have said before...*", he's referring to an earlier time that he was there with the Galatians in-person. It's like he's saying "What I said at THAT time, I'm saying again NOW". And that means that from the start of his ministry with them, Paul had been warning them of distortions to the gospel that he felt were inevitably coming sooner or later. It's like by saying these things back at the beginning of his dealings WITH them during his initial visit, he was trying to "heresy-proof" them.

And finally, false teachers not only shouldn't be believed or followed, but should be left to God's judgment to be accursed. Remember when I said this last set of verses carries with it some scary language? Well, here it is. This is serious stuff. "Accursed" comes from a Greek word which you may have heard before. And that word is... "anathema". And "anathema" refers to things that have been set aside and devoted... to God's destruction. The Apostle John in 2 John 7 said, *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."* And just a few verses later in 10 & 11, he continues *"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."*

Believers are to have nothing to do with false teachers, no matter HOW impressive their credentials are! In fact, it's not only naive - it's actually unscriptural to believe, for example, that staying in a church that denies the Bible and distorts the gospel, gives a believer the opportunity to be a positive influence for the Lord. Even Timothy, Paul's own protege, a guy who was well-trained in truth, was warned to stay away from error and to focus on the clear, pure truth of God. To submit yourself - to even SUBJECT YOURSELF AT ALL - to false teaching, no matter how orthodox your own convictions may be, is to disobey God and to compromise and weaken your testimony and to tolerate distortions and perversions of the grace of God in Christ. One little bit of yeast leavens the whole loaf. Steer clear of false teachers. Avoid them like the plague. Don't tolerate them. There is nothing more profitable than God-breathed scripture itself. So stay alert, stay in the Word, and stay close to the foot of the cross of Christ. Amen?

[PRAYER]