

Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:1-5; Another Gospel? I. The Author of the Gospel II. The Content of the Gospel III. The Curse of the Gospel

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you know how to tell the difference between the real and authentic verses the fake and the knockoff? For example, if you were offered a Rolex watch from a street vender in NYC- would you know if that watch was real? Of if you were buying a Chanel handbag from eBay- would you be able to spot a fake. My own children know how to spot fake Lego from the real. The fact is, something that is fake is of no lasting value. Something that is real and genuine has lasting worth. The same applies to the gospel- the real gospel has lasting worth while the fake gospel is worthless. This morning as we return to Galatians, we find the core of this letter at issue. What is the gospel? We consider this theme: Jesus Christ defends the real gospel by warning His people of other gospels.

### **I. The Author of the Gospel**

In our first point we consider the author of the gospel -who it originates with and who authorizes it. Just as you would inspect the tag on merchandise to ensure that it was authentic- so the tag on the gospel- the original author- lets us know that it is real and trustworthy. So who is the author of the gospel? As you might remember, the word gospel simply means good news. The gospel is the message of salvation- a good word. But who has declared this good word? As v. 6 starts in the negative, to reject the true gospel is to desert Him who called you in the grace of Christ. Stated positively, the message of the gracious gospel comes to us from the Father who has called you in the grace of Christ. As we know from Hebrews, Jesus is the word of God and it is through Jesus that God now speaks. But our passage focuses on the Father as the source of the gospel- He who called you is He who speaks to you! So not only does the Father chose a people to be His own- electing them before the foundation of the world as Eph. 1 says- it is also the Father that choses you to receive the message of the gospel! It matters who has delivered the gospel to you. As 1:11 continues- the gospel that was preached is not man's gospel! To desert the true gospel is to desert our God and Father who has called you. To contrast this point, the false gospel can be carried and proclaimed by all sorts of people.

The false gospel had been proclaimed to these churches by other so called super apostles. But Paul says in v. 8-9; don't listen to a person just because they call themselves an apostle! Weight their words! Even if someone claims to be someone important- don't believe every message you hear! If they preach something different from the truth, don't accept them! People claim to be important- they claim to be someone special all the time! But even if an angel were to appear- don't blindly listen and believe! Even if the most famous and well-liked pastor were to come up here and eloquently speak- do not just accept it as true! For example- if you are reading Calvin or Sproul- and you find something that contradicts the gospel-would you believe it just because of the identity of the speaker? No, men make mistakes all the time! Do not align with men over God! We need to be like the noble Bereans of Acts 17- testing the words of men to see if they agree with the Scriptures. If someone claims to be important- or to have a pressing matter to declare- do not accept them if they do not agree with the one, true gospel. People claim to be important all the time- but if they preach another gospel, do not accept them or listen to them. So Paul is asserting this fact once again- the gospel is not from man it is from God. The author of the true gospel is the Father who called you in the grace of Christ. So even if another prophet, even Paul himself or an angel from heaven were to declare a message that contradicts from the true one they already received- do not receive or accept it! The standard for truth is not the messenger but the message! The gospel is good news because it is God's message of salvation! God alone is the author of the gospel!

## **II. The Content of the Gospel**

Now that we have considered the author of the gospel, in our second point we consider the content of the gospel. What is the big deal here- why is it so important to distinguish the true gospel from every other? What is the difference between the gospel they had received from God and these other gospels peddled by men? Or to ask this another way- how many gospels are there? One or many different ones? Do all roads lead to God? Is your truth different from my truth? No- there is only one truth and there is only one gospel! And this one, true Gospel remain the only good news! There were some teachers who had come to these

churches bent on changing or adding to the gospel. They wanted to adjust the teaching that the saints had received. But Paul makes it clear- there is only one! Any twisting is only a perversion of the truth! As v. 6 says, you are turning to a different gospel. This is not just an addendum- it is an all together different gospel. In fact, it is no gospel at all! Works righteousness is not gracious- a man centered religion is no good news at all! The gospel that these Judaizers were pushing was gospel-less! They distorted the gospel as v. 7 concludes. To distort is to pervert, twist and corrupt! The church in Galatia was becoming a congregation of deserters- they had left their first love! It would be like a wife forsaking her husband- on their honeymoon! Paul was astonished by this- amazed as he said in v. 6. Where normally we like to sing about how amazing grace is- here Paul is amazed at how fickle the Galatians are! Paul marvels at their willingness to be lead astray and the time it took for them to forget! You have done this so quickly! Paul had just left- his footprints were still visible in the sand! He had been there less than a year ago- we are talking months! And they had forsaken the gospel- rejecting the grace of Christ and embracing the religion of man. Paul was amazed at their immaturity and their inability to discern. I have taught you better than this! The fact is- those who have received the gospel must be convicted- they must stand fast and firm in the truth! How could you be so gullible! To give away what is priceless in order to buy something fake and worthless! Trading your real Rolex for a knockoff! Who does that? These false teachers were throwing the church into chaos and confusion- distorting the truth. Twisting what was straight. Muddying what was clear. The churches of Galatia needed to answer these questions- do Gentiles need to become Jews in the flesh before they could become Christians? Do we begin by grace but continue by works? Do members of Christ need to keep the commands of the OT ceremonial Law in order to be welcomed by God? Does the gospel depend on man's effort or merit? Any other gospel is in fact no gospel- it is the opposite of good news! The good news of the gospel is that we are saved by the grace of God alone based on the works of Jesus Christ alone! All other gospels pervert this truth!

### **III. The Curse of the Gospel**

Now that Paul has clearly distinguished between what was true and false- between the real gospel and the fake- what remains is the curse and condemnation pronounced on the false teachers. It is not all good news for the churches of Galatia! As it was for the church in Ephesus- they had forsaken their first love. They have gone along with these false apostles- these churches were falling away from the gospel, and Paul was writing to warn them! Stop doing this- stop going down this path! Proceed to your own destruction! Don't listen to these men who speak on their own authority! So Paul declares in v. 8- if someone- if anyone preaches another gospel let them be accursed. If anyone- even an angel- declares a message that is missing or maligns the good news- let them be condemned. And again at the end of verse 9- anyone who preaches a gospel contrary to the one you received, let them be cursed. The word in the Greek is Anathema- doomed to destruction. This is similar to the OT concept of Haran- devoted to destruction and to be burned in the fire. If anyone comes- even if that person used to faithfully preach- if they start declaring heresy- reject it! Even if I- the apostle Paul- declare a false gospel- don't listen to it! Now this is a clear warning to preachers- do not mess with the gospel! There is no room for various interpretation of this doctrine! The gracious nature of the gospel must be protected and preserved at all cost! Now the fact that the gospel is singular is not a concept that people like to hear. It is not politically correct to say that there is only one truth, only one way to the Father, only one name under heaven by which we can be saved. But the fact remains, every other teaching is deception! Every other religion is a perversion- no true hope or good news will be found in their teaching. More than that- every other teaching is accursed! Every false prophet stands condemned by God!

To conclude, there are many false gospels present in the churches today. Prosperity gospel, tradition gospel, easy believism gospel, family gospel, purpose driven gospel, feelings gospel, morality gospel. They are all perversion of the truth. Anything that puts our works in the forefront or adds to the gospel of grace with the works of man be anathema! Jesus Christ defends the real gospel by warning His people of other gospels. So let us return to our first love- let us never distort or malign this sacred truth! We are saved by grace alone by faith in the work of Christ alone! To God alone be the glory!