

Title: Paul's Call to the Pure Gospel of Grace (1:6-9)

Text: Galatians 1:6-9

Theme: The gospel Paul preached is the only true gospel. The believer must reject any message that contradicts the pure gospel.

Introduction: Paul establishes the death of Christ as the means whereby God gives grace and peace to the believing ones for His eternal glory (1:3-5). It is against this statement we begin our study of 1:6-9.

This is perhaps one of the strongest paragraphs in Galatians. It gives us the reason as to why Paul wrote Galatians. There was a distortion of the gospel of grace in Christ and a desertion of the believing one's to falsehood and error. Paul would have nothing to do with this. The value (its worth) and function (its purpose) of the gospel demand that any deviation from it be met with the most passionate/fervent and ardent/strong response.

In verses eight and nine Paul damns the false teachers to hell. The language could not be more direct and biting. Such verses cry out for comment. Why such unyielding and ironhanded language? First, to think we must finish what Christ began is to destroy the very nature of the sacrifice. Second, it is the souls of mankind that are at stake in the communication of a false message. Third, if its not the right gospel, it's the wrong gospel and thus no gospel at all.

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/ Authorization/Vindication (1:1, 2)
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition (1:3, 4a)
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/ Application (1:4b, 5)

Its Eternal Value:

There is only one gospel of God and it is the grace of Jesus Christ.

The Present Danger:

In a culture where everything and anything goes, the purity of the gospel must be maintained by setting forth the truth and standing against the error.

The Problem:

Often in our desire to be liked we compromise the purity of the gospel.

The Storyline:

What God has done in the offering up of Himself for our sins must be stringently maintained. No compromise is permissible as it relates to the gospel.

Questions:

1. Why was Paul amazed?
2. How does Paul describe the action of leaving the gospel?
3. How is the gospel described in verses 6 and 7?
4. In the NASB notice the words deserting Him, disturbing you and distorting the gospel. What do these ideas communicate to you?
5. What are your thoughts on the statement, “Truth tainted is falsehood disguised”?
6. Is there a definable and absolute quality to the gospel? If so, how did you come to this conclusion and what is to be our response toward those who would distort the gospel?
7. What does call these distorters of the gospel (cf. 2:4)?
8. What other way could we say, “Let him be accursed?”
9. What does Paul suggest is an outcome of standing for a pure gospel message?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the gospel is incapable of division or distortion without compromising its purity.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose the pure gospel and to stay the course.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of living in and under the pure gospel of grace.

Introduction:

His transition from verse 5 to that of verse 6 is abrupt and rabid. The reader is to register shock and dismay. **The same grace that saves also sanctifies. What works could not merit it cannot maintain.**

Outline:

- I. Paul’s fatherly distress at the Galatians’ desertion (v.6a)
 - A. Paul’s response of amazement (v. 6).

Paul was appalled at what he was hearing (v.6). The question we must ask ourselves is why would anyone leave the calling of grace? Paul is surprise and shocked. He is totally perplexed. When grace is properly understood, why would anyone live under works?

The word “marvel” is rich (Present Active Indicative). This is the continual attitude of Paul. The word **thaumazo** is used forty-six times in the New Testament. Of its forty-six occurrences all but three are found in the four gospel writers (Matt-Acts and [1 John 3:13] Revelation). Paul only uses it twice (Gal. 1:6; 2 Thess. 1:10) and in the general epistles it is found only in Jude 16. The word itself has no moral connotation. In our common vernacular it would have the idea of being “slack jawed and opened mouth, to be completely bewildered or stunned.” Have you ever as a parent said to your child,

“What were you thinking?” You pull hair out and pace the floor. Well, this is what Paul is doing.

Is legalism or a works based merit system an issue within Evangelical circles today, absolutely? Why is a law of works so appealing? I believe a law of works is appealing because we want to believe we did it ourselves. That some how we contributed to what we received by grace.

Our problem today is that legalism or any works based approach to ladder climbing before God no longer stuns us. We have been so inundated by falsehood that error no longer moves us to action. We are comfortable in our error. They were betraying Christ. They had committed treason against Christ.

“The present tense of the verb suggests that the defection of the Galatians from the truth was not yet complete, and that it would continue, unless of course they were brought to a better mind by this letter.” (C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians: with Notes Exegetical and Expository* [Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1959], 27).

B. Paul’s reason for amazement (v. 6b).

1. The Galatians were *deserting* Christ (v. 6a).
2. The false teachers were *disturbing* them (v. 7a)
3. The false teachers were *distorting* the gospel (v. 7b)

Those who abandon grace for works or distort grace by adding works are perverting grace. Such people are condemned with the strongest language possible. “No one would think of perverting the Gospel, except with the intention of confusing the minds of the believers.” (F.F. Bruce, *Galatians*, NICTC, 82).

The Galatians were trading the sufficiency of Christ for the inability of man (v.6b). The word “removed” (**metatithami**) is used only five times in the New Testament (Acts 7:16; Heb. 7:12; 11:5; Jude 14).

Ac 7:16 And were **carried over** into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Heb 7:12 For the priesthood being **changed**, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was **translated** that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his **translation** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Jude 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning** the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a present middle indicative. They were currently in the process of removing themselves from Him.

- First, their departure was in process.
- Second, they were doing it themselves.
- Third, they were moving from Christ.

“They were being transferred from a person to a position.” (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 29). The text is clear, “They were deserting Him who called them in the grace of Christ.” Listen to the commentator Kenneth Wuest as he explains this statement.

“God called the Galatians in the sphere of grace. That is, when He effectually summoned them to a participation in the salvation **procured** by His Son on the Cross, it was on a basis, not of works, but of a salvation **unmerited** by them and **freely bestowed**, offered out of the **pure generosity and love** of the heart of God, with **no strings tied to it**, offered as a **free gift** to be accepted by the outstretched hand of faith. This put the Galatians in a position in relationship to God in which they were the **objects of His everlasting favor.**” (Wuest, *Word Studies*, 1:36, “Galatians”).

The tragedy can be seen in their quick or soon departure from their initial salvation experience. Why is a law of works so appealing? Because we want to believe we did it ourselves, that some how we have contributed. Historically “The word was used of desertion or revolt in a military or political defection and frequently had the idea of a change in religion, philosophy, or morals.” (Rogers and Rogers, *Linguistic and Exegetical*, 421). They have changed loyalties and abandoned commitments.

In salvation we have exchanged what we are for what He is. The difference between the two is indescribable and insurmountable. It is impossible for our finite minds to lay hold of this incredible imputation. Yet this is what happened when we got saved.

Somehow in the process we have come to believe that what we were was not all that bad. That our badness was not all that bad and our goodness was in some sense meritorious. Friend, nothing could be further from the truth. Isaiah 64:6 tells me that “all of my righteous acts are as filthy rags.” The Hebrew word “filthy” is very descriptive. In the Ancient Near East it was used to describe a woman’s menstrual cloth. It was during this period of time that she was ceremonially unclean causing her to be completely cut off from God and man. We would like to think that decent people do not discuss these things in public. And for many of us our sensibility of proper décor has been violated. But try to capture what is happening here. Our righteous acts were filthy rags and because of our inability to merit divine favor God stepped in and graced us. He sent His Son to die for my sins and to deliver me from my self-righteousness and to give me the very righteousness of Christ and now I am wanting to go back by trading His righteousness for mine? Oh God where now is our sense of outrage at such an exchange? Can we not like Paul be appalled at such a scandalous attack on the very grace of Christ? We are worse than bad, we are self-righteous.

II. Paul’s targeted defense of the gospel of grace in Christ (vv.6c-9)

A. There is only one gospel

Paul's word choice is telling. The Galatia believer was embracing a gospel different than the one brought by Paul. "He calls this 'another gospel,' and the Greek word for 'different' in verse six is [heteros], which means **qualitatively different**. However, in verse seven, Paul uses an entirely different word which is also translated 'another.' It is [allos] which means 'another of the same kind.' The true Gospel of Christ can be declared in different ways by different people, but its truth can never be altered." (Zodhiates, *Word Study NT*, Gal. 1:6).

It is not as if we have several different types of fruit such as an apple and an orange, but rather something entirely different. The gospel they preached was completely foreign to the grace of Christ. It is not even fruit but an empty can or a spoiled, filthy rag in contrast to fruit. "When Jesus promised another Comforter (John 14:16) the word *allos* is used. The Holy Spirit would be a distinct Personality; but He would not be a different (*heteros*) kind of Paraclete. Rather, He would be another of the same kind (*allos*)." (Earle, *Word Meanings*, 268).

We are not permitted to tamper with the text. What God has declared we have no right to edit. There is only one gospel and we have no right to mess with it. Our problem is that we no longer know what the gospel is. We know that it has in it the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). However, the gospel is more than that. The gospel originates in our justification and culminates in our glorification and the process in between the two is our sanctification. This is the gospel and every aspect of it is based on the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel as we commonly understand it to be is the means whereby our relationship with God is established and maintained. Remember, what we merit by grace we cannot now maintain by works.

B. False teachers were perverting the gospel of Christ

Paul uses two key words in verse seven.

1. Anything other than the gospel of grace is troubling (Galatians 5:10).

Someone or something was agitating the church. Paul said these false teachers are troubling you. It is the same word used in Acts 15:24. Notice the parallel thought and circumstances.

"Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:"

The word "trouble (**tarasso**) is telling. It has the idea of "shaking back and forth." It is found in seventeen different verses. When Herod heard of the Christ child's birth "He

was troubled” (Matt. 2:3). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, “They were troubled” (Matt. 14:26). When Zacharias saw the angel “He was troubled and fear fell upon him” (Luke 1:12).

Jesus tells those who are troubled to cease from being afraid (Mark 6:50; 1 Peter 3:14). It is not His intent that we be troubled (Luke 24:38).

John 14:1 Let not your heart be **troubled**: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Why is anything other than the gospel of grace troubling, because it places the burden back on self? You and I cannot measure up to God’s righteous standard. It is impossible and the sooner we learn this, the better off we will be. There will be no rest in your soul until you find it in God. Remember, “Grace always leads to peace (1:3), but the believers had deserted grace and therefore had no peace in their hearts.” (Wiersbe, Galatians, 17).

“The compromise of grace always leads to the forfeiture of peace.” (Wilson, Galatians, 15).

2. Anything other than the gospel of grace is a perversion (v.7).

This particular word (**metastrepho**) is used only three times in the New Testament. Its occurrences are telling. Truth and error are incompatible.

Acts 2:20 The sun shall be **turned into** darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

James 4:9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be **turned to** mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

The idea is to change something into its exact opposite, from light to darkness and from laughter to mourning. The false teachers were changing the grace of Christ into the works of man. The two are incompatible. They are antithetical. “Law does not moderately pollute grace but reverses and destroys it. Grace can be destroyed, but it cannot be modified. It can be rejected, but it cannot be changed.” (MacArthur, Galatians, 15). These false brethren (2:4) snuck in for the purpose of spying out their liberty. They came in to do damage.

This is why Paul says, “Which is not another.” This is why Paul says, “They trouble you.” This is why Paul says, “Let them go to hell.”

If you live an agitated life, perhaps it is because you are not resting in His grace but rather in your own ability to perform. To say we are saved by grace, but sanctified by works in another gospel.

C. The message takes precedence over the messenger.

Paul, in the clearest language possible, wants us to understand that if anyone changes the gospel of grace they are cursed and should be treated as such. We are slaves to the opinion of man and fail to hear the voice of God. It is always the message and not the messenger that takes precedence in worship.

“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.” (MacArthur, *Galatians*, 16).

Never believe a word I say, believe what the Bible says. Study for yourself. I want to assure you that I spend my days making sure I’m rightly dividing the Word of truth, but you must study the Scripture for yourself. God the Holy Spirit protects the church collectively through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit individually.

D. Condemnation is upon the heads of those who pervert the gospel of grace.

Those who abandon grace for works or distort grace by adding works are perverting grace. Such people are condemned with the strongest language possible. No crime is worse and no judgment is heavier.

The Greek word for “let him be accursed” is **anathema**. It is used in six verses. It is used of those who bound themselves under oath to kill the apostle Paul in Acts 23:14. Paul places himself under oath if it would bring about the salvation of his brethren after the flesh (Rom. 9:3).

He also places under a curse those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 16:22). It is the word used in the Septuagint for placing something under the Ban (Joshua 6:17, 18; 7:11). Once something was placed under the ban it was to be completely destroyed and removed from human consumption. “It was without hope of being redeemed, and, if an animal, to be slain.” (Thayer, *Lexicon*, 37). I think it is fair to say Paul’s not kidding, he is not playing around. He is in dead earnest. If we understand Paul’s message correctly, then we should have no identification with those who turn the grace of Christ into the works of men.

To say we are non-denominational does not mean we are non-doctrinal. We are a Bible based doctrinally driven church. This is our standard.

This paragraph gives us the reason as to why Paul wrote Galatians. There was a distortion of the gospel of grace in Christ and a desertion of the believing one’s to falsehood and error. Paul would have nothing to do with this.

SHEPHERDING THE PEOPLE: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. There is only one gospel. “A Christless [or graceless] gospel is no gospel at all.” (Earle, Word Meaning, 270).
2. We should be disgusted with the doctrine of works.
3. We should commit ourselves to the pure gospel of grace without defection.
4. This gospel of grace in Christ must go global.
5. Calvary was not an enablement but a rescue. We were drowning and the rescuer was not seeking our help.