

HOLD TO THE TRUE GOSPEL

Galatians 1:6-9

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Every marriage its challenges; there's no such thing as a perfect marriage. The problem with being a preacher's wife is that her husband shares their marriage challenges with the whole congregation. When we get in bed at night, we like to watch a little TV to wind down before falling asleep. The key phrase is "wind down." To wind down, I like to watch something mindless and stress free, like a cooking show on PBS. Lydia likes to wind down with the news. The problem with the news is that it's all bad. The world is about to end because of climate change or nuclear war with Russia or China. The economy keeps getting worse. Crime keeps rising. Illegals are flooding over the border. Education keeps deteriorating. Trump keeps getting arrested. It's all bad news, and I it stresses me out. I can't wind down to that.
2. Today we're not going to talk about the bad news; we're going to talk about good news. But that doesn't mean I'm trying to put you to sleep, because today we're talking about the best news the world has ever heard. It's the most important news. It is news that you cannot live without.

II. CONTEXT

1. Before we get into our text, it's important to understand the context of the book of Galatians. Paul and Barnabas had been sent out as missionaries by the church in Syrian Antioch. They took the gospel to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, and started churches in the Roman province of Galatia. When they made it back to Syrian Antioch, they shared the wonderful news and celebrated. But then a group of Christians arrived from Jerusalem and said that it wasn't enough for the Gentiles to believe in Jesus; they also needed to become Jewish; they needed to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law. This led to a disagreement within the church. So, they decided to send a delegation, including Paul, to the apostles in Jerusalem, to let them settle the matter. The Jerusalem council sided with Paul and said that the Gentiles did not

need to convert to Judaism; they just need to have faith in Jesus Christ. They put their decision in writing, and Paul traveled back to the churches in Galatia and to Syrian Antioch to share the news. Unfortunately, right after Paul left the Galatian churches, he was followed by false teachers – let’s call them Judaizers – who continued to teach that the Gentiles that faith in Christ was not enough. They needed to get circumcised and become Jewish. Eventually Paul received word that the churches in Galatia were being persuaded by these false teachers to turn from the true gospel, and that prompted him to write this letter.

2. **William Hendriksen** “Briefly, therefore, the occasion which prompted Paul to write this letter was the sinister and, to some extent, successful influence which Judaistic trouble-makers were exerting upon the churches of South Galatia. And the purpose was to counteract this dangerous error by re-emphasizing the glorious gospel of free grace in Christ Jesus: Justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the law, and to urge those addressed to adorn their faith and prove its genuine character by means of a life in which the fruit of the Spirit would abound.”

III. TEXT:

1. **Galatians 1:6-9** *6 I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—7 not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling 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 what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! 9 As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!*
2. Paul’s message to the Galatians is to hold to the true gospel. We need to hear the same message today. We need to hold to the true gospel.

IV. 3 THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **There is a real risk of turning away to a false gospel.**
 - a. **Galatians 1:6** “I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel”

- b. The Galatians had heard the gospel from the apostle Paul himself, one of the primary authors of Scripture, and Paul received it directly from Jesus (Gal 1:12). They knew Paul personally. And yet they were turning away from the gospel.
- c. If it was possible for the Galatians to turn away from the gospel, then it is possible for you and me.
- d. Don't assume that you are so holy, so spiritual, so mature, that it is impossible for you to be deceived.
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 10:12** "So, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall."
- e. To protect yourself from turning away, you have to admit that it is possible for you to turn away; that you are not invincible.
- f. I have seen many church-goers over the years turn away to a false gospel. Two of my friends in college were in the Baptist collegiate ministry – a married couple – and they left the faith and joined a cult. In the early years of the church, one of our charter members left our church and joined cult. All three of these people were very devoted to their faith. They were very involved in ministry. They had been Christians for years. And yet they still turned away to a different gospel.
- g. Paul is "amazed," or astonished, that they were turning away so quickly. They had just heard the gospel. They had just visited with Paul. Paul had just clarified the terms of the gospel with them. But they are already turning away. You must realize that as human beings we are weak, prone to wander, vulnerable to deception.
- h. What are the dangers of turning away to a false gospel?
 - 1. You will miss out on salvation.
 - a. We are saved by believing in the gospel. If you are believing a false gospel, then you cannot be saved.
 - b. **Romans 1:16** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes"
 - 2. You will face the punishment of a false teacher.

- a. If you believe a false gospel, you will proclaim a false gospel, and Paul said that a special punishment is reserved for false teachers.
 - b. **Galatians 1:9** “As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!”
 - i. The Greek word for “curse” is *anathema*. It means “devoting someone to destruction in eternal hell (MacArthur).” It means being doomed to face God’s wrath.
 - c. I’m not sure all that it means to be cursed by God, but I can say with confidence that it is something you want to avoid.
3. You will miss out on the joy of the gospel.
- a. The true gospel leads to joy (Gal 5:22)
 - i. Galatians 1:7 “not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”
 - 1. That word “troubling” means to agitate or stir up; it means upsetting the mind or heart, or deep emotional disturbance.
 - 2. This is what happens when you turn away to a false gospel. Deep emotional disturbance. You lose the joy and the peace that come with the true gospel.
 - ii. Why does the true gospel lead to joy? Because everything necessary for your salvation has already been accomplished.
 - iii. We don’t have to do good works; we don’t have to observe certain rituals; we don’t have to jump through hoops; we don’t have to earn it. We don’t have to do anything but receive it by faith.
 - iv. In a Roman prison cell, they would place a sign next to the cell listing the prisoner’s crimes.

Every day they would be reminded of what they had done, and what they had to pay, or the time they had to serve. When they paid their debt, they would be released, and the sign would have something stamped on it: tetelestai, paid in full. When Jesus died on the cross, His last words were, “It is finished.” Do you know what that translates in Greek? Tetelestai; paid in full. When Jesus died, He paid your debt in full; He accomplished everything necessary for your salvation.

v. Christians are the happiest people in the world because no matter what we have to endure in life, we know that we are forgiven, adopted into God’s family, and headed for eternal life. And nothing can change that because our salvation is not based on our behavior, but on Christ’s behavior for us.

i. If turning away is a real risk, how can we protect ourselves? The key is to know the true gospel with confidence and clarity. That leads to our next point.

2. There is only one true gospel.

a. **Galatians 1:6-7** “I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

b. The Galatians were turning away to a different gospel. But Paul is sure to clarify by saying that there isn’t a different gospel. There isn’t another gospel. There is only one true gospel, and then there are distortions of the true gospel. There is one authentic gospel, and many counterfeits.

c. The word gospel is used at least 12 times in Galatians, 60 times in all of Paul’s letters, and 72 times in the NT.

- d. The word “gospel” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “godspell,” meaning “Godstory,” or “good story.” The Greek word is *euangelion*, which literally means “good news.”
- e. Definition: The gospel is the message of free salvation from sin through faith Jesus Christ.
- f. The gospel can be explained with four words:
 1. Creation: God created you for a love relationship with Him that would last for eternity (Gen 1:27).
 2. Corruption: We have sinned and broken that relationship with God. The punishment for sin is eternal separation from God (Rm 3:23; 6:23).
 3. Cross: God sent His Son, Jesus, to take our punishment by dying on the cross and rising from the grave (Rm 5:8).
 4. Choice: God’s forgiveness and eternal life are available to anyone who makes the choice to trust in Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16).
- g. Another way to explain the gospel is by using the words that are associated with it in the NT.
 1. It is called the gospel of God (Mk 1:14) because it was initiated by God’s unconditional love for sinners.
 2. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:1), because it was made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 3. It is called the gospel of God’s grace (Acts 20:24) because salvation is a free gift that is undeserved and impossible to earn.
 4. It is called the gospel of salvation (Eph 1:13) because it is all about how to be saved from the power, penalty, and presence of sin.
 5. It is called the called gospel of peace (Eph 6:15) because it is the way to forgiveness and peace with God.
 6. It is called the eternal gospel (Rev 14:6) because it is the way to eternal life in heaven with God.
- h. One of my favorite ways to explain the gospel is by contrasting the words “Do” vs. “Done.” All distortions of the gospel (gospel counterfeits) are about what man must do in order to earn his

way to heaven. The true gospel is about what Jesus Christ has done to secure heaven for us. False gospels say you must earn heaven. The true gospel says you can't earn heaven; you can never deserve heaven. Instead, Jesus earned heaven for you by living a perfect life, and then taking your punishment. He has done it all. You don't need to do anything. Just trust in Him and what He's done.

3. There are some who preach a false gospel.

- a. **Galatians 1:7** “not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”
- b. The reason the Galatians were turning away from the true gospel was that there were false teachers who came in after Paul and who said, “It's not enough to believe in Jesus to go to heaven. You also need to become a devout Jew, beginning with circumcision, and keeping all the Mosaic laws in the Torah.”
- c. The same is true today. The main reason that people turn away from the true gospel is that there are false teachers. The invention of radio, TV, and now the internet makes false teachers all the more dangerous.
- d. To hold to the true gospel, you must beware of false teachers who would distort the gospel.
- e. How do you spot a false teacher selling a false gospel? They add to the gospel. It is not enough to have faith in Christ for salvation, you also need to keep the rules; you also need to follow the rituals; you also need to jump through these hoops. You need to believe in Jesus and be baptized, and be baptized in the name of Jesus only, and speak in tongues, and follow a dress code, and take communion, and go to confession, and belong to a certain church or denomination, and go to church, etc. It's not faith alone, it is faith plus other things.
- f. Before the 16th century, everyone was catholic. But over the centuries the Roman Catholic church drifted further and further from the Bible. Starting in the fourteenth century, different priests and monks such as John Wycliffe, John Hus, Martin

Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and others began to protest the unbiblical patterns within the Roman Catholic Church. This led to the Protestant Reformation, and the creation of different denominations such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, etc. Eventually the leaders of the Protestant Reformation summarized their movement with five essential points known as the five solas: Sola gratia – grace alone; sola fide – faith alone; sola Christus – Christ alone; sola scripture – scripture alone; soli deo gloria – to the glory of God alone. Two of the solas speak directly to the heart of the gospel.

1. Sola gratia – grace alone. Salvation is by grace alone. It is a free gift. Man does not deserve salvation, and cannot earn salvation. He does nothing to contribute to His salvation. It is by grace alone.
 2. Sola fide – faith alone. The way to receive salvation is not through good works or religious rituals, but through faith in Jesus Christ.
- g. You can spot a false gospel because it violates sola gratia, and sola fide. Grace and faith are not enough.
- h. The most popular religion in America today is no longer Christianity. It is a distorted version of Christianity that some have called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, or MTD. It teaches that there is a God; He just wants you to be nice or good; the goal of life is to be happy; and good people go to heaven when they die. In other words, it doesn't matter what you believe; all that matters is that you are a good person. That's the exact opposite of the true gospel. The false teaching says faith doesn't matter, it's all about works. The gospel says it's not about works; it's all about faith. But let's just let the Bible speak.
- i. **Ephesians 2:8-9** "8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—9 not from works, so that no one can boast."

V. CONCLUSION

1. There is a simple question you can ask to see if you are holding to the true gospel. Why should God let you into heaven? If your answer points

to your performance, your actions, your efforts, your desert, then you've turned away. If you understand the true gospel, then your answer needs to be something like this: "God will let me into heaven because Jesus died for my sins and rose again, and I trust in Him."

2. The point of the gospel is to lead people to a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That leads to a question: Are you sure that you are saved? Are you sure that you have understood and believed in the gospel for salvation? Are you sure that you would go to heaven if you died today? If not, then you can be saved today. It's as simple as ABC.
3. A – Admit you are a sinner in need of a savior. Remember, the gospel is the gospel of grace. Salvation is a free gift. It is undeserved, and cannot be earned. If you don't think you are bad enough to deserve hell, or if you think that you can earn your way to heaven, then you don't need Jesus, and you can't be saved.
4. B – Believe in the gospel. Believe that Jesus died and paid for your sins and rose again.
5. C – Call on Him to be your Savior and Lord. Ask for His forgiveness; make Him the boss of your life; and invite Him to save you.