

LSB Galatians 1:1 - 10

6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, 7 which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you, let him be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed! 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a slave of Christ.

This morning we dive right into the deep end. The meat of Paul's polemic. A polemic of course is an argument for a thesis and against any opposing thesis.

And that is exactly what we will witness as Paul mounts and explains his argument for a singular specific gospel that provides entrance into true christianity.

Nothing generates more animus against christians than the idea of exclusivity that we hold as truth, that all people in every belief system in the earth are bound for eternal destruction except for a singular group who have believed in a single person's act in their behalf.

The insistence that there is a God, and that God is offended by our sin, and the teaching that all persons everywhere are born condemned in sin by that God, and then the insistence that there is only a single possible avenue of rescue and escape from our sentence of hell fire.

And that singular avenue of escape requires every person who receives it to become the slave of the person who purchased that exclusive path to a right standing with the Creator who actually owns everything.

Those have become fighting words in our culture. And our culture is out of patience with anyone who would espouse something so radically fantastic. So much so that we expect push back like we've never had to experience before in our corner of the world.

Listen to a line from an issue of the Wall Street Journal earlier this very week;

"Democrats last year passed legislation empowering the State Medical Board to discipline doctors licensed in the state who 'disseminate misinformation or disinformation that contradicts the contemporary scientific consensus or is contrary to the standard of care.'"

This happened next door in California and was challenged in the high court there and ultimately shot down. But it should send a chill up your spine that we are at the point where Secular religion is passing laws against anyone who dis-agrees with something they call scientific consensus or some other standard of care, whatever that is.

Science is everything and nothing these days. And something called a "standard" is whatever secularists decide they want it to be even regardless of real science or anything else. And then to pass a law that anyone who dis-agrees with them must be silenced because of mis-information?? Any information that disagrees with their standard of information is mis-information? Mercy.

Shot down this time, but these challenges are relentless and they never stop and they never go in a godly direction. Indeed our new president tried to set up an office of dis-information in his new cabinet and happily that was quickly extinguished. But the idea will keep being launched until it flies.

What will we do when the day comes when secularists have the power to ban these and many other words of Paul and beyond Paul, all of the New Testament writers, and beyond those, all of the canon of scripture. Banned because by their "standards" it is dangerous mis-information. They already believe that premise, they just don't have the power quite yet to legislate it's

removal.

In these verses we are considering this morning, Paul clearly says, there is one gospel, one true message, and only one, that can deliver every human being from the curse of sin.

Not only that, but Paul says it two times. All other so-called truths, gospel's if you will, are mis-information and lead to being accursed by God. Do you think we might be in for a fight in this culture if we start broadcasting a message like that? And yet, that's exactly what Paul is doing here.

And our culture would think we are even moreso insane because they would see Paul's argument as friendly fire. Christians killing christians. Because Paul here doesn't argue against secular godlessness, this is an argument within christianity saying this person's arrangement of beliefs about Christ have cancelled out Christ's very rescue of them.

The onlooking world see's christians shooting christians and to them it's an insanity beyond the original insanity. And yet Paul takes the idea of mis-information that strikes terror in us in our culture and applies it here with the forceful declaration that there is only one gospel that brings life, and any departure or mis-application of that singular truth brings death, not life.

Cursing or blessing is dependent on the application of a single truth. The gospel itself is very simple. We covered it last week in Paul's introduction. He presents his version of the simple gospel truth in vs. 4.

We are born into a condemned race. Sinners every one. We chose our parents poorly. We are born condemned in Adam's race. Dead to God and separated from Him by our sins. Helpless to do anything about our predicament. Bankrupt sinners waiting for judgement after we die. Born with a death sentence. Helpless to change anything.

And most sinners don't want to change anything anyways. They love their sin more than the Creator who owns them. They don't want to be rescued.

Oblivious to God or to the weight of eternal damnation away from Him in flames He designed for Satan and the demons.

Most secular people get triggered by the message itself. How dare you tell me God is furious with me and plans to send me to hell. But the fact is, the good news, the gospel, gospel means good news, the good news is only meaningful in relation to the bad news that it offers a rescue from.

You stand condemned and you are helpless to undo anything that has been done, but Jesus offers forgiveness of the debt. He died on a cross, died by crucifixion, in our place. He took our punishment for all of our sins, upon Himself.

His death is a substitutionary atonement. He died in my place as my substitute taking all of the retribution that was due to me because of my sin. Likewise, in that substitution, He gave to my account, all of His righteousness. Because of His one act, on that cross, I can stand before God with a debt that is paid in full and an account that says; Righteous.

Why would anyone believe such a thing? Because of a singular phenomenon in all of history past present and future. Jesus rose up from the dead. Jesus rose from the dead. Proof that He is the single person who could achieve atonement for sin. Sin couldn't hold Him in the grave. All of the sin of the elect from Adams race, past, present, and future, could not hold Him in the grave. He paid for that sin, was buried in death, and rose up again from the dead.

How do we appropriate that salvation. Jesus tells us how in John chapter 3. He was speaking to Nicodemus. He said; *14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.*

We appropriate the good news by believing Jesus is the sufficient payment of our debt. We believe the good news. Faith alone in Christ alone is the appropriation of the good news. Ask Jesus to save you too. The thief on

the cross believed and asked Jesus to remember him also, when He comes in His kingdom. And Jesus said, Today, we'll be together. No waiting. Faith makes it happen instantly.

Pretty simple plan. Too simple for the world. In our fallenness, one of our problems is pride. We don't like it that God's plan is achieved entirely by His will for His glory. All we can do is believe in His finished work. Where is there anything for my pride in that gospel. He accomplishes everything and all the glory is to Him.

Sinful man says, first of all, I'm not bankrupt, I'm pretty hot stuff. And I may have broken a few rules, but I can work that off. I can make things right with God by doing some good stuff to offset the bad stuff. I can pay my own way.

I don't need any help from the outside. I can proudly work my own way back to God. Do stuff to balance the ledger. Rites. Rituals. Ceremonies. Offerings. Smoke. Holy water. Confessions and then the necessary rituals to absolve those sins. Keep it paid up. I can DO this.

And if it doesn't come out even, I can invent a place that isn't ever mentioned in the Bible, where I can go and finish paying off my debt. I can DO that part too. It's all about me and what I DO.

Paul's gospel; Believe in the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, in your place, on the cross because He was raised again from the dead.

All other gospels. You're not that bad. Get to work doing stuff that will counteract your debt and appease God. You can DO it. Get to work.

In this book we're going to find out how much of a breach of man's gospel into God's gospel, is enough to upset the whole thing and render it void. How much can we alter the simple gospel before it collapses?

Our opening paragraph in vss 6 - 10 answers our question, and then Paul is

going to spend the rest of the book arguing his thesis.

6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel,

Marvel is Thaumazō and in our generation we might say something like, you blow my mind. Astonished. Speechless, except Paul's going to find words. He is stunned out of his mind. Amazed. Why?

I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ

so quickly. I was barely out of town and you guys quickly what? *Deserted* someone. They became deserters. That word means a departure. A separation. Like a marriage partner who deserts the other partner. They leave. They're gone. That's what has taken place in Galatia with these previous believers. They deserted their partner. Who have they deserted?

Him who called you by the grace of Christ

They have deserted God. Him in this verse is God. And in case there's any mystery about who this God is, He is the God who called these believers.

What does it mean to be called. It means God chose them. God elected them. He called them out of Adam's wreckage, out of the present evil age, in vs. 4.

When God calls people, He calls them out of bondage to slavery to sin, and places them in His kingdom, His authority to reign, His ownership.

Romans 6:22 talks about this transfer when God calls you out of this world to belong to Him; *22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit, leading to sanctification, and the end, eternal life.*

You're a slave either way. Slave to sin, captured in sin by Satan, and condemned to eternal separation and punishment. Helpless slaves under the rule and authority of Satan.

But when God calls you, you come out of that slavery and you become forgiven slaves who belong to God, who enjoy sanctification as they dwell with their new Master blessing their hearts and minds, and then ultimately, eternity with Him forever in bliss. Blessed slavery. Jesus said;

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matt. 11:28 - 31

Paul is astonished because they walked away from the new Master and re-embraced the slavery of the old master. Astonishing.

Now they didn't realize just how dreadful their position became in deserting God, but Paul is going to educate them and hopefully, get the wandering train back onto it's tracks. But for now they have deserted God and gone wandering away from Christ back into the capture of their old master, Satan

6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel,

Their call out of this sinful world is here called the grace of Christ. They had been called into a position unobtainable any other way. We were found by our caller as helpless bankrupts with a huge unpayable debt of sin.

We were called out of that hopeless predicament completely by Grace. Unmerited favor. Favor we totally did not deserve. God would have been righteous to leave us in our rebellious sin and His judgement would have been what we deserved.

We were rescued by God's calling us out of Satan's rule and realm and placing us in His kingdom as heirs of everything along with Christ, for what reason? The only reason for God's inscrutable decision to effect our rescue is this word grace. Unmerited favor poured out on us because it pleased Him to call us.

And you're going to walk away from THAT, to a ***different gospel***??? Utter astonishment. That word different is the greek word heteros. We use it today. A heterosexual couple is a man and a woman who are married. Different but the same. Both human but very different from each other. Paul says they abandoned his gospel to go after a different, heteros, gospel.

They should have known better, but we give them the benefit of the doubt, they had been deceived that something different from Paul's gospel would put them in a better position than God's call and Christ's grace. What an astonishing deception these well meaning gullible folks had accepted. Paul will later refer to them as beloved idiots. Gullible fools.

Listen to Paul's words to the Corinthians about a similar situation and how it comes about;

2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be corrupted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit which you did not receive, or a different gospel which you did not accept, you bear this beautifully. 2 Cor. 11:2 - 4

Satan didn't come upon Eve and say, Honey, if you'll just eat that apple the entire human race will be condemned in sin and trapped in death and this world and it's kingdoms will be forfeited to me, so take that first bite.

Eve was deceived by lies from Satan. *Hath God said ?* "Did God really say . . . Well it isn't so. That old liar, God. He knows if you eat that fruit

you'll be just like He is, and He wants to hold it over you." Lies. Deceit.

And that's how Satan rolls from that day to this day. The judaizers under the deception of Satan would have said something along the lines of;

"Paul's a nice fellow but his gospel is incomplete. Too simple. God does everything and you do nothing? Impossible. We're from Jerusalem and we're here to bring you up to speed so you can really be christians more fully. Actually, you **do** have to **do** stuff. We'll get you started by circumcising all the men. Then we'll teach you Moses law from start to finish. Do all that stuff first, and then you can be christians." Lies. Deceit. Satan's 100% behind it.

At the end of that section about false teachers fooling the Corinthians Paul says; *13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.* 2 Cor. 11:13 - 15

Listen to Jude describe the very same situation that Paul is trying to unscramble. Deceivers crept in, unnoticed. Deadly cancer cells in the body.

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you exhorting that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude says I had this nice easygoing pleasant letter planned that would encourage everyone around the topic of our common salvation. But, he says, instead I had to write a different letter. I need to exhort you strongly

to fight earnestly for the once for all delivered to the saints faith.

The simple gospel that effectually causes new life to spring alive in every called out hearer is under attack. Then, and now. Same devil. Same method. Mess up the gospel so that it becomes ineffectual. Cause people to abandon grace and think they need to do works in order to merit their salvation.

In the regions of Galatia the churches were deserting Paul's gospel and embracing some kind of a mish mash of jewishness first with Jesus as the frosting on top. A new different better than Paul's gospel.

7 which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Notice how crafty Satan is. You don't send in your deceivers and tell people they can't have Jesus as some kind of a component of the new religion. Jesus can stay, but, He's sort of like a pretty mast head on the bow of a ship, but rowing is what gets the ship to move.

A different gospel that looks same enough to confuse people. Ever notice how the Mormons will argue that Mormonism is just the same as what we believe. Take Paul's gospel and distort it enough so that it's almost the same, confusingly similar, but in the end, the substitutionary atonement of Jesus is gone.

Lots of times the Trinity is gone. Grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone by authority of the Scriptures alone for the glory of God alone is always absent. You could memorize that little deal and compare every other look alike religion that claims to have something to do with Christ and you'll always find what's lacking or what's added very quickly. Sola Gracia. Sola Fide. Sola Christos. Sola scriptura. Sola gloria Deo.

We are saved by Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to scripture alone for the glory of God alone.

Memorize those 5 parts of Paul's gospel and you're ready to scrutinize whatever gets thrown at you. Satan wants it to look so close it's confusing, but he wants it to lack some component that renders it ineffectual. You think you're a christian but you wind up standing before Jesus saying;

*‘Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never **knew** you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’*

Mt. 7:22b,23

I never knew you! Those should be the most frightening words in the new testament. Real christians have an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ because His Spirit lives in us. The Holy Spirit is transforming us daily to be more like Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you, let him be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed!

Paul reiterates the same thing two times. And he covers the gamut of possibilities. He says whether its us, Paul included plus all in his company, or an angel, and then in the second re-iteration he says any man. Me, everybody with me, angels, or any other man.

The only thing left out is Balaam's donkey. If your dog starts talking to you and says there's a different gospel I think you default to angel. Demons find all possible ways to make different gospels come about. Mostly through false prophets.

But can you think of a religion that came about because of angelic declaration? Like the angel Moroni maybe? I always thought he was well named because the resulting religion is moronic.

Paul couldn't have been more clear, and yet an angel starts a new religion that is a textbook case of everything Paul is declaring in this passage.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you, let him be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed!

The word Paul uses two times here is the strongest damnation used in the bible. Anathema. Accursed. What does it mean to be accursed.

accursed; Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41 says this: “*Depart from Me,*” – Jesus said – “*you accursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.*”

To be accursed is to be separated from God for eternity in the fires prepared for the devil and his demons. Eternal torment.

No other gospel. We are saved by Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to scripture alone for the glory of God alone.

The moment you add any forms of works that add merit in order to be good enough to be saved, you've wiped out grace. When works comes into the equation you wipe out most of that formula. Where is grace if it's you that is working. Where is faith. Your faith is in you and what you're doing to earn your salvation, not in Christ's effectual finished work. Works wipes out Christ. And where is God glorified in your salvation if you're the one doing the saving through your own efforts.

Adding works to salvation completely undoes what Paul proclaimed as the once for all delivered to the saints Gospel. God through His Son Jesus accomplishes it ALL. We accomplish nothing. God alone gets all of the glory for rescuing bankrupt sinners. That's why Jesus said;

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the lowly, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

The beatitudes reflect a bankrupt heart of a sinner who is helpless before a Holy God. No works. No pride in achieving some merit through works.

What is the motivation for false teachers to come along and make a mess of the gospel? Wreck the simple gospel. Why?

Well the gospel is a hard sell to prideful people. It turns out we actually want to accomplish our own salvation. We want to achieve some merit ourselves. We want the credit of jumping through religious hoops.

In this case, Paul's gospel to the gentiles was especially egregious to the Jewish population. The Jews had devolved into a works righteousness system. And they were extremely proud of their achievement through works righteousness. Counting wheat grains. 9 for me, and one for God.

Listen to Jesus' description of this exact heart attitude of pride in merit by works. Righteousness by works; Luke 18

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and was praying these things to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus was crystal clear about works righteousness. In Matt. 5:20 in the Sermon on the Mount he declares; 20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

vs 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a slave of Christ.

These men from Jerusalem were pleasing men. They wanted to be found righteous by the pharisees. So they invented some kind of christianity - ish that looked like pharisee-ism and it mangled the gospel.

Adding works to the front of salvation, making works part of what is necessary to be saved destroys the simple gospel. It robs God of His due glory for accomplishing our salvation for us, Christ in our place, absorbing our due punishment when we were helpless to do anything effectual towards accomplishing salvation ourselves.

Our gospel does NOT please men. It infuriates prideful men. It requires spiritually meek, lowly, bankrupt sinners who acknowledge that they are helpless before a Holy God who is righteously angry with their rebellion.

That's why Paul tells the proud Corinthians;
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,
*24 but to those who are **the called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

This situation in the region of Galatia caused by satanically duped false teachers had virtually, if possible, undone real salvation. We'll see later that if these folks persist in this error, they will in fact be lost.

That's why Paul wastes no time with pleasantries in his introduction and literally enters the room shouting let these men be accursed. This error

undermines salvation right at it's roots.

We tend to use a spritiual triage with different errors. Which error is absolutely a life threatening dangerous poison, and which error is damaging but not necessarily spiritual life threatening.

I can fellowship with people who believe in infant baptism but still hold onto a transformative correct gospel. I can fellowship with folks who have dismissed about a third of their Bibles by believing in a-millenialism, no millenial reign of Christ which wipes out virtually an entire eschatology.

Those are both errors that can be costly but without destroying root salvation. But in my triage of error, this error of adding works of any kind as part of the causal formula of salvation, is so deadly, that it wipes out an effectual gospel. It sends folks who are convinced they're OK before God because of some merit they achieve by works, to hell. Deadly poison.

No other gospel. We are saved by Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to scripture alone for the glory of God alone.

You'll get weary of hearing me repeat that but before we're finished with this letter to the Galatians, you'll hear it so often that after a while you'll begin to analyze every salvation issue by considering that simple formula. It was Paul's gospel, and Paul received it directly from Jesus Himself.

There is no other gospel. Adding things destroys the gospel. That's why the word "alone" appears 5 times in that gospel. Subtracting things destroys the gospel. All 5 must be present. And a corrcet gospel is life or death. Heaven or hell.

Finally, if you have questions, I am always glad to meet with folks, one on one, and work through any of these life or death elements. I won't waste much time arguing about tier level 2, 3 or 4 issues. My time is too valuable to argue about prophecy if you dis-agree. But life or spiritual death issues I've got all the time in the world for you.

Actually I'm generally available to fuss about all that other stuff too if that seems important to you. Totally available. But we approach some things as life or death, and others as simply sort of fun steel sharpens steel type discussions.

For Paul, this salvation issue is life or death and he kicked the door in with both guns blaring. We should too.