

Discussion Guide Galatians 1:6-9 Distorting the Gospel

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.

As stated in last week's discussion guide, turning aside from the true Gospel- the one proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles- to a different gospel was a concern for the church from a very early time. Keeping the purity of the Gospel is a challenge to which every single generation of Christians has had to rise.

Austin's sermon challenge zeroed in on 5 "different Gospels" that are common for Christians in our context.

- 1) Religious traditionalism- salvation through observing traditions
- 2) Religious moralism- salvation through doing "right works" (nearly always defined by those who are preaching the moralism rather than the "law of love.")
- 3) Religious liberalism- a denial of the reality of sin
- 4) Religious intellectualism- replacing knowing and obeying God with knowing things that other people say about God
- 5) Church religion- loving the experience of going to church more than actually loving and worshipping God

As demonstrated by false Gospels that we face in our own age, it is extraordinarily easy to turn aside to false Gospels. But we must start by acknowledging that false Gospels are cheap and inferior substitutes for the real thing.

The cheapness and the inferiority is underlined by the strong language that Paul uses against people who teach false Gospels. Paul says twice that the false proclaimers should be ACCURSED or under God's pronounced judgment.

This is harsh language that many in our day would find unsettling. What gives Paul the right to curse somebody? We should remember a few things:

- 1) Paul is not cursing people for offending him. Paul on many occasions was more than willing to bear abuse against his person. The issue of false Gospel in the church is one that affects other people and their salvation. It is, therefore, a serious issue and not a petty personal grievance.

- 2) Paul is making a proclamation that God is the one who curses those who distort the Gospel. Paul doesn't bring the judgment, God does. It is HIS Gospel. He himself will defend it.
- 3) Last week we spoke of Paul's apostleship. Being an apostle is what gives Paul authority in the church to declare what is true and what should be cursed. (Matthew 16:17-19)

The WHOLE church must be committed to the purity of the Gospel in order that we may know Christ and invite the world to truly know him. It is our prayer as pastors that our entire church would be passionate about clinging to the message passed down from Christ through the apostles.

Discussion Questions

- **What is the Gospel? (Use 1 Corinthians 15 as a cheat sheet)**
- **How is the Gospel complicated from its pure Scriptural form?**
- **Why does every generation want to add to the Gospel?**
- **What do you think are the most prominent distortions of the Gospel in our day?**
- **What other (false) gospels have led you astray?**
- **What helped you to see the distortions and turn away from different (false) gospels?**
- **How do you distinguish between a different (false) gospel and a teaching that you disagree with, but is not contrary to the Gospel?**
- **Do you think we underreact, overreact, or react rightly to the distortions of the Gospel in our day?**
- **Do the greatest threats to understanding the Gospel come from inside or outside of the church?**
- **How can we (the church) be proactive in protecting the purity of the Gospel we preach as partners in the church?**