

Another Gospel.  
Galatians 1

Old Testament: Exodus 32 vs 1-8

New Testament: Acts 4: 19-28

Read Galatians 1.

Our focus will be mainly on verses 6-12.

We read Moses account at mount Sinai this morning for in a way, the Apostle Paul was going through the same type of event. Just as the Israelites swore to keep Gods commandments, as soon as they were left to themselves they turned and created an idol. I am sure Paul was just as angry as Moses was, when he discovered that the churches that he and Barnabas established have turned away from the gospel he preached.

Paul does not open this letter with his usual greeting but this time he opens with an introduction to himself saying that he was not sent by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who sent him to minister to them. Setting forth validation for his right to be called an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and his authority to instruct the churches in Galatia. His authority as an apostle was being challenged by a group of Jewish men who followed behind him trying to undermine his teaching. They argued that since he was not one of the 12 original apostles, he was not commissioned by Christ and was just a 2<sup>nd</sup> rate apostle. So to answer that, Paul starts this letter off by challenging that accusation and proving his apostolic credentials.

There is some disagreement as to which churches this letter was written to. Whether it was designated for the Northern or the Southern part of the Province of Galatia. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C the Gauls had migrated and established a kingdom under King Amyntas. 20 years later around 25 BC after the death of Amyntas the Romans took over this area and made it into the province of Galatia. It is debated whether this letter was designated to the ethnic Gauls in the North, or to the various races who lived in the southern province of Rome. It would seem that the strongest evidence points in favor of the Southern Roman province for Paul went through that area on his first missionary journey establishing churches as recorded in Acts chapter 13 and 14. Paul, being a Roman, more then likely used the term Galatians in the same way as the Romans would referring to the whole province, and not just the ethnic Gauls themselves.

Paul on his first journey went to Galatia with Barnabas. The area was predominantly Gentile, but they would always first preach to the Jews at the Synagogues. But in every city they went, they met opposition by the Jews, so afterward they would turn their focus to the Gentiles.

After Paul and Barnabas left the area, apparently a group of men which Paul does not name, but it is believed were Jew's from Jerusalem came to Galatia claiming Christ, but began started teaching that once a person was saved, they then must follow the Mosaic Laws to be truly justified and saved. This is the "other gospel" Paul is referring to in verse 6 when he says:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

These false teachers were saying that what Paul previously had taught was just the beginning of truth, and after that it was following the Mosaic laws that was actually required for salvation. This is the issue that Paul takes up with the churches in Galatia, that they would listen to these false teachers over what he and Barnabas previously taught. This is also why Paul in his opening statements reminds them of the gospel, of Jesus Christ crucified and risen who gave himself that he might deliver us from our sins according to the will of our God and Father. It is a gospel of grace, and promise, not of law and obedience. This gospel that was given to Paul by God the Father, is so set, so sure, and so unchanging that Paul says in verse 8 and 9

.But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Paul is not playing around. This false doctrine that is being taught, corrupting the saints in Galatia is so dangerous that Paul does not hold back. This is not like what our society wants to say today, we all travel our own path, and find our own way to heaven, or that all religions really are the same thing. FALSE, There are not many ways to heaven, we are not each finding our own path on this journey of life. There is one way, and only one, by grace through Faith in Christ Jesus. His death, burial and Resurrection. These false teachers were saying...you can believe in Christ but before you can do that and have salvation you must first follow the Law given to Moses. Paul was so opposed to this "other gospel" that he says let them be cursed! This is so important that Paul does not want it missed that he repeats it. If anyone teaches you anything other than the gospel of Christ crucified let them be cursed!

Strong language...let them be cursed?! Does he really mean cursed? Well if we look at the The Greek word used here, it is anathema, ana meaning "up" or to conclude a process, and Tithemi, meaning to place. So properly, anathema is to Place Up, or to be given up to destruction, it is a divine curse, or ban. Paul is not messing around here. To put plainly, he is saying that if anyone comes and teaches you in a way apart from what I have taught you, being that what I have taught has come not from man, but from God..then let these false teachers be damned to hell!

After such harsh words, he goes on to say in verse 10. For do I now persuade men, or God? OR do I seek to please men? Paul isn't looking to make people happy here, he is not seeking approval of his peers. He is warning them to flee from this false gospel, do not let these false teachers trick you and turn away from the one true word of Christ.

Continuing on in verse 11 and 12, he once again appeals to his authority on this matter. Verse 11: But I make known to you brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, for I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The gospel that Paul shared, was not from himself, or another.. he was not seeking his own fame and

glory, or any hidden agenda but he was preaching the word given to him through the revelation of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God.

He continues on and uses himself as an argument against these Judaizers that have come in, who have perverted his teaching and are attempting to make Jews, out of the Christian gentiles there in Galatia. Verse 13 and 14 he says “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

We should all be familiar with the story of Paul's conversion, as he was traveling to Damascus to put to death the Christians sent by Sanhedrin in Jerusalem he came face to face with God. In fact, let us turn there and read the account. Starting in Acts chapter 9 reading to verse 6.

I think Paul is bringing this up, not only to prove his apostle authority, and the validity of the Gospel shared, but to also point out.. this Judaism that is now being taught to the Galatians is false. Paul was a devote follower of the Mosaic Laws, and as he says, was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers. God stopped him dead in his tracks, knocked him to the ground, and changed his life. That is why Paul is so upset with these false teachers, he has been there, he knows what they are teaching first hand and it is not the gospel of Christ.

There are a few points that need to be made here before we go much further.

First, we need to take note as to who Paul is arguing against. He is instructed the Christians there to be wary, and turn away from false teaching. It is these false teachers that he directs his harshest words not the brethren in the churches. This is an important distinction to make. Teachers should be held at a higher standard, therefor they are responsible to make sure that what is being taught is correct. If what is being taught is found false, it is those who are teaching and leading that need to be brought down, not the people who have been deceived.

Second, there should be a distinction between a false doctrine, and mistaken doctrine. We need to remember that just because someone may disagree with you, does not make them not part of God's adopted family. As an example, a person who teaches the 10 commandments are guide for the christian life is completely different then the person who teaches that unless you practice the 10 commandments completely you can not be saved. for it is as Paul says, “another gospel, that is not a gospel” It is a false gospel that should be stopped.

This letter written 1000's of years ago is just as relevant today as it was then. It seems that there are churches today who have left their first love, Christ...and have turned away to another gospel, that is not a gospel. Christ, is the gospel, he is the law, he is our hope, our king, our sacrificial lamb, our priest, our savior. Not traditions, not a list of laws, but in all things Christ!

Remembering the 2 distinctions listed earlier I do not want to condemn our Reformed brethren in making the same error as the churches in Galatia, but they come close at times with their, over focus on the old Covenant, and church tradition. But just to clarify, as before there is a difference between one who says that since you are saved you are now able to follow the law, verses what the Judaizers were telling the gentile Christians in Galatia that they must follow the Law to be saved. The first I believe is a mistaken doctrine, while the second is a false doctrine. Over the next few weeks as we go through the book of Galatians we will see why this view of the law is a mistaken doctrine. But just to

give a little preview, The bible teaches that the Christian life is much more than being given the ability to follow the covenant given to Moses. We will see as we study further that It is a life of promise in Abraham's Seed, adoption as sons and daughters into a life transformed for the glory of our Father. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is a perfect example of that. As he said, he followed the law better than any man...and was not justified by it, in fact it drove him to kill God's adopted children!! We have not been converted to return to following these old laws, but we have been given a new heart, our lives have been changed as Paul's was, to be a living sacrifice for our Father's Glory.

There is also another gospel that is very prominent in the church today. I wrestled with this one as to whether it's distinction would be that of a false doctrine, or mistaken doctrine. For it really is half true, but the half it gets wrong undermines that which is true. It is The gospel that is preached predominantly from the pulpit today, the gospel which appeals to man's free will. Man's ability to choose his own fate. That man, isn't really dead in their trespasses and sin, but rather they have retained just enough life to make a decision to ask God into their heart. It is subtle, at first glance...it seems true but what it is doing is that it takes the saving work away from a sovereign God and puts it into the hand of mankind undermining our sovereign Lord, and making him nothing but a responder to man's will and desire. I am sorry, but that is "another gospel, which is not another" to quote Paul in Galatians. It is dangerous ground to be standing on, as it sets man's will above God's. But please, do not mistake my intention here. I am not saying that all who believe and follow an Arminian free will understanding of the gospel are unsaved heretics destined for destruction. There is enough truth in this doctrine that people are saved, not because of the doctrine, but in spite of it. The doctrine of man having an innate ability in themselves to decide to follow Christ, is not a mistaken notion, it is an unbiblical idea, that was actually refuted as heresy over 200 years ago, yet it is the most prominent view among the churches today. I don't think we talk about it enough to be honest, we treat this as a difference of opinion, or a secondary issue. But I believe it is not, it strikes at the heart of the gospel and is dangerous for it can create false converts, who are deceived into believing they are saved but have no actual inner work of the heart. Instead of the gospel being God's plan and work to call his people to himself, it becomes a call to reform your life, making salvation not much different from a new years resolution, and when these people fall back into sin, repeatedly, and they will for without the working of the holy spirit they can not and will not have the ability or desire to live a life that is holy. When that falling away happens they are encouraged to remember that day that THEY decided to ask Jesus into their hearts, it is this cyclical nature of this doctrine of creating false converts, then convincing them that they really are saved despite their life showing no fruit there of that contributes greatly to the issue we see today of what is known as carnal Christians, those who have at one time confessed faith, but have turned away. Instead of the gospel being a life changing event, driving a person to repentance, and a true reformation by the power of the holy spirit we have people who have head knowledge, but lack the resurrection work of God raising their souls from death to life. If we turn to Ephesians 2, it lays out the gospel plainly.

Turn to Ephesians 2 ( read to vs 9 ) .

Ephesians says, and you HE made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. It wasn't you, it wasn't your decision, but God who used resurrection power to bring you to life by his Grace, through faith, a gift of God. Not of our works, lest we would have something to boast about. But rather while we were enemies of God, he tore out our hard stone heart and replaced it with a soft heart willing, and able to hear and respond to the good news of the gospel. Also if we turn to Roman's 9:15 and 16 says. For God said to Moses I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion, so then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. If you are sitting in a church and hear any gospel other than that of which is taught in scripture flee for it is a false gospel. do not be deceived, do not turn away from the gospel of our sovereign Lord. If you are a teacher, and you are declaring a gospel not founded in scripture but rather built around appealing to man's will, or driving one to church traditions, or laws, you might want to take a better look at what you are teaching, search scripture to see if these things be true. Paul was concerned, and had compassion on the Galatian church, but he had a divine curse for those leading them astray. We should all take this as a warning to check ourselves, that what we believe truly is supported by the word.

A good rule to follow is that if anything is elevated to be equal to, in place of, or better than Christ, and His work on the cross is false. Salvation is not found in church tradition. Heaven is not your reward for living a good life, or being a good person. It is not Christ plus tradition, or Christ plus law, or Christ plus works. It is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is Christ, who is above all, in all, and through all. If anyone tells you otherwise, flee...do not be deceived as the Galatians, rather hold fast to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of your salvation.