

An Outline & Commentary for Galatians 1:1-12

If I get it wrong, then I am accursed. The gospel I mean. If I get the gospel wrong, then I am accursed. The same goes for you. Get it right or remain under the curse of God, crushed under the weight of his holy law. So we had better get it right then, hadn't we?

And you may notice that I am speaking of the gospel. We don't have to call it the true gospel to identify it, to have it stand out among the other gospels. It is true, and we could rightly say the "true gospel," but we are on very solid ground when we simply say "the gospel" because there is only one.

In our text this morning the Apostle Paul speaks of a different gospel that is no gospel at all. So I repeat—there is one gospel.

Our Galatians study is all about making sure we get this right. Why? Why does it matter? Because if we do not get the gospel right, then we will not be rescued from this present evil age.

The message of Galatians is one of freedom, freedom from our sins, freedom from this present darkness. Escape. We need rescued. We need a Savior. The other gospels—that aren't gospels at all—not only cannot rescue or deliver us from this present evil age, but they are part of the lie. You know the lie I am speaking of—the one where humans trade the truth of God for a lie.

And is there any greater lie than a gospel that deceives and leads to the judgment of God? Please tell me if I am missing something, but where is the good news in a story that ends in a lake of fire.

John MacArthur shares this insight from his many years of ministry: One of the strange realities in my life that I never really anticipated is that I have spent so many years, preached so many messages, written so many books, trying, in a sense, to hang onto the gospel while it's under attack from so called evangelicals. When I was in seminary, you know, we were kind of prepared to battle with liberalism, and we were prepared to defend the inerrancy of Scripture. We were prepared to be able to defend the true ministry of the Holy Spirit and get the right paradigm of sanctification, and deal with the sort of initial movement of what we now call the charismatic movement. We were learning how to address issues of liberalism and counter Catholicism and deal the cults. But the gospel seemed to be sort of a settled issue in the evangelical world.

Philip Ryken, speaking of *MODERN GOSPELS*, tells us that: More importantly, can you distinguish between the true gospel and all the false gospels in the contemporary church? We worship in a church of many gospels. There is the gospel of material prosperity, which teaches that Jesus is the way to financial gain. There is the gospel of family values, which teaches that Jesus is the way to a happy home. There is the gospel of the self, which teaches that Jesus is the way to personal fulfillment. There is the gospel of religious tradition, which teaches that Jesus is the way to respectability. There is the gospel of morality, which teaches that Jesus is the way to be a good person. [End quote.]

But there is only one gospel, one effective rescue from the evil of this world, and that is God's gospel. One plan, one gospel. No other way or ways.

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- *(Galatians 1:1-5 ESV) Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
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THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL IS GOD, NOT HUMANS, 1:1-5.

- The messengers of the gospel are God's messengers.
- The words of the gospel are God's words that bring grace and peace.
- The purpose of the gospel is to deliver us, to rescue us from the present evil age.
- The plan of the gospel is God's plan.

Philip Ryken ... Thus the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was not merely an example of supreme sacrifice, but an actual atonement for sin. It enabled God to forgive us by satisfying his pure justice ... The cross had been in God's mind from all eternity. Thus it demonstrates the love of God as well as the love of Christ. There could be no conflict within the Trinity, as if a loving Son had to rescue us from an angry Father. On the contrary, the willingness of the Son was in response to the Father's will. The Father does not love us because the Son died for us. Rather, the Son died for us because the Father loves us. The cross had its origin in our Father's heart.

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- *(Galatians 1:6-9) 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.*
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THE SOURCE OF THE DIFFERENT GOSPEL IS ACCURSED HUMANS, 1:6-9.

- The messengers of the different gospel are quick to leave grace—God's way of dealing with humans—to embrace "the human way."
- The messengers of the different gospel trouble their listeners by distorting the words of the gospel.
- The messengers of the different gospel speak a gospel that is contrary to the one that Paul preached.
- The messengers of the different gospel are under the curse of God.

- The messengers of the different gospel are under the curse of God. [*Intentionally repeated.*]

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 ESV) *And to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

- (Galatians 1:10-12) *For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. 11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

THE MESSENGER OF THE GOSPEL

IS A SERVANT OF CHRIST, 1:10-12, 2:6.

- The messenger of the gospel seeks God's approval.
- The messenger of the gospel is a servant of Christ.
- The messenger of the gospel knows that his gospel is not man's gospel.

(1 Thessalonians 2:2-6 NIV) *We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. 3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4 On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority.*

One gospel ... one plan ... God's plan ...

Philip Ryken tells that ... The crucifixion and the resurrection, the cross and the empty tomb—these are the simple facts of the gospel. These facts do not contain a single word about anything we do. They simply document what God has done in human history through Jesus Christ. The gospel is not about what we do for God; it is about what God has done for us. God the Father is the one who came up with the gospel plan. [End quote.]

So then here is a very important point: Since the gospel is God's plan, then any change to the gospel, any and every modification performed, is done by people to please people. From the small to the large, from the simple to the complex, humans demand some part in salvation. Why? Because the natural man, the unsaved person, cannot

comprehend a gospel completely apart from human works. They do not know grace. So apart from God they can neither accept nor receive a gospel of grace. Every system of works comes about because people distort God's teaching with human understanding.

TWO INDICATIONS THAT A PERSON DOES NOT KNOW THE GRACE OF GOD:

Indication #1: They are unsettled. They have to tinker with God's gospel. This person cannot accept the clear, simple truth of a gospel of grace.

(Galatians 2:16 ESV) *Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Indication #2: They are fearful.

(Galatians 5:1 ESV) *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

(Romans 8:15 ESV) *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

(Galatians 2:4-5 ESV) *Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.*

And one more from Philip Ryken: Raymond Ortlund Jr. has tried to imagine the church without the gospel. He asks, "What might our evangelicalism, without the evangel [the gospel], look like?"

- a passionate devotion to the pro-life cause
- a confident manipulation of modern managerial techniques
- a drive toward church growth
- a deep concern for the institution of the family
- a clever appeal to consumerism by offering a sort of cost-free Christianity Lite
- a sympathetic, empathetic, thickly-honeyed cultivation of interpersonal relationships
- a determination to take America back to its Christian roots through political power
- a warm affirmation of self-esteem

Look at the above list. Every single item shows a modification to the gospel to make it more acceptable, more appealing, to human reason. And it is. The problem is that these "different gospels" will not quench the thirst for true life that comes only through salvation in "the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."