

So the message tonight that I am presenting from our text is called “About the One True Gospel”. This is because Paul does not in this section lay out the definition or content of the Gospel but he does describe or tell us about the One True Gospel. Remember in our overview I suggested that the theme of the whole book was “The True Gospel”. Please turn with me to Galatians chapter one and read verses 6-10 with me.

So tonight we are going to consider five observations I take from this text, surely there are more that can be found but I will look at five. Then we will seek to understand Paul’s teaching and apply it to our lives.

A paraphrase of the lesson would be this: Paul’s description of the One True Gospel helps me to recognize and reject false versions or copies or alternatives that might weasel into my thoughts in order to maintain a pure and sincere devotion to Christ. By now in our study of Galatians we should understand the historical context where we find our passage. And we know that Paul is here stating the actual problem and purpose of his letter. Interestingly Paul cuts right to the chase and it becomes clear from the outset that his letter is at least in part a rebuke.

First I see that embracing a distorted Gospel is rejecting God and separating one’s self from Christ, not simply rejecting a doctrine. This implies a personal union and a relationship and not just a belief or conviction or system. I find this in verse 6a. Paul primarily tells us **who** we desert when we turn from the true Gospel and it isn’t Paul. Paul appeals here to the result of the Gospel and speaks of the deserting of a person, not just a doctrine. He will later talk about being severed from Christ by this false doctrine. Do we see in this argument that the Gospel brought us to God?

“18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” (1 Peter 3:18)

This will lead us to our first head which is this: **The Goal of The One True Gospel.**

Second I see that we “receive” (this word comes from verse 9) the true Gospel by the “individual” or “personal” call of God in the grace of Christ. I find this in verse 6b. Paul is here describing an action of the one who we would be rejecting. He describes how this person brought us to “receive” the One True Gospel. Paul makes the clear case that it was according to the sovereign will of God who called us and by the gracious work of the Son who justified us.

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“4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:4–6)

This leads to our second head: **The means of the One True Gospel.**

Third I see that a distorted version of the Gospel is not the true Gospel. I find this in verse 6c-7. This distorted Gospel that Paul speaks against still affirms Christ as the crucified and risen Son of God, but is none-the-less not the One true Gospel. Falsehood was added to the truth and Paul argues later how this defiles the whole thing in similar fashion to how Jesus called out the false teaching of the pharisees.

Jesus said “11 **How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**” 12 Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:11–12)

This leads to our third head: **The Exclusivity of the One True Gospel.**

Fourth I see that Paul calls a curse upon any man or angel, any apostle, any prophet, any church, any supposed messenger who would distort the Gospel. I find this in verse 8-9. Paul only curses someone else using this word for accursed, “anathema” one other time. Paul calls a curse on the person who does not have a love for Jesus

“22 If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!” (1 Corinthians 16:22)

Paul is willing here in our text to put a curse upon himself or any other person and any angel that would dare to corrupt the purity of the Gospel with lies and deceit. He is declaring that person condemned and cutoff. By his choice of wording in verse 6 Paul may even be comparing the seriousness of this offense with the offense in Exodus 32. Remember that he said “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him” in verse 6.

“7 And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden

calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' """ (Exodus 32:7-8, ESV)

This leads to our fourth head: **The seriousness of the One True Gospel.**

Finally my fifth and last observation is that Paul ties this astonishing nature distorted Gospel to the idea of pleasing man, which he refuses to do. I see this in verse 10. Here Paul is drawing a conclusion from our passage and transitioning to his next unit. Paul presents the idea that the True Gospel will be offensive to the natural man and that one must choose to serve the satisfaction or pleasure or approval of man or serve Christ.

"28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God." (Romans 2:28-29)

This leads to our fifth and final head: **The Offense of the One True Gospel.**

The Goal of The One True Gospel.

What is the goal and the end result of the Gospel that we have received? Is the Gospel about not getting punished? Or not being guilty? Or not dying and suffering eternal torment? Or about getting crowns and a mansion? Or seeing a lost loved one who is asleep in the LORD?

"21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:21-23, ESV)

"3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3, ESV)

Communion with God. Knowing God. Being reconciled to God is the goal. Christ died to bring us to God! May we watch for deceptive teachings that would take us away from this...

“3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:3)

The Means of The One True Gospel

How do we receive the One True Gospel? Do we achieve it? Do we merit it? Do we perform it? Do we work for it? Paul asserts that God decides to accomplish it and he does so by the free and gracious work of Christ redeeming us, justifying us, reconciling us unto God. We must deny any gospel that would set up our work as a contributor or partner to this work of God in Christ.

“3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:” (Romans 4:3–6)

Now an objection can be raised here about works. We know that James rightly speaks highly of works and judges that faith without works is dead faith. Reconciling scripture with itself we can plainly see that saving faith moves us to personal action but that the action is a result or an outflow of my justification and not a contributor to it. Without a changed heart that follows the Lord I am living a lie and do not possess saving faith (see 1 Jn chapter 2-3; Ezek 36:26-27; Romans 6).

The Exclusivity of the One True Gospel

Does the Gospel allow for pluralism, which is the “Conflicting roads still lead to heaven” doctrine? Does the Gospel allow for inclusivism, which is the “I am sure people will be saved by God through Jesus even without new birth and faith in Jesus if they never have an opportunity to hear the Gospel or were raised in a different faith”. Paul preaches a very exclusive and narrow Gospel that cannot tolerate falsehood added in. Not only is justification found in Christ alone (no other name, Gal 1:6), but by grace alone (no other means, Gal 1:4, 6), and through faith alone (no human contribution, Gal 2:16), according to scripture alone (no other revelation, Gal 1:8-9), and to the glory of God alone (no higher reason or goal, Gal 1:5).

The Seriousness of the One True Gospel

The Lord takes false or absent representation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ seriously.

“1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (James 3:1, ESV)

“6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.” (Ezekiel 33:6, ESV)

Scripture is our rule. There is no other standard.

“17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17, ESV)

Many people have been martyred for the purity of the Gospel and the accurate transmission of this message in our own language. Tyndale in 16th Century.

The Offense of the One True Gospel

The Gospel message is not a message of peace but of truth

“34 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34, ESV)

“22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:22–24, ESV)

“20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” (John 15:20, ESV)

“12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV)

“4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4, ESV)

Paul teaches that we are to stand for truth and that we are to seek to please God and not man. By this I take Paul to mean that we are not seeking man’s approval, but God’s. Our culture values

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tolerance as long as the idea in question is not exclusive, and then it will not tolerate it. Relativity is still king. Individual truth and reality reigns.

*“3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,”
(2 Timothy 4:3)*

However, we must guard against the misunderstanding that we are to be obnoxious jerks.

“18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18, ESV)

“2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” (Romans 15:2, ESV)

In summary, the goal, means, exclusivity, seriousness, and the offense of the One True Gospel are all signposts for us to recognize the True Gospel from error. So how does this message from Galatians help me and where does it fit in with all of my understanding of the Bible? Paul is clear that to fail to keep the purity of the Gospel message is to be unsaved and condemned.

So what are some ways that the Galatian heresy can make its way into my thinking? Do I value and seek communion with God above all other advantages to the Gospel? Do I think that by spiritual disciplines merit me standing with God? Do I think my meeting attendance or giving or clean speech merit me standing with God? Do I recognize the need for the explicit Gospel around me and do I stand for the truth of Christ and the Five Solas of protestantism? Do I check all experiences by the authority of the Word, submitting all interpretations and decisions to it? Do I primarily seek to please other Christians with my public actions and words and opinions or do I primarily seek to please the Lord in my private thoughts and attitudes and actions? Do I share the Gospel and do I do so with a faithfulness to the message of Scripture or do I make it “relevant” or “easier” to take?

My hope would be that we would regularly check our understanding of the Gospel against scripture and that we would fight to maintain the purity of the message and our faithfulness to it.

“24 The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; 26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26, ESV)