

Paul's Painful Surprise

Galatians 1:6-10

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I want to read Galatians 1:6-10, so follow with me together in your Bible. Paul says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God?" Paul is asking a rhetorical question, "or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

The salutation in Paul's letters are ordinarily followed by an expression of gratitude and appreciation for his readers. What Paul usually starts off with, "Paul, an apostle," or "...servant of Jesus Christ to the saints which are in Ephesus," or Thessalonica or Philippi or whatever it might be, and he wishes them grace and peace, as we covered that. Normally, Paul would launch into one of two or both things. He would actually say, "I thank my God every time I think about you." When he thought about the Philippians, it brought joy to his heart, and he would pray for them. Neither one of those are found in the book of Galatians. It's unlike any other letter that Paul wrote. He simply starts in verse 6, "I marvel," or I am amazed or I am surprised. We're going to break this all down tonight in this passage, and I'm going to look at four things we need to learn about Paul that caused him to marvel or to be surprised or to be in wonder as he looked at these believers there in Galatia. Unlike any other epistle that he wrote, he was writing to a church that had turned away from the gospel, and they were turning to a false gospel, which is no gospel at all.

In Galatia, false teachers known as Judaizers, we use that term for them because they were Jews and it would seem as though, and I'm not dogmatic about this but I think this is the best way to view them, they were professing to be believers in Jesus Christ and did believe that Jesus was the Messiah, that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. They had many of the points of Christianity right, but what they did was, and this is the fundamental problem, added works to be necessary for salvation. What they were telling the believers, and specifically the Gentiles and included Jewish believers as well, that they must proselyte into Judaism and literally become Jews through proselyting in order to be Christians. Christianity was in danger of being kind of a division of Judaism and not really the fulfillment and completion of it as the Bible tells us it is. They were Judaizing Gentiles, and they were telling them, "You've gotta be circumcised. You gotta keep the Mosaic law. You gotta follow all these rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship on Saturday. You gotta follow dietary laws and all of the things that are necessary," they said, "for salvation." Paul takes issue with that, rightfully so, and is our example. We, too, because of a love for Christ, a love for the truth, a love for the gospel, should be willing to stand for the truth and earnestly contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

The theme running through this section that's really speaking to my heart is Paul's approach in this letter, and it seems so clearly in this passage to the Galatians, is not something that is acceptable or viewed as right in our culture today. You're going to see how clearly the Bible is an antithesis or in contrary to the popular cultural view of today known as pluralism and relativism—that no one person is right, no one is wrong, all paths lead to God, there is no absolute truth—and certainly we're seeing it today in our Cancel culture, be it not even in Christianity, but it has come into the church, that you never ever tell anybody that they're wrong, and you never ever tell anybody anything that might upset them, hurt their feelings, or anything that would throw them off or be offensive. You have to say everything that's nice, uplifting, edifying, and palatable. You never say, "Your religion is wrong, and it's in error," and "If you believe that, you're anathema," or "You're going to be lost and go to hell."

Everything that Paul says in this passage is condemned and thrown out by the world. The reason why it concerns me is because it's not just in the world, it's filtered into the church. It's filtered into our pulpits. It's filtered into the pew. Sadly, today, we have churches that are placating to this kind of relativism, pluralism, all paths lead to God, that we should never put down other religions, we should never tell them they're wrong, or we should never believe that we have the truth. They kind of freak out on that idea that you believe your truth is true, others are false, and they reject absolute truth. That has filtered into the church today. Certainly, the Old Testament prophets wouldn't fill that mold. Certainly, Jesus Christ Himself wouldn't fit that mold, and certainly Paul the Apostle would not fit that mold.

That doesn't mean that it's unloving. The most loving thing you can do is speak the truth in love. Amen? Truth without love is hypocrisy; love without truth is duplicity, and it is wrong. We need to speak the truth, and we need to speak it in love. We don't want to be brutal. We want to be truthful, but we want to be honest and speak the truth in love. Today we need pastors and people in the church to stand without wavering on God's unchanging Word, and I believe that Paul is a beautiful example of this. Any pastor that wants a model for pastoral ministry would do well to look at Paul the Apostle and use him as a pattern for how we ought to preach God's Word, how we ought to faithfully minister to God's people, and how we ought to win the lost. Paul was a wonderful example, but he did stand up against false teachers. It's not en vogue or popular to preach this way today, so pastors will avoid the topic of false teachers; and we come to the place where we don't even think there is such a thing as a false teacher, that everybody's okay, and we leave everything alone. We don't want to upset or bother anyone or say anything that might be negative or mean.

I want you to note these four things about Paul. Notice the thing that he marveled over in verse 6. In just verse 6 we see Paul's marveling. He says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." The phrase, "I marvel," literally means I am surprised. It's both an indication of astonishment coupled with the emotion of bewilderment and denotes a painful feeling or emotion. Some translate this, "I am dumbfounded." When I read this section of Paul's letter, he starts with, "I marvel," and I think, What is it that Paul was surprised or marveling or dumbfounded about? The question is, he was bewildered or bothered by their transfer (verse 6) or their removal. Notice that he says, "I

marvel that ye are so soon removed,” and then adds to that, “from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.”

The word “removed” or transfer is in the present tense. It indicates that they were in the process of turning and walking away from God, who had called them, from the gospel that he had given to them. I want to break it down for you. Paul’s warning to the elders of Ephesus is an example of this in Acts 20. When Paul was meeting with a group of pastors, the word “elder” is a synonym for pastor, and they were meeting on the beach of Miletus. Paul said, “For I know this, that after my departing,” that is, these pastors and their churches, “shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” He is warning the pastors about false teachers from the outside, “They’ll come into the church and try to deceive.” But then he made this statement. He said, “Some will even arise from your own midst and will seek to draw disciples after themselves and would be speaking lies and not the truth.” Paul warned these pastors that they had to be vigilant, sober, and watching out because people would come from the outside and people would arise from the inside.

Satan is always trying to infiltrate the church with false teaching. It is one of Satan’s number one methods to deceive people and lead them astray. If he can pervert the gospel of Christ, which is the message of salvation, the doctrine of how we’re saved, then he can lead many people to hell for all eternity.

Paul says, “I’m upset. I’m bothered. I’m bewildered. I’m dumbfounded that you have been removed.” Notice these things. Paul was upset that they removed so soon, verse 6. It hadn’t been a very long time. They were new converts, young believers, and he was surprised that in this early infant stage of their walk with Christ, that they would be so easily influenced and be led astray. Secondly, notice that they had turned from three things: “him that called you,” and from “the grace of Christ,” and they turned “unto another gospel.” In context here, as he preached to the Galatians, God by His Spirit had called them to salvation. They were true believers but were in danger of being polluted, being led astray, and being brought into bondage. The Judaizers, which were not true believers but professing believers, came with a false gospel and were fostering it on these people.

It’s so important that we believe the truth of God’s Word, and the guide by which we determine what is right and what is wrong is always the Bible. It’s that simple. It’s not the preacher. It’s not his personality. It’s not his oratory ability. It’s not history. It’s not intellect. It’s not experience. The source of authority...and by the way, every human being has a source of authority. Sometimes it’s people’s emotions or their feelings or a vision they saw or what their parents taught them or what they learned when they were growing up as a little child or whatever it might be. They have a source of authority.

For us, as believers, we must come back to the Bible. All that we believe and every way we behave must be based upon the Word of God. It always needs to be in that order, too. What we believe determines how we behave. In an age of churches that have abandoned truth, it’s so important that we believe properly in order that we might behave properly. The Judaizers

brought legalism, which could lead also to license. They could live either in license or in liberty or they could live in legalism. We want to live in liberty where Christ has set us free and be not entangled in this yoke of bondage. Don't forget the importance of sound doctrine.

People will choose churches today not based on their doctrine but based on the nice building, comfortable pews, a great children's ministry, a great worship team, a nice playground for the children, a nice parking lot, "I can get in and out real quickly, so I can go and do what I want." Those things are fine. I'm actually really appreciative of those things that we should have, but that's not how you judge a church or determine what church you should go to. It's not based on whether the preacher is charismatic, dynamic, or pleasant to listen to. It should be the content of the message and the doctrine that the pastor holds to and is believing. Is it closely in line with God's Word and God's truth? Paul says, "I'm just marveling that you are removed so soon."

The word "removed" also was used for those who were in the military or in the army when they would actually run or go AWOL. It was a punishable thing by death. He says, "You're in the Lord's army, but you're turning away and running for your life." Paul is concerned. He is marveling and surprised. Notice it says that they've been "removed from...the grace of Christ." That's the theme that runs through the whole letter, that you've fallen from grace, that you were saved by grace, sanctified by grace, kept by grace, but you're fallen from grace.

It does not mean that if they were born again they would lose their salvation. But it does mean that they would lose the power, the presence, the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and would be living in bondage and lose the joy of the Lord. They wouldn't lose their relationship, but they could lose their witness, that is, for sure. "You've been led astray," or have been pulled aside to this other gospel. That's the third, so you left "him that called you," God called them and they are walking away from God the Father. They're walking away from the grace of Jesus Christ, and they are walking away from the gospel, "...called...unto another gospel," and as you see in verse 7, that is not truly a gospel. This is called another gospel, but it's not really the gospel, the true good news of Jesus Christ. So, don't turn away from God's grace.

The Bible is very clear that you cannot mix law and grace. If you try to mix law or works with grace, Paul says in Romans, it's no more grace. It's either all of the law or it's all of grace. You're either saved by what you do or what Christ has done. Christianity is that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by our good deeds or by our righteous acts or by our works are we indeed saved.

Turn to Galatians 3 for just a moment. We'll get there in several weeks, but look at verse 3. This is the problem. He says, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Not only did he not praise them or congratulate them for their walk with the Lord but actually says, "You're foolish," and says, "you started in the Spirit but for some reason you now think that you're going to be perfected by the flesh." It happens to a lot of people. They get saved and think, Okay, now that I'm saved, I've gotta prove that I'm worthy, so I've gotta read a lot, study a lot, and live a good life. Those things are great, but it needs to be the work of the Holy Spirit in your life working from the inside out. Legalism comes from

pressure on the outside and creates conformity. But the work of the Holy Spirit is from the fruit on the inside. This is why in Galatians we're going to be looking at the fruit of the Spirit because that's what it means to walk in liberty where Christ has made us free.

Turn to Galatians 4:9-11. Paul says, "But now, after that ye have known God," so they were true believers, "or rather are known of God," here's the problem, "how turn ye again," so they had been removed in Galatians 1, and now he describes them as turning away in Galatians 4, "to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage," and here's the problem, verse 10, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." He said, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." He says, "You're all wrapped up in 'I gotta worship on this day, this is a holy year, and holy month, and holy time,' and you think that by some ceremonies, rites, or rituals that you can be made more holy."

Hold your place here in Galatians 1, we'll come right back, but since it's pretty close, turn to Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul says that God has given to the church, "...apostles," which Paul was an apostle, "and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The reason God has given them to the church is for their perfecting. That means they are to mature the saints. The reason they are to be mature, verse 12, is "...for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," and the reason all that takes place is in verse 13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Notice verse 14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro," the Galatians were being removed. They were being tossed to and fro. They were losing their balance. They were getting knocked off center. They were going away from the grace of Christ, the God who had called them. They were embracing a false doctrine which was another gospel which wasn't true. He says, "...tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." That concept is referring to the preaching of novelty consistent with what Paul said to Timothy that in the last days people will have "...itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." He says that we are given pastor-teachers for the maturing of the saints that they can do the work of the ministry that we "...be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the," notice this, "sleight of men," he could be well describing the Judaizers, "and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

This is the great need of the church today, that we grow out of immaturity and a state of infancy and get grounded in God's Word, we know the truth, and we're not under the influence of always hearing some new preacher or new speaker, some new book, some new trip that we're on, we're not cast to and fro with every wind of doctrine. One translation that I read years ago on that verse says, "They are always under the influence of the last person they talk to." "Did you hear this new doctrine?" "Did you hear this new speaker?" "Did you hear this new thing?" They're just like a tumbleweed. In California, we have tumbleweeds. Sometimes people from other states that come to California don't know what those are. They are those big weeds that

break loose and roll when the wind blows. You know, a lot of Christians are like tumbleweeds, they just roll around with every wind of doctrine.

I grew up in a church that wasn't preaching doctrinal truth, and people were always looking for the new experience. Now, experience is wonderful, but it must be based on the truth of God's Word. If your experience cannot be substantiated, grounded, and verified in the objective truth of God's Word, then you are in big, big, big danger. You've just opened a Pandora's box. You have to accept everybody's experience as being equally valid, and then you're always going to be looking for a new experience, a new emotion, a new high, a new feeling rather than be grounded and growing in the Word of God.

I thought that passage in Ephesians was interesting in light of Galatians where they had been led astray or removed from the true gospel to a false gospel. They were like "...children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," they weren't growing up and maturing in the things of Christ. Go back with me to Galatians 1. So, they were removed. Paul was marveling and surprised, and such is the same as Christianity today is so influenced by false truth and false doctrine.

The second thing that I see is Paul's example for us is that he had wisdom to discern the true gospel, verse 7. He says, "Which is not another," this is a play on words where Paul says that they were "...removed from him that called you...unto another gospel." That word "another" there, the very word in the Greek actually has the idea of another of a different kind. It could have been a word that meant another of the same kind, but it's another of a different kind. It's not really a gospel at all, verse 7, "but there be some," and he uses this word, "that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." As I said, Paul here denounces false teachers. Again, even in Christianity, this has become unpopular. You're not going to Win Friends and Influence People or grow a big church if you preach against false doctrine. But, you know, the minister's job is not just to preach true doctrine, which, again, is lacking today—doctrinal sermons are greatly lacking today, most sermons are kind of practical, life situational, filled with how to get along in life and how to prosper and be a success, how to be happy, how to reign in this life, and all those positive kind of things instead of teaching Bible truth or doctrinal truth.

On the other side of the coin is warning against false doctrine and against false teachers and labeling it for what it truly is. This is not en vogue or popular today whether it be in the culture around us or in the church that we are part of. I believe that these were the Judaizers. They were on a Judaizing mission to bring people under their false doctrine that you have to become a Jew to be saved, you have to keep Mosaic law, you have to follow dietary rules and regulations, and have to keep all these principles that we give or impose on you. Paul says, verse 7, they "trouble you." He says, "Which is not another," gospel, "but there be some that trouble you." The word "trouble" there means to confuse you. It means to twist the Scriptures so that they are confused. It means that they are twisting the Scriptures, adding to the Scriptures, or omitting from the Scriptures, but they're being confused. The word "trouble" you means that they are agitated, confused, or lacking peace. They're confused in this state.

Notice also that they, "...would pervert the gospel of Christ." This phrase "pervert" there means literally to change into the very opposite direction. It actually has the idea of the gospel goes this way, they go that way; that what they're preaching is the opposite direction. I've listened to some men preach and said to myself, What they're preaching is the antithesis of what the Bible teaches. Yes, they quote verses; yes, they quote Scriptures, and they are eloquent, dynamic, and have a lot of other great qualities; but what they're saying is unbiblical. We live in a culture today that's not that concerned about truth or being biblically sound or accurate. They just want something to move them, stir them, excite them, and motivate them. They want something that's appealing. It's that, "Tickle my ears. Don't tell me what I don't want to hear, tell me what I do want to hear. Tell me I'm okay. Tell me how to be prosperous, happy, and all that stuff."

I believe that when we're living holy lives and we are filled with the Spirit of God and come to the truth of God's Word, we're going to be happy even in the midst of our sorrow and suffering. But we get the cart before the horse and we just don't really understand that it starts with purity then comes peace. Do you know you can't have peace without purity, whether it be moral purity or living holy lives or sound doctrine? You show me where doctrine is aberrant or false, and I'll show you somebody that's miserable. It's living in bondage, fear, lacking the joy of the Lord, lacking peace. It's so prevalent today.

Paul says, "...but there be some that trouble you," you're agitated, and, as I said, they do it so often today by twisting the Scriptures. They don't interpret a text in its context. They don't explain the text in its grammar, in its theology, in its context, and especially its historical context. When a verse appears in the Bible and you ask yourself, What does it mean? It means what the author intended it to mean. It's what we call authorial intent. It doesn't mean what you think it means. It doesn't mean what you feel like it means. It doesn't mean what you hope it means. It doesn't mean what you want to impose on the text what it means. It means what the author meant it to mean. That's why when we're studying the Bible, we have to get its historical context and background. We have to pay attention to the grammar. We have to look at the purpose of the author—his intent, what he meant by what he said—to be able to interpret properly the Scriptures. You don't want to twist the Scriptures. You don't want to add to the Scriptures preaching things that aren't in the Bible, and you don't want to omit from the Scriptures things that are in the Bible. A lot of times preachers will preach a sermon which sounds very good, and what they say isn't wrong, but the problem is they omit things that are true but offensive to our sinful flesh because they want the message to be palatable and to be smooth. They want to be liked and to be popular so they pervert, verse 7, the gospel of Christ.

Before we move on from verse 7 and wrap this up, I want to mention the gospel of Christ and what it is. In 1 Corinthians 15 is one of the simplest and to the point messages on the gospel. Paul says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The gospel is basically focusing on Jesus died for us, Jesus rose for us, Jesus lives for us.

In Romans 1:16, Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of

God unto salvation to...the Jew first, and also to the Greek," or to the Gentile. In order to understand the gospel, you need these elements. First, man is a sinner and needs a Savior. He's not just sick or socially held back, he needs a Savior. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and "There is none righteous, no, not one." If you fail to understand that man is a sinner by birth and by nature, inherited from Adam, then you're not going to understand either the need for the gospel or the content or purpose of the cross, which is the gospel. If it's a social gospel or just a moral gospel, if they're preaching the cross as a love of God theory that man just needs to have an example of sacrifice that Jesus gave us on the cross and don't see that man is a sinner and the cross is the atonement for man's sin, then you're not going to understand the gospel.

You start with a foundation of a man being a sinner, sinful and separated from God; and in that sinful unregenerate state, he is destined and bound for hell. We are born sinners on our way to hell. Salvation is a rescue mission. We need to be saved from hell, from sin, from death, from the penalty of the law. That's why we use the word "salvation." What are we saved from? We get saved and don't even know what we're saved from. Sometimes people just say, "Just pray and ask Jesus in your heart." "Okay, Jesus come into my heart," but you don't realize why you're doing that is because I'm a sinner going to hell, and if I don't trust Jesus as my Savior, then I'll be lost for all eternity. You need to start with man's sinfulness, and then God's solution to man's sin is the cross—understanding the essence of the cross is the substitutionary death of Christ—and then you're saved by grace alone, period. It's that simple, and that's simply profound. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." It's through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

It's not faith plus good deeds or church attendance or confirmation or catechism or water baptism or getting a Christian haircut or eating Christian food or wearing Christian clothes or worshipping on Christian days or being a good person—I don't smoke, I don't chew, I don't hang out with those that do. I don't go to the movie theatre. I don't go to dances. I don't watch movies. I don't do sinful things. I'm a Christian. Christians are known for what they don't do. I'm not saying you should do those things, but those are not the things that bring salvation. Jesus saves you by His grace. God's grace is unearned, undeserved, unmerited favor.

How do they pervert the gospel? Well, as I said, they teach that man is not a sinner by nature, we don't inherit Adam's sin nature. They don't believe that Jesus died a substitutionary death on the cross. They don't believe that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There could be a whole list of other things that they're promoting. Today, we call them Progressive Christians, but Progressive Christians of today are the liberal Christians of past years. There was what was called Neo-orthodoxy. It was started by a theologian named Karl Barth, and it has resurfaced in our day in what's called Progressive Christianity. It's very prevalent today. If you're not biblically attuned and listen carefully, you can easily be led astray by the fluting and the piping of the false apostles and the false teachers. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul said, "...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Satan comes as an angel of light to deceive; we must know our Bibles.

Now, we move from Paul's marvel, verse 6, to his knowledge and wisdom of knowing the truth of the gospel, verse 7, to verses 8-9 of Paul's warning. This is very stern. He says, "But though we," probably including himself with Barnabas and other spiritual leaders, preachers, or pastors there in the church at Antioch, "or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel," and now what he's saying here I want you to understand is a hypothetical situation. Paul isn't specifically talking about a situation, but he's saying, "Hypothetically, if I or anyone with me, if we preach another gospel, and even if an angel from heaven preached some other gospel," he says, "... than that which we have preached unto you, let him be," and here's the word, "accursed," it's the Greek word anathema. It means cursed or destroyed by God or cursed to the lowest hell. This is very strong language. It's very, very radical language, and Paul is using it because he loves God, loves God's truth, and loves God's people. The last thing on Paul's list is to be liked by people or to be impressing people or to be popular with people; so he says, "If they preach another gospel," which he explained was not a true gospel, "let them be anathema," cursed to the lowest hell.

Verse 9, "As we said before, so say I now again," he's repeating it, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be," and here's the same word, "accursed," anathema. Now, he says, "I preached it before. When I was there in Galatia, I preached the gospel and you received the gospel, so somebody comes along and preaches a different gospel, then they are accursed by God, they are destined for hell." What does he mean by accursed? This word "anathema" or accursed actually means that you will be separated from God, that you will be in the lake of fire or hell forever and ever and ever and ever.

By the way, that is another doctrinal truth that is denied by the Progressive Christians today. "There's no hell. God is a God of love. He's not going to send anyone to hell. He's not going to judge anyone." They deny the existence of a literal hell. As we studied Sunday, they deny the existence of a literal devil, so we need to be careful. It must be the same preaching that Paul preached, and I like it, he says, "Even if an angel from heaven preaches this message," now the Jews had a belief that the law was mitigated to Moses by angels, and in Hebrews he talks about that the law given to Moses through angels. This is hypothetical. Again, if he was truly an angel who came from heaven, unless he were a fallen angel, the gospel would be true.

You know, you can be deceived by Satan appearing as an angel of light, "Well, an angel appeared to me and told me that there were these golden tablets, and they contain the true everlasting gospel. All the Christian churches up to this point are apostate and don't believe or teach the truth," Joseph Smith had an angel visit him. Isn't it interesting that Paul the Apostle uses angels here as an example of if an angel even preaches to you, and we even know that he claimed the angel's name was Moroni that gave him the golden tablets in Egyptian hieroglyphics. "I couldn't read it, but he gave me a special pair of glasses. I put my glasses on and I could read it," and on and on the story goes. It's another gospel. It's not the gospel of Jesus Christ, yet people will be led astray by this story. That's why the Bible and the Bible alone—not the Bible and the Book of Mormon, not the Bible and the Pearl of Great Price, not the Bible and the Book of Abraham, not the Bible and the church—the Bible and the Bible alone is to be our final authority.

Paul says, "Even then that which I preached unto you, if it's a different gospel," verse 8, it must be the same preaching, same gospel, same message that Paul preached. Let me give you an example. You can use this when a cultist knocks on your door. It's Acts 16:30. You have a couple Mormon missionaries knock on your door, a couple elders, or you have some Jehovah's Witnesses knock on your door, you can point out that in Acts 16:30 a question is asked by the Philippian jailer of Paul the Apostle. It's a very important question: "What must I do to be saved?" You don't need to be a theologian. You don't need to know Greek or Hebrew. You don't need to be a church historian to look at that question in the Bible, "What must I do to be saved?" What was Paul's answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

I know in the verse, in case you're wondering, it goes on to say, "...and thy house." What it means is that if you believe on Jesus Christ, you'll be saved; and if the members of your family or the members of your household, believe on Jesus Christ, they will be saved. You don't automatically get saved and all of your relatives living in your house are automatically saved. You're only saved when you believe on Jesus Christ.

I can't tell you how many times I've shared that with Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, "Let's just get real simple here. Let's get right to the chase. Paul was asked by the Philippian jailer, 'What do I need to do to be saved?'" Paul didn't say, "Wear your Mormon underwear. Get your marriage sealed in the temple. Stay away from certain foods. Keep the Mosaic law. Get baptized." He said, "Believe on Jesus Christ." That's what it means to become a Christian. You trust in Him.

The word "believe" is a synonym for the word "faith." It's also synonymous for the word "receive." It's used in John 1, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." In John 3:16, that we believe, we will have everlasting life. You can't get any simpler than Paul just simply says, "Believe on Jesus Christ and you will be saved." If not, if you're not preaching this gospel, let him be anathema—let him be cursed to the lowest hell—Paul's powerful words. He took very seriously what he was believing and teaching the gospel.

Notice verse 9, "If any man preach any other gospel," he repeats that in verse 9, "let him be accursed." The message vindicates the messenger, not vice versa. Many times people will say, "Well, he's a doctor," or "He's a bishop," or "...an elder," or "...priest. He has authority." The authority is never in an individual. The authority is never in an organization. The authority is always in the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. You can't say, and this is what I hear quite often, "Well, he's so dynamic. He's so charismatic. He's so winsome. He's such a great orator." They don't really care if what he's teaching is false. It's pleasant, there are a lot of stories, and it's exciting to listen to; but there's no doctrinal content.

Write down 2 Timothy 4, where Paul tells Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season," and in his preaching he's to, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine," didactic content. Then, he tells him why he is to preach that way, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to

themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” It’s so important that we give ourselves to truth.

Why was Paul so adamant to use this strong term “anathema,” to those who preached doctrinal error? Because he was living like Jesus. Jesus did the same thing with the false teachers of His day. He believed that man needed the gospel for salvation, that was at stake, and he believed that we needed, as believers, the true gospel of grace for sanctification—to live holy lives. He also believed that it would bring health to the church and bring glory to God. I believe to give the Bible its rightful place in the church, that it brings health to the church, it brings glory to God, and it brings a witness to the watching world around us.

Last, but not least, in verse 10, and we won’t spend much time on it because it will transition us into next week’s text, he says, “For do I now persuade men, or God?” the answer is, “No, I’m not living to persuade or to seek to influence the favor of men,” or do I seek to live for God? The answer is, “I’m living for God.” or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men,” notice he says, “I should not,” could not, and would not, “be the,” true, “servant,” or slave, “of Christ.” We have the characteristic and the motive of Paul in verse 10. Paul’s motive was not to please men, not to placate to men, not to favor men’s opinions, men’s views, but to be faithful and please God.

False teachers were accusing Paul of courting the favor of men and being a compromiser. “He doesn’t tell you all these things that we’re telling you because he’s watering it down, he’s compromising, and he’s not telling you the truth.” So, Paul asks these two rhetorical questions showing that as a true servant of God, he is only seeking to please God and to do it for God’s glory. First, there’s nothing more important than living for the glory of God; secondly, being faithful to the gospel of God’s grace; thirdly, walking in that grace in our daily lives. It’s serious stuff. It’s so serious that even Paul said, “I would wish myself,” same word, “were anathema,” accursed to the lowest hell, “for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. If they could be saved, I would be willing to go to hell for their salvation.”

Truth and error matters. You read these verses we covered tonight, it basically says: Truth matters, and truth does matter. We speak the truth; we speak it in love. Amen?