

A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

(LESSON FIVE)

“ANOTHER GOSPEL” (PART 2)

GALATIANS 1:6-7

(NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel—

7 not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ.

Commenting on the issue that the apostle Paul was endeavouring to deal with in his letter to the Galatian believers, **Theodore H. Epp**, the founding director of the *Back to the Bible* radio broadcast, made the following comments:

“The basic error the Apostle Paul was dealing with was the mingling of Law with grace. There are three grave errors that arise out of this.

First there is what we call “legalism.” This is the teaching that people are saved by works or human effort. That, in this case, would include the keeping of the Law and observing the rituals and ceremonies found in the Old Testament covenant God made with Israel...

The second error that can undermine true faith in Jesus Christ is what we may call “false liberty.”

The Christian is called unto liberty, but that liberty is defined for us in the Scriptures and not left to our imagination. Yet there are those who

teach that because they are saved by grace, it makes no difference how they live or behave...

The third error is the one Paul deals with in his Letter to the Galatians. In fact, the error itself is often named '**Galatianism**.' This false doctrine teaches that we are saved by grace but are kept saved by the Law.

In reality this makes salvation dependent on our works. Our works of righteousness are to be a supplement to our faith for ultimate salvation. One must endure to the end by keeping the works of the Law if he is going to be saved.

This is the error of '**Galatianism**,' the error that Paul combats in this brief letter."

Last week we noted that in verse **6** we have the first of Paul's exclamatory statements in this letter, reflecting his amazement at the suddenness of the defection on the part of the Galatian believers from the Gospel. He writes, "*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel.*"

The word "*astonished*" is a translation of the Greek word **thaumazó**: (**thou-mad'-zo**), which means, "to wonder, wonder at, marvel." It denotes surprise at the unexpected. Paul considered the defection of the Galatian believers to be an extraordinary thing. It was not something that he had expected.

The Greek word translated "*deserting*" is **metatithemi**: (**met-at-ith'-ay-mee**), which means, "to transpose two things, one of which is put in the place of the other." The word refers to a transfer of allegiance. The Galatian believers were in the process of transferring their allegiance from Paul and his Gospel of grace to the **Judaizers** and their gospel of

works. They were in the process of deserting and they were doing so “*quickly.*”

The Galatian believers were not merely turning away from the Gospel of grace that they had learned from Paul. They were turning away from God Himself! They were turning away from, “*the one who called [them] by the grace of Christ.*”

Brothers and sisters, it is critical that we understand that to turn away from the true gospel is also to turn away from the God of the Gospel. In turning away from God, these believers were turning away from the **Person** and **Work** of Christ!

The Christian life is a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A person does not become a Christian merely by agreeing to a set of doctrines; he or she becomes a Christian by submitting to the Lordship of Christ and trusting Him. We cannot mix grace and works, because the one excludes the other. Salvation is the gift of God’s grace, purchased for us by Jesus Christ on the Cross. To turn from grace to works is to desert the God who saved us. The Galatians were abandoning not only the authentic Gospel, but more importantly “*the One*” who had called them by means of the very same Gospel of grace that they were turning away from!

The Galatian believers were not only abandoning the Gospel of grace and the God of the Gospel of grace, but they were embracing “*a different gospel.*”

The Greek word translated “*different*” is **heteros**: (**het’-er-os**), which means, “another of a different kind.” The word sometimes refers, not only to difference in **kind** but also speaks of the fact that the **character** of the thing is evil or bad. In other words, the fact that something differs in kind from something else, makes that thing to be of an evil character. The English word **heterodox** is made up of two Greek words, **heteros** (different), and **doxa**, which means “opinion.” **Heterodox** refers to that which is contrary to, or different from, an acknowledged standard, a

traditional form, or an established religion. It is the opposite of **orthodox** which means, “Following or conforming to the traditional or generally accepted rules or beliefs of a religion, philosophy, or practice.

Paul’s doctrine of grace is God’s truth; it is **orthodox**. Anything that differs in kind from it must necessarily be **heterodox**- a different and false doctrine.

When Paul speaks of the Galatians turning to a **heteros** gospel, he means that they are turning to a “gospel” that is false in its doctrine. It is not only different in character from the Gospel which he preached to the Galatians, but it is different in a bad sense. It is essentially evil. The **orthodox** Gospel is centered on *“the grace of Christ.”* The **heteros** “gospel” that the Galatian believers were turning to was centered on **works**. It was not **“good news”** but was in fact **bad news!**

In verse **7**, Paul makes it clear to the Galatian believers that the different (**heteros**) gospel that they were embracing is not only different in kind to the Gospel that he preached, but it is not a gospel at all! He writes, *“not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ.”*

In verse **6**, Paul used **heteros** to describe the “different” gospel that the Galatians were turning to. But in verse **7**, in referring to “another” gospel, he uses the Greek word **allos**: (**al’-los**), which means, “another of the same kind.” The point is that this “different” gospel is not a gospel of the same kind that Paul proclaims. In fact, it is not a gospel at all!

In **John 14:16-17** our Lord used this same Greek word **allos** to refer to the Holy Spirit. He says to His disciples,

*16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another** (allos) Helper, to be with you forever,*

17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

(New English Translation)

He was informing His disciples that after His ascension, He would send the Holy Spirit Who would be **another** Helper of the same (**allos**) kind as He Himself. But the gospel that the **Judaizers** were preaching and that the Galatian believers were embracing was **not** another gospel of the **same kind** as Paul's Gospel. It was a counterfeit gospel which in reality was no gospel.

Warren Wiersbe states that, "The **Judaizers** claimed to be preaching 'the Gospel,' but there cannot be two gospels, one centered in works and the other centered in grace. 'They are not preaching another gospel,' writes Paul, 'but a different message - one so different from the true Gospel that it is no gospel at all.' Like the cultists today, the **Judaizers** would say, 'We believe in Jesus Christ - but we have something wonderful to add to what you already believe.' As if any man could 'add' something better to the grace of God!"

What effect was the pernicious, legalizing, false gospel of the **Judaizers** having on the Galatian believers? It was "*disturbing*" them. The Greek word translated "*disturbing*" is **tarassó**: (**tar-as'-so**), which means, "to agitate, trouble; to stir up; to render anxious or distressed, to perplex the mind of one by suggesting scruples or doubts." The word literally means, "To shake back and forth," and therefore to agitate and stir up as was the case of the stirring up of the waters of the pool of **Bethzatha** in **John 5:7**.

Tarassó conveys the idea of disturbing mentally or of causing deep emotional distress, and thus refers to an unsettled mind, as when Herod heard of the birth of Jesus (**Matthew 2:3**). It carries with it the idea of perplexity, confusion, and unrest. Paul uses the word here to describe the

effect of the graceless, legalistic “gospel” of the **Judaizers** on the minds of the Galatian believers. They were being mentally disturbed!

The word is in the **present tense** which indicates that at the time of Paul’s writing of his letter, the minds and hearts of the believers were **continually** being agitated by the **heteros** gospel of the **Judaizers**, which, in fact, was not a gospel.

Paul tells us that it was the desire of the false teachers to pervert the Gospel of Christ. He says, “*There are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ.*” The word “*wanting*” is the translation of a Greek word which means, “To be resolved or determined, to purpose.” This indicates that the false teachers had a desire, a motive, even a resolve to distort the true Gospel. They purposed to do so and were deliberate and intentional about it. The word is in the **present tense** which indicates that this was their present, continual desire and purpose.

The actions of the Judaizers themselves testify to the mutual incompatibility of law and grace. These two systems have nothing in common. As Paul writes in **Romans 11:6**, “*And if it is by grace, it is no longer by works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace*” (**New English Translation**).

The Greek word translated “*distort*” is **metastrephó: (met-as-tref’-o)**, which means, “to turn about, turn around, reverse; to pervert, corrupt.” The idea is to turn something to its opposite state, so altering it and causing it to be different. The purpose of the **Judaizers** was to so change the gospel of grace which Paul preached, that it would be the reverse of what it was, a message of salvation by **good works** instead of a message of a salvation offered free in answer to **faith**. The word is in the **aorist tense** which indicates that this was a complete and thorough change, a complete perversion of the Gospel of Grace! It was not merely an attempt to rearrange it or to turn aside its true meaning. The Judaizers were endeavouring to transform the Gospel into something diametrically opposed to what it was originally, into something of an opposite nature.

In other words, the false teachers were trying to “reverse” the Gospel. They had turned it around and taken it back under the Law!

It is no wonder then that Paul was anxious for his beloved converts in Galatia. They were going through great mental and spiritual agitation because of the false doctrines that had been introduced into the churches. Grace always leads to peace, but the believers had deserted grace and therefore had no peace in their hearts.

It is important for us to understand and appreciate that we not only are saved by grace, but we are to live by grace. We stand in grace; it is the foundation for the Christian life. In **Romans 5:1-2** Paul writes,

1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory.

(New English Translation)

When a believer turns away from living by grace, he or she has no other alternative than to depend on his or her own power to live a life that is pleasing to God. This inevitably leads to failure and disappointment. This is what Paul means by the term “*fallen away from grace*” which we will encounter in chapter **5** and verse **4**. It means to move out of the sphere of grace into the sphere of Law, ceasing to depend on God’s resources and depending on one’s own resources.

Paul was agitated because of the agitation of the believers! He recognized that they were deserting the God of grace, perverting the grace of God, and reverting to living their Christian lives in the flesh and by their own resources. They had begun their Christian lives in the Spirit but now they were going to try to continue in the power of the flesh. How foolish and how sad!

The great champion of the Reformation **Martin Luther** wrote the following: "These false apostles do not merely trouble you, they abolish Christ's *Gospel*. They act as if they were the only true *Gospel*-preachers. For all that they muddle Law and *Gospel*. As a result they pervert the *Gospel*. Either Christ must live and the Law perish, or the Law remains and Christ must perish; Christ and the Law cannot dwell side by side in the conscience. It is either grace or law. To muddle the two is to eliminate the *Gospel* of Christ entirely."