

A STUDY IN GALATIANS
Part 4 – “Another Gospel”
Galatians 1:6-8

Don Emmitte, Grace Restoration Ministries

READ TEXT...

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse! (Galatians 1:6-9 NIV).

The word *gospel* is a translation of the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* (“euangelion”). It occurs as a noun 76 times and a verb 54 times. In the first case it simply translates “good news;” and, in the latter it means “to bring or announce good news.” Both words are derived from the noun *angelos*, “messenger.” In classical Greek, a *euangelos* was one who brought a message of victory or other political or personal news that caused joy. In addition, *euangelizomai* (the middle voice form of the verb) meant “to speak as a messenger of gladness, to proclaim good news.” Further, the noun *euangelion* became a technical term for the message of victory, though it was also used for a political or private message that brought joy.

That both the noun and the verb are used so extensively in the New Testament demonstrate how it developed a distinctly Christian use and emphasis because of the glorious news announced to mankind of salvation and victory over sin and death that God offers to all people through the person and accomplished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as proven by His resurrection, ascension, and now being seated at God’s right hand. In the New Testament these two words, *euangelion* and *euangelizo*, became technical terms for this message of good news offered to all men through faith in Christ. The word *gospel* is derived from the Old English *gōd-spell* (rarely *godspel*), meaning “good news” or “glad tidings”. The Greek word “*euangelion*” is also the source of the terms “evangelist” and “evangelism” in English.

So, originally, the gospel was the good news of redemption through the propitiatory offering of Jesus Christ for one’s sins, the central Christian message. It should not be a surprise to us that the Apostle Paul saw this threat of “another Gospel” as devastating. This new message was one, which would shipwreck their faith. As Paul faces his death, he writes this clearly as a warning and encouragement to Timothy:

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. (1 Timothy 1:18-19 NIV).

In the coming weeks we’ll turn our study to a more detailed understanding of Paul’s image of the importance of “faith and a good conscience.” Today I want us to understand the critical nature of understanding and holding to a true Gospel. It is so important to Paul that he pronounces a curse upon those who proclaim any other gospel. This is not personal pique,

spoken in a spirit of revenge upon those who were disturbing his converts in these churches of Galatia. No indeed. They were perverting the Gospel of CHRIST and thereby offering an affront to God and to "the grace of Christ." He denounces them with the anathema of God.

FIRST, ANY OTHER GOSPEL IS BOTH DIFFERENT AND COUNTERFEIT (vv. 6-7).

Notice the use of two words in verses 6-7: *a different gospel* and *no gospel*. At first glance in our English translations these words do not make sense. However, when we see them in the original language they do. The first is *heteros*, from which is derived our *heterodox*, meaning one of a different kind; the second is *allos*, meaning in the same class, one within the same class; while *heteros* is but an imitation, not to be classed with the genuine. That is, these two while they appear much the same are antithetical; they are opposed to each other; they are on opposite sides.

Let's suppose, for illustration, I take a silver dollar and place along with it a paper dollar. The latter is *allos*, just as good as the silver dollar, since the United States government validates it, both are equal to 100 pennies. But I have in my possession another (*heteros*) dollar; to the untrained eye it looks just like the paper dollar, but it is *heteros*, only an imitation, a counterfeit of the genuine.

Counterfeit is simply "similarity without reality or validity," since its purpose is to deceive it is made to appear just as much like the genuine as is possible. Thus the unwary will not detect the difference. This has long been Satan's method. Remember the warning of Jesus in the Parable of the Tares. The word translated "tares" is actually "darnel." The darnel seed of the Middle East is so similar to the wheat seed that in its earlier stages it is almost impossible to detect it so it passes for wheat. **Let's look a little deeper in this illustration of the character of this counterfeit gospel.**

- *It is lacking in authority.* Like the counterfeit dollar, it is man-made, not officially recognized or authorized. In fact, it is under the ban of government law, the anathema of the law; so is everyone who circulates it.
- *It is lacking in quality.* In this the counterfeit gospel there is no real value. It may look good to the naked eye, but upon close examination, it is worthless. It is completely empty and without power.
- *It is lacking in utility.* Like the genuine dollar is worth 100 cents, a counterfeit dollar is worth nothing. It will buy nothing (except through deceit), and is worse than useless because attached to it is a criminal offense.

LISTEN... DON'T MISS THIS... Paul is ABSOLUTELY confident he has the true Gospel. And, further it is the only Gospel that will do anything for us now and eternally. We dare not be deceived by any other word!

SECOND, THERE ARE TWO ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GENUINE GOSPEL.

1. **First, it involves a supernatural Person. It is "the gospel of Christ" (verse 7).** There is only one Christ. He is the Christ of history and of prophecy. He has revealed Himself through certain immutable facts imbedded in the annals of our past. Through these facts all men may know Him.
 - *Jesus came from a supernatural birth* (cf. Galatians 4:4). This fact that alone explains His unique person. Luke's account of the nativity is the mother's own story given a medical doctor! While we may doubt the veracity of her report, we cannot doubt the declaration of it. She said it was supernatural and certainly she would know. To deny that fact is to deny all of the Scripture's declarations concerning Jesus.
 - *Jesus' teachings were unique* (cf. Luke 4:22; John 7:46). In all the knowledge of the past 2,000 years, nothing Jesus ever taught has been rendered obsolete. This in itself is especially unique. Today, a four-year-old textbook is considered antiquated. Jesus' teachings are the perennial fountain of human thought. There are so many references *outside* the New Testament to Jesus and His teachings that it is not possible to cite them all in this brief study. They come from many non-Christian authors such as the Roman historian Tacitus (64 AD); or, the Greek philosopher Pliny the Younger, who instructed the Roman emperor Trajan (112 AD); or, the Jewish historian Josephus (70 AD). There are countless others less ancient who have continued to quote Jesus obliquely, perhaps even unknowingly. The "Golden Rule" is found in virtually every religion, yet it is Jesus who makes it both understandable and practical through his teachings.
 - *Jesus lived a spotless, sinless life* (cf. John 8:46). Majestically Jesus lived His life, never apologizing for anything He did, never correcting Himself in any way. Jesus taught a new standard of life, and forthwith He Himself lived it.
 - *Jesus died a supernatural death.* The one man who had no need to die, He purposefully set about to give up His life, saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (cf. John 18:37; 12:27). Those who witnessed his death on the cross cried, "Truly this was the Son of God" (cf. Matthew 27:54).
 - *Jesus experienced a supernatural resurrection.* Every other grave in every cemetery across this globe still holds all their recruits in silence, except Jesus. His tomb is the only empty tomb because of resurrection. Men do not naturally rise from the dead, but Jesus said that He would (cf. Matthew 16:21), and against all natural explanation He did. Without this fact, there would be no gospel, no Christianity. It would have failed.

These facts are unalterable. Imbedded in history, no one can root them out. Through them we know, believe on, and appropriate the person and saving work of Christ, the first essential of the Gospel.

2. **Second, it results it a supernatural experience.** Here is the crux of the matter. Here we reach the real vitals of the Christian faith. The focal point of the Gospel is THE HEART-LIFE of the one who believes it. Does it solve the problem of human living? Does it produce a transforming experience? Does it meet human need? Or, is something else necessary, as the "other gospel" suggests? Paul's declaration is that NOTHING ELSE IS NECESSARY!

Let me close this discussion with a simple declaration: *The true Gospel must be spelled with four letters.* There are many people today who want to merely use two letters to spell it, however, it must contain four. Can you guess what those letters are? Genuine salvation, THE Gospel, must be spelled "DONE." It will always be a counterfeit if we spell it "DO."