

## **No Other Gospel**

Scripture: Galatians 1:6–9

Code: 48-4

Now for this morning, I want you to open your Bible to Galatians chapter 1. We are now past the kind of introduction to the book, and we get into the heart of it, and it comes on us with some fierce power. The verses that I want you to look at this morning are chapter 1, verse 6 through verse 9. Let me read it for you.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

There is a word there repeated twice, it is the word “accursed.” It is the Greek word *anathema*. It means devoted to God for destruction, devoted to God for destruction.

The gospel is the good news about salvation, the good news about salvation. Anyone who distorts the good news about salvation is cursed. This is severe language. It is as harsh as the Word of God ever gets, pronouncing a damning double curse on anyone who distorts or alters the gospel. The gospel, the good news of salvation in Christ, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, is the only way that sinners can escape hell and enter heaven. It is by believing the true gospel.

Obviously, Satan, wanting to hold onto those that are in his kingdom of darkness, wants to confuse and deceive and distort the gospel. This then becomes a major enterprise of Satan, the distortion of the gospel, so that people are believing something that is not true, does not save, and they end up in hell, saying, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we do this, and didn’t we do that?” only to hear, “Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity.”

The apostle Paul here has no hesitation, no reluctance. He starts these severe verses, this very fierce declaration of divine punishment without any reservation. This is so direct, so confrontational, so explicit that, frankly, this kind of forceful pronouncement of damnation is just not what you would hear preachers preach today. This is a day of tolerance. This is the day for the post-modern mind to decide that you can believe anything, there’s no absolute truth: you can have your truth, I can have my truth. Nobody should condemn anybody for anything they believe or any religion that they adhere to. That doesn’t pass Paul’s inspection. This passage is extremely disturbing to the post-modern mind. It is extremely disturbing to the tolerant world in which we live. But it is absolutely necessary, because salvation is at stake, and it only happens through belief in the true gospel.

Now there are curses in the Old Testament. You can go through the Old Testament and just find the

curses, and you will find that again, and again, and again God was pronouncing curses on people who turned against Him. You come to the New Testament, you see Jesus going into Jerusalem in Mark 11 and seeing a fig tree and cursing the fig tree; and when the disciples come back the next day it is dead, and this is a symbol of the divine curse on the nation Israel for its rejection of God and the Messiah. Jesus attacked the Jewish religious system at the beginning of His ministry when He assaulted the temple, at the end of His ministry when He did it again. The curse that comes out of the mouth of Jesus is directly from heaven. There is a curse from God when God is not pleased. That curse is severe and everlasting.

But somebody might say, "Well, it's one thing to have curses in the Old Testament, another thing to have curses from Jesus in the gospels, and maybe even another thing to have Paul pronouncing curses in the apostolic era. What about today? What about today? Is God still in the business of cursing, consigning to judgment? Is God still pronouncing destruction and devastation people today?" And the answer comes to us in 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed," same word, *anathema*. Damnation is pronounced on anyone who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever your religion, if you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ you are cursed.

Now what does it mean to be cursed? What is the result of being cursed? In Romans chapter 9, just a couple of verses will answer that question. In Romans chapter 9, Paul says in verse 3, "I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren." He is very desirous for the Jews to come to Christ, and He is so passionate about it that he says, "I could almost wish myself were accursed," and then he defines what it means: separated from Christ. That what it is to be cursed, separated from Christ forever, and therefore separated from God, out of the presence of God forever.

And it's more than that. To be cursed, also according to Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41 is this: "Depart from Me," – Jesus said – "you accursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." Out of the presence of God, out of the presence of Christ, and in an eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; that's where the curse puts people.

Those cursed in the Old Testament are there now. Those cursed by Jesus in the nation of Israel at the time they rejected Him are there now. Those propagating a false gospel during the apostolic era that Paul addresses here are there in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and separated from God and Christ now. And continually throughout all of human history, those who do not come in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ to love Him, acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior are cursed and are sent to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Paul's curse is very severe, and it applies to anyone who perverts the gospel. People who dishonored God in the Old Testament. People who dishonored God in the gospels were cursed. People who reject Jesus Christ are cursed. And people who pervert the gospel or substitute a false gospel are cursed. *Anathema* is pronounced on them.

Now, look, assaults on the gospel are relentless. They have always been present, since the very beginning. Here we are very early in the life of the apostles. I told you last time that Galatians is likely the second New Testament book written. Already at the beginning of the ministry of the apostles, just halfway through the first century, there is already widespread distortion of the gospel, promulgated by Satan, his demons, and his human agents. And it's been going on since then down to this very day, and will always be Satan's greatest effort.

Backing up just a few pages from Galatians, you come to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and in verse 3 Paul writes this: “I am afraid. I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. I know how Satan operates. He started this way, deceiving Eve by his craftiness. And I’m afraid that as he did that with her, he’ll do the same with you, and your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ, simply saying that the gospel is Christ – not Christ plus anything, but Christ.”

And then in verse 4 he says, “For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received,” – different than the Holy Spirit – “or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” He’s saying, “You Corinthians are just accepting a false christ, a false holy spirit, and a false gospel. You’re enduring this beautifully. This is staggering, and I am afraid. I understand the deceptiveness of Satan.”

Go down to verse 13. “There are false apostles,” – propagating these false christs, false spirits, and false gospels. They are – “deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it’s not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

“They will be cursed. But they are disguised as servants of righteousness. They are disguised as angels of light or bearers of truth. They are disguised as apostles of Christ, and they are the ones who are telling you about a false christ, a false holy spirit, and a false gospel, and I am afraid that you are listening.”

Damning heresy came very quickly in the early church. Peter in 2 Peter 2 warns with the strongest kind of malediction and denunciation, the false prophets already at work. Jude repeats that in his brief epistle. Paul repeatedly warns about false teachers. The Lord gives letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that show they already accomplished destruction of false teachers. But here in Galatians in the strongest language Paul ever used are pronouncement of eternal damnation on perverters of the gospel. In this case, they are what we’ve been calling Judaizers. Their notion is that Jesus is the Savior, and you need to believe in Jesus, they do; but in order to receive salvation you have to come through Judaism. You need to be circumcised literally, physically. You need to adhere to Mosaic sabbaths and ceremonies and laws and rituals and standards.

Now these men who came, these Judaizers, they had come from Jerusalem. If you look at chapter 2, verse 12, it implies that they came from James, James the brother of our Lord, who was the leader in the Jerusalem church. So they are not anti-Christian, they are declaring themselves to be Christians representing the true God of the Old Testament and believing in Jesus as the Messiah, and they have come from Jerusalem the mother church, and they have come from James the leader of that church, and they actually may have been known by Paul. And they have decided that salvation cannot occur unless there is an entry into the kingdom of God through practices and rites and rituals and ceremonies of the Old Testament patterns of Judaism.

Now Paul is not friendly to that. He doesn’t see that as a minor detail. What harm if they want to be circumcised? What harm if they want to keep the Sabbath? What harm if they want to follow the ceremonies and rituals and dietary laws, et cetera? What harm is that? Deadly harm, damning harm,

because if you add any work of any kind to the gospel, you have undone grace. So they are cursed.

Somebody might say, “Well, what about Romans 12:14? Romans 12:14 says, ‘Bless and curse not.’” Well, that’s a different context. In the life of the church among believers, when we are personally offended, we bless and curse not. But we let God do the vengeance. If vengeance is necessary, “Vengeance is Mine,” says the Lord. We forgive. We bless. We turn the other cheek, as Jesus said. That’s when we’re personally offended. Paul’s not writing about a personal offense in Galatians, he’s writing about the distortion of the gospel, which then cuts people off from the truth, the only truth that saves. They are literally attacking God, attacking His redemptive plan.

These cursed religionists – mark it – were not hostile to Christianity, they were professing Christians from the Jerusalem church, wanting people to believe that literally they were sent by James, acknowledging Christ. It all seemed so good, and that’s what gained them entrance. And then they added this assault on the gospel: works. Might seem harmless to some. It is deadly. It is deadly to the gospel, and therefore it is deadly to those who need to hear the true gospel, and it is deadly to the purveyors of that false gospel who are cursed.

Now this issue of adding works to the gospel had been settled. Go back to the 15th chapter of Acts for a moment. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem, the apostles, this is the last time the apostles actually all are seen together in the book of Acts. They were together in Jerusalem. They were making some final decisions about the essence of the gospel and what they were going to preach when they scattered around the world.

Verse 1 says, “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. You have to go through this rite.’” Now this brought about a debate: Was it necessary? Was it not?

Down to verse 6: “The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. There had been much debate. After that, Peter stood up, said to them, ‘Brethren, you know’ – here’s the answer – ‘that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.’ – and we see that in the early chapters of Acts – “And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us.”

Here’s Peter’s answer. Do you need to be circumcised to be saved? Peter’s answer is, “Have you forgotten that I went to the Gentiles, to Cornelius namely, early in the book of Acts; and we took the gospel to the Gentiles, and they believed, and they received the Holy Spirit, and it was manifest miraculously that they had received the Holy Spirit. Obviously then, they were not circumcised.”

God knows the heart. He testified to the reality of their salvation by giving them the Holy Spirit. “He cleansed their hearts by faith.” – verse 9 says – “Why now” – verse 10 – “would you want to put God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? Why do you want to put the yoke of law on them which we couldn’t even bear?” This is going back from the new covenant to the old, from the new day post-resurrection to the old.

Paul says to Titus in Titus 1, “These who advocate circumcision must be silenced. There’s only one gospel. There’s only one way to God, and it involves no rites, no rituals, no ceremonies, no works of religion. And that’s the message Paul wants to deliver here, and he has a certain sanctified fury

about himself at this point. There are many false gospels preached by lying agents of Satan. They must be exposed. They must be consigned to a divine curse.

Faithful men throughout church history have been warriors, fighting for the true gospel against the counterfeits. You just don't hear that today. Who would step up and plant a curse squarely on the top of Roman Catholicism? Who would pronounce a curse on the papacy? This is a forbidden thing in the name of love. Love says the truth.

We already know what the gospel is. Paul summed it up in verse 4 here – look back at it: “who gave Himself,” the Lord Jesus Christ – “who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age.” Are you in there anywhere? Do you see you in there? Do you see me in there?

“Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of God the Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.” You're not there, because that's a work of God, and that's a work of Christ, and all glory to God for it. That is the heart of the gospel. It's not what you do, it's what Christ has done. God validated what He did by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him to His right hand.

Paul is in shock. We don't know how he received word about the Judaizers having a hearing through these Galatians churches – and there were several of them as you know. The message came to him, and he is literally stunned. He is not shocked that Satan is propagating a false doctrine; that's what Satan does. He disguises himself as an angel of light, as a religionist.

He's not shocked that Satan has deceitful workers, he's not shocked that they masquerade as agents of righteousness, he's not shocked at the work of Satan; he is shocked at the response of the Galatians. And this is what launches him, this notion that in order to receive salvation you have to come through the rites and rituals of Judaism, or through any rites or rituals, or any ceremonies, or any standards of morality or religion is a cursed distortion of the truth. Gospel is the gospel of grace; faith alone, not works.

Now as we look at the passage, just three words. First, you see Paul's wonder, then his wisdom, then his warning. His wonder, verse 6: “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel. You're deserting God, the one who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.

His wonder is over the Galatians' defection. And as I said a week or so ago, there's no prayer at the beginning of this letter as there are in his other letters. There's no praise. There's no commendation. There's no thanks. There's no personal notes; nothing is here. He just launches into this assault on them.

And, frankly, nothing could be more dramatic than the absence of normal thanks, normal praise, normal love, normal gratitude, normal expressions of loyalty, so obvious in every one of his other epistles. This conveys the seriousness, the fire in his heart, because the gospel is at stake. They had been influenced to deny the gospel of grace, the message he had preached to them on his first missionary journey, his second missionary journey, his third missionary journey. He is amazed. The word is *thaumazó*.

In chapter 4, verse 11, he says, “I am afraid,” as he said back in 2 Corinthians 11. In chapter 4, verse 20, he said, “I am perplexed.” And here he says, “I am astonished, amazed.” He only uses that word two other times. Once he uses it in reference to the amazing reality of the return of Jesus Christ. The only other time he uses it is back in 2 Corinthians 11, his amazement over Satan disguising himself as an angel of light. He was amazed at the glory of Christ, he was amazed at the strategy of Satan, and he is amazed at the desertion of the gospel by these Galatians.

Now you need to be careful to understand this. It’s happened quickly, he says, so quickly, so easily, deserting, not a message, but Him, God. It is the gospel of God, deserting Him. By the way, that word “deserting,” that is a really good translation of the Greek word. It means to transfer your allegiance. It defines a turncoat, a traitor, a deserter.

The Galatians are acting like spiritual deserters. They are literally turning against God. It’s not passive, it’s middle reflexive, so it would read like this: “You are in the process of deserting God. You are removing yourself.” Now the process is not complete, but they have started to go a wrong direction.

Now you say, “Well, wait a minute. Are they going to go all the way? Are they going to go all the way and abandon the gospel?” If they do that, if some of them do that, what do we know about them? First John 2:18 and 19, “They went out from us, because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But they went out from us that we might know that they were never of us.” So if they were false believers in the Galatian churches, they would potentially totally defect, because they never did belong.

But what about true believers which makes up the congregations in general? What would they do? Where are they in this? How are we to understand true believers going down this path? Go to chapter 3 for a moment, see if I can’t answer that, verse 2: “This is the only thing I want to find out from you. I just have one question:” – Paul says; let me bring it down – “did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith?”

What happens when a person is saved, when a person believes the gospel and is justified and converted? What happens is God gives that believer His Holy Spirit, right? So he’s talking about people who have received the Holy Spirit. He’s writing to believers.

“I just want to ask you one question. You received the Holy Spirit. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by law? Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you were circumcised? Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you went through some ritual, some rite, some ceremony, kept some Sabbath, followed through with some Old Testament feast?”

Now remember, he’s writing to Gentiles who didn’t know anything about that. “Well, of course not. You received the Holy Spirit, and you know you received Him, because your spirit witnesses with God’s Spirit that you are a child of God. So you know you received the Spirit by the hearing of faith.” – faith alone not works – “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now make perfect by the flesh?” In other words, “You were saved by faith, you received the Spirit by faith, and now you’re going to turn to works, as if that necessarily perfects you?” They are believers.

“So what’s the danger?” – you say – “They’re not going to lose their salvation.” The danger is they

will give into Satan's reinterpretation of the gospel, and consequently, they will be like Ephesians 4:14. They will be like children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." And then, though a true believer cannot lose salvation, they will cease to have a clear understanding of the gospel to proclaim to the world.

And I would say that is precisely where the evangelical church is today. It isn't that people in those churches aren't saved, it is that they were saved by grace through faith alone. They received the Spirit by faith, but they have been led down the path to tolerate false gospels that add words to faith, add works to faith, add baptism to faith, add certain rituals to faith, add morality to faith, something you have to do to play your role to qualify for grace.

So you have saved people believing for salvation in a true gospel, and now tolerating false gospels, and saying, "Hey, can't we all get together with the Roman Catholic Church?" No, that's a false gospel that you can be saved by baptism as an infant, that you can be saved by a ritual or a routine, or through the prayers of a priest or a saint. That's a false gospel. This is the danger within the realm of Christianity. Paul will not tolerate it. Roman Catholicism today, Greek orthodoxy is contemporary Phariseeism and Judaizing of a different kind.

"So you are deserting Him" – Paul says – "for a different gospel. You're deserting" – and who is God – "Him who called you by the grace of Christ." That is an absolutely glorious doctrinal statement: "Him" – God – "who called you."

What do you call it? That's an effectual call. That's the call to salvation. That's the call of Romans 8 that "Whom He predestined, He called. Whom He called, He justified. Whom He justified, He glorified." That's a saving call. That's not just an open call you can take or leave. That is a saving call.

Second Thessalonians 2 says, "We are called by faith." Second Timothy 1:8 and 9, "We are called not by works." So God called us. "God called us. Now you're going to desert the one who called you savingly to Himself?"

In chapter 5, you have to notice this, in verse 7: "You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? Who did this? This persuasion did not come from Him" – there's God again – "who calls you. You didn't get this from God. And, by the way, a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. You let this settle into your congregation, and its corruption will penetrate everything, like leaven does dough.

"However" – verse 10 – "I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view. I know you're saved; I believe that you will not adopt a false gospel. But the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. Curse is coming down on his head. I'm not saying you're going to adopt a false gospel; my concern is" – listen – "that you're going to tolerate a false gospel. You're going to tolerate a false gospel."

And that is what defines so much of evangelicalism today. Who gets up and pronounces damnation on every false gospel? But that's what we are called to do.

Back to chapter 1: "You have been deserting Him who called you. He called you by the grace of

Christ” again, it’s all about Christ, not about you; all about grace, not about works – “for a different gospel,” another gospel, *heteros*, another of a different kind. Something that’s heterodox is another of a different kind, it’s different. Orthodox is the same; heterodox is something different.

This is a different gospel. Literally not for a different gospel, but toward would be the best translation there, toward. “You’re moving toward a different gospel, a gospel of a different kind.” Like Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 2:13, “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

“Why would you do that, turn from Me to false teaching?” So this is what concerns Paul, “not that you lose your salvation; you will not personally adopt something other than what saved you, but you will tolerate this.” That’s his amazing wonder at the Galatians’ defection.

Secondly, his wisdom regarding the false teachers’ deception, his wisdom regarding the false teachers’ deception, verse 7. Listen: “That different gospel” – that *heteros euaggelion* – “that different gospel is really not another,” – and he uses a different word for another: *allon*. *Heteros* means another of a different kind; *allon* means another of the same kind. “You are believing a different gospel, one of another kind, which is not the same kind.”

Just using those two words to point out that any other gospel is not the same gospel, which is to say – listen – there is no such thing as a small variation of the gospel. It is the true Christ, the true God. It is grace, it is faith alone without works; don’t tamper with that. Don’t tamper with God, don’t tamper with Christ, don’t tamper with His work on the cross, don’t tamper with grace, don’t tamper with faith. What offers itself as another gospel is not just a variation, an acceptable variation: no. “Some,” – he says – “some false teachers” – we talked about them; very likely they said they were authorized from Jerusalem. These Judean Judaizers – “they are disturbing you, they’re disturbing you.”

Here’s the issue, folks. This is the issue. They’re not going to take away your salvation, but they’re going to shake you up. They’re agitating you. The verb literally means to stir up or to agitate. It’s used of Herod when he heard that a king had been born in Bethlehem, and he, it says in the Scripture, was deeply troubled.

It’s used of the disciples when they were in shock, thinking they saw a ghost in Galilee. It’s used to describe the shock of Zechariah when he saw an angel. This is a very, very graphic word.

Jesus, speaking to the disciples in John 14:1, said, “Stop letting your hearts be troubled.” Same word. The disciples were in chaos, agitation, because the Lord had told them He was going to die.

The Galatians were being thrown into confusion. They were being thrown into chaos by this attack on the gospel of grace that was teaching salvation by grace plus works, by faith plus works. This is a distortion.

By the way, the word “distort” can be pervert, and it even can mean reverse. This is flipping the gospel into backwards position. If you touch any of it, you add anything to it, you have distorted it; and this distortion was rattling the Galatian churches. You can’t modify this gospel.

Go to chapter 5 for a minute, and verse 2. Here’s how extreme and exclusive the gospel is: “Behold



I, Paul, say to you, if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. If you have that operation, Christ will be of no benefit to you. If you have that because you believe there's some small contribution that circumcision makes to your salvation, Christ is useless to you. You've just canceled your salvation."

Substitute the word "baptism." "If you receive baptism as if it's your part in your salvation, Christ is of no benefit to you. And I testify" – verse 3 – "to every man who receives circumcision, now you put yourself under obligation to keep the whole law. Is that what you want? If you want to save yourself, okay, save yourself, get circumcised, and keep the whole law perfectly, because if don't keep the whole law perfectly," – we'll see in chapter 3 – "you're cursed."

"You" – verse 4 – "have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you've fallen from grace. You add anything, Christ become of no effect. You're cut off from Christ." The word "severed" literally means nullify. "You've nullified His work. You've taken on the responsibility for your own salvation. Try that by keeping the law perfectly; and if you don't, you're cursed."

You can't listen to this lie. The church must be on guard for false doctrine. So the wisdom of Paul is, "See it for what it is, and don't get agitated and disturbed and confused about what is a tolerable sort of variation of the gospel." Remember now, these people believed in Christ; that was the subtlety of it.

So his wonder regarding the Galatians defection, his warning regarding the false teachers' deception, and then finally – his wisdom rather regarding the false teachers' deception, and his warning regarding God's destruction, verses 8 and 9, his warning regarding God's destruction.

"But even if we, some" – verse 7, some false teachers were doing this. "But even if we" – meaning me an apostle, and all those with me – "or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!" Paul is using hyperbole. He's using a hypothetical situation. He's not going to preach a false gospel, an angel from heaven's not going to preach a false gospel, but this is hyperbole to make the point. It doesn't matter who they are.

You say, "Well, that's the appeal, isn't it?" Absolutely. Why do people buy into a false gospel? Because of the appearance of the people who propagate it. They look religious, they sound religious, they act religious. Maybe they're nice people, maybe they're kind people, maybe they're very devoted people, maybe they're very philanthropic people, maybe they're very outwardly affectionate people. Paul says, "I don't care what they are. I don't care if it's one of us or an angel from heaven; the person is irrelevant. Anyone who perverts the gospel is damned: anyone."

Don't pay attention to the outside. If they're dressed up in all kinds of garb, all kinds of clerical garb that gives the false external appearance of virtue and holiness and some kind of divine imprimatur, don't let that deceive you. If the message deviates one iota from the gospel of grace, then they are *anathema*. So many buy into false doctrine. So many tolerate it, because the packaging is pleasing. That's Satan, isn't it?

And then he repeats himself in verse 9, as we've said before: "So I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" Once would have been enough; twice is devastating, absolutely devastating.

He's furious here, not over any personal offense. He's furious that the gospel is under assault. And it isn't that all of a sudden the Galatian believers are going to lose their salvation, they're just going to lose their clarity on the gospel, and they're going to be tolerant of lies. When the church does that, tragedy happens.

I read an interesting article this week. The heading of the article was "Evangelical Christians are Responsible for Everything That's wrong in Our Nation." And I thought, "Wow, somebody's really after us." "Evangelical Christians are Responsible for Everything That's wrong in Our Nation." So I said, "I need to read that."

This is what the article said: "Because evangelical Christians claim to represent Scripture and will not take a stand on the issues biblically, they have aided and abetted every conceivable corruption that has occurred in this culture." It's absolutely true. We have tolerated every deviation. It's not a popular thing to say these things, but it's right and necessary; and this is the saving truth.

So what are the lessons here? Don't nullify the work of Christ. Don't make Christ's death of no effect. Don't think that somebody's going to be converted by works. You put any work into the gospel of grace and you have undone it. Christ's work was sufficient; He did it all. We cannot allow the truth to be obscured. We cannot allow it to be bent. We cannot allow it to be expanded.

The second and important lesson is anyone in any age must believe the gospel of grace as given by the apostles and written down in the New Testament to be saved. There's no salvation in any other message. So the church must fight for the gospel.

And, lastly – this is where we started – we need to tell people that if they do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, which can only happen if you believe the gospel, they will be cursed forever; that's the truth. And that's why the gospel is such good news.

Father, we thank You for speaking to us from heaven through Your Word. We understand the zeal of heaven is unleashed through the inspired pen of Paul. We are called to earnestly contend for the once for all, delivered to the saints, faith: the true gospel. May we maintain that true understanding that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; not of works. And any effort, any work, any act seen as somehow contributing to one's salvation nullifies grace, puts that person under the law, and then demands perfection or damnation. May we be clear on the gospel in our own minds and for the sake of others that we need to reach. Give us holy boldness in doing that, we pray. Amen.

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