

4-24-22

Galatians 1:1-9.

"In a world filled with trouble, it is becoming more and more difficult to find any "good news." To the person who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, the real "Good News" is the Gospel. The Good News of salvation through faith in Christ is the most important message in the world." -Warren Wiersbe

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: 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,

Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia because he was appalled that some false teachers had been spreading another gospel, a bad news gospel. They were teaching that the grace of God wasn't enough to save a person. They insisted for a person to be saved they had to believe AND do some religious acts. That's called legalism. So, I could invent an oxymoron by using the term "legalistic grace."

Read Galatians 1:1-9.

As we begin to read Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians, you can tell immediately that something is wrong, because he does not open his letter with his usual praise to God and prayer for the saints. False teachers are spreading a false "gospel" which is a mixture of law and grace (legalistic grace) and Paul is not going to stand by and do nothing.

The message of the cross is important in the Galatian letter. (2:19-21; 3:1, 13; 4:5; 5:11, 24; 6:12-14) "Liberty in Christ" and "Grace of God" are the dominant themes. The word bondage is used in (2:4; 4:3, 9, 24-25; 5:1). "Grace of God" (1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18)

A man does not become a Christian merely by agreeing to a set of doctrines; he becomes a Christians by submitting to Christ and trusting Him (**Rom. 11:6**). Grace and works cannot be mixed, one excludes the other. Salvation is a gift of God's grace, purchased for us by Jesus on the cross.

Salvation is by God's grace, which leads to God oozing out of the believer, confirming that God has changed the person into a new creation.

Notice how many times Paul uses the word "**gospel**" in three verses.... (4 times)

He is so sure of his last statement, he repeats it! (**Verses 8-9**) Those are some of the strongest words Paul ever wrote. He said if even an angel appeared with another gospel, then let him be eternally condemned. Paul is literally saying, "If anyone, preaches any other gospel let them go to hell."

Legalism was a problem in Paul's day and it's a problem today. But legalism isn't the only bad news gospel that's being preached. Today there are plenty of people who are preaching their own version of the bad news gospel. Let me give you three examples of distorted, different, perversions of the gospel.

I. Messed Up Gospels

a. The Name it Claim it Gospel

- Each of this distorted, messed up, different gospels are perversion of the true gospel. The true gospel doesn't need anything added to it to make it better.

- This bad news gospel also goes by the name “Prosperity Gospel, Name it Claim it, or Health and Wealth Gospel.”
- This prosperity gospel is being preached on television and radio by a host of false prophets who tell you to send in your money to them, and God will bless you with more money, then they laugh all the way to the bank.
- This gospel is still being offered, and it’s never been more popular, because Americans are obsessed with possessions.
- In this prosperity gospel, God is seen as a divine vending machine. You put in faith and out pops blessings: money, homes, cars, and health. God exists to make you healthy and wealthy. Well, there’s a good Greek word for that—hogwash! Or bullpucky!

b. The Groupon Gospel.

- I’m calling this the groupon gospel, because groupon is a combination of the words “group” and “coupon.” It’s an online coupon website with 115 million subscribers. They are famous for their “deal of the day.”
- The message of this gospel is that we ought to be able to make a deal with God.
- It’s usually recognized by a prayer like this: “God if you’ll just get me out of this mess, I’ll give my life to you.” Or “God, if you’ll just heal me, I’ll serve you forever.” Or it may be a bargain like this, “God if you’ll let me get this job...win the lottery...date this guy...marry that girl...then this is what I’ll do for you.”
- Sometimes people buy into this “let’s make a deal” mindset and they bail out on God when they think He hasn’t kept his end of the deal. But you can’t bargain with your Creator.

c. The Diet Gospel or Gospel Lite.

- The “at your convenience gospel.”
- Many products are called “lite” or “diet” because they don’t have as many calories as the real thing. There is a dangerous “lite” gospel being preached today that is all about feeling good about yourself and doesn’t make any demands on you. It’s very appealing to Americans.
- Gospel Lite is all about you and your feelings. Here at Gospel Lite: We don’t expect you to tithe, or give much, but we’ll let you know who does. Don’t worry; with diet gospel or gospel lite we will never offend you with the truth. There’s a better you in there, listen to your dreams and give yourself a big old hug. Because at Gospel lite we say, ‘God loves you; and you do too!’”
- Some congregations in the U.S. are hearing a form of Diet Gospel where sin and repentance are seldom ever mentioned, because it might offend the listeners. At gospel lite churches, the Bible isn’t really preached, there’s just a brief devotional, short and sweet. And you are never inconvenienced to stay longer than 30 mins.
- Diet Gospel might reference the Bible a couple of times, but there’s no verse-by-verse study of the Bible, because (ahem) frankly, there are parts of the Bible that aren’t very nice.
- Americans are all about convenience. Americans complain if they are inconvenienced in any way.

- There is a Wyoming State Park called Bridges Wilderness Area. It's a wilderness area for hikers and campers. Here are some of the actual comment cards hikers have turned in: (1) "Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands. (2) Please avoid building trails that go uphill. (3) Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the areas of these pests. (4) Too many rocks in the mountains." These are from people who came to a wilderness where all you can do is hike and camp, and they complained because it wasn't convenient enough.
- Let me give you an oxymoron: **convenient commitment**. If you are going to be a real Christian, the Bible says you are going to have to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Jesus. Being a Christian is not a spectator lifestyle, its hands on, we are all starters and God desires us to be in the game.
- The danger of these messed-up messages of the Bad News Gospel is they can creep into your thinking. You may not swallow them hook, line, and sinker, but once you start nibbling on these beliefs, you miss out on the true gospel. We can become consumers, live the Christian life as, what can I get out of this? Rather than what can I give of myself, how can I serve someone else; you know like Jesus did?!

II. The Gospel of God's Grace.

- Do you know WHY Paul was so upset about the false gospel? Because his life goal was to preach the gospel of grace. The Bible says, ***"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."*** (Acts 20:24)
- While in Tennessee, Kim and I had lunch with the pastor who led us to Christ's daughter. Kim told her that after his death, his wife gave me a bunch of his books. And the week previously I conducted a wedding out of one of them.
- This last week I listened to a couple of his sermons that I have on tape, man could he preach! When talking about salvation and God's grace, he said, ***"God thought it; the prophets taught it; the devil fought it; sinners sought it; Jesus bought it; the Holy Spirit wrought it; and I caught it."***
- I want to borrow part of his thought and share four phrases with you that characterize the God's gospel of grace.

a. God thought it.

- Salvation comes by grace through faith. The plan of salvation isn't a scheme someone developed. It was God's plan from the beginning. The Bible says Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world.
- By the standards of the world, grace doesn't make sense. The world says, "You do the crime; you do the time." Grace says, "Guilty, but forgiven." If you don't like the idea of grace, then take it up with the Creator, it was His idea.

b. The devil fought it.

- The devil has been fuming since the Garden of Eden because he knows he is a defeated foe. Satan has done everything within his limited power to sidetrack God's plan for a gospel of grace.

- When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Satan suggested to Herod the Great to kill all the boy babies born in Bethlehem. He was fighting God's plan, but grace prevailed. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness to try to sidetrack Him from his mission of grace. Satan is still fighting against the message of grace.

2 Corinthians 4:4, *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ESV*

- If you are listening and haven't trusted in gospel truth, know that Satan doesn't want you to, he wants you to be deaf and blinded to it.

c. Jesus brought it.

- All the events and circumstances described in the Old Testament were looking forward to the time when God would send a Redeemer.

Galatians 4:4, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born[a] of a woman, born under the law,*

- Almost daily God purposes a song on my heart, this week, because of Easter it was "**At Calvary.**" (PowerPoint)
- God thought it; Satan fought it; Jesus brought it; and praise God.

d. By FAITH, I caught it!

- I'm not talking about the act of catching a ball someone throws your way, because that involves action on your part. I'm using this phrase in the sense like catching a cold or the flu. Is there anything you must do to catch the flu? Not really. It is something to which you're exposed, and it catches you!
- Grace is God offering us the free gift of eternal life, even though we are guilty sinners and deserve death and hell. Faith is my response to God's offer of grace.

Ephesians 2:8, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

- Grace is God's free gift to us, but it's not cheap. Jesus paid a high price for our forgiveness. If you want a good definition of grace, just read

2 Corinthians 8:9: *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*

- You've heard of a "rags to riches story." Grace is a riches to rags to riches story. Jesus set aside the riches of heaven to take on the rags of our humanity. And once we receive His grace, we exchange the filthy rags of our own self-righteousness for His spotless robe of righteousness. Grace really is amazing. Have you caught it yet?

Conclusion

The bad news gospel is the message that Jesus plus something else equals salvation: Jesus plus baptism; or Jesus plus Bible reading; or Jesus plus good works. The good news gospel of grace says Jesus plus nothing equals salvation.

The Private Ryan movie. Tom Hanks (as he is dying) telling Matt Damon's character, "Earn this! Earn this!" Fast forwards to Matt Damon's character at Tom Hank's tomb saying, *"Every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. And I've tried to live my life the best I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of you have done for me."*

Unfortunately, this is how many live their lives today, trying to live their life the best they could, hoping it's enough, hoping they earned it.

Look at **Galatians 1:3** again. ***"Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from the present age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."***

Unlike the movie, the last words Jesus said on the cross weren't "EARN THIS." His last words were a shout of triumph, ***"It is finished!"***

Sadly, some Christians spend every day of their lives like Private Ryan, feeling like they must live in a way to earn the sacrifice of Jesus. *"Legalism is nailing a sign to the cross that says, 'necessary but not enough.'"*

When Jesus said, ***"It is finished,"*** He was saying there was nothing else we could ever do to be saved. Adrian Rogers used to quote a little poem that says, *"I cannot work my soul so save; That work my Lord has done; But I WILL work like any slave; for the love of God's dear Son!"*

Stay away from the bad news gospel and let the God's gospel of grace set you free. Grace sets you free to humbly bow at the cross and confess that you can NEVER be good enough or worthy enough for that sacrifice and you'll be set free from legalism. You'll be set free to discover what real holiness is—letting Jesus live His life in and through you.