

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 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.. Galatians 1:6-9

As we saw last week, error at the Galatian church had stirred the Apostle to write this letter to them. It is a strong letter, because the error was a serious error. Because it was subtle did not mean it was any less dangerous to the church. The error was that this: that the use of right ceremonies would make them better Christians. Because there are very few ceremonies prescribed by Jesus Christ, it was only natural that the Galatians would turn back to Jewish ceremonies, because these ceremonies had been given to Abraham and Moses and were central to the Old Testament worship. The false teachers in Galatia took these Christians, not back to Moses, but they went further—they took them back to Abraham. If you believe in Christ, then you are children of Abraham, and it is only fitting that you should be circumcised, just as Abraham was.

These false teachers, false prophets, stirred up very strong words from the Apostle. What they said brought in very serious error which struck at the very heart of the Gospel. They did not realize that those who were justified in the Old Testament had never been justified because they observed certain ceremonies, but because they believed the promises that were signified in those ceremonies. The ceremonies in themselves were nothing, and could never make the heart new before God.

It is the very same thing in our day. Although the church has been commanded to observe the Lord's Supper and baptism, these sacraments have no validity in themselves, as if water could wash away sins and cleanse the heart; or that bread and wine could make my soul strong. It is not the ceremonies in themselves that have validity, but what they represent that is powerful to change the heart and soul. And what they represent is Christ. He is the end of all the ceremonies in the Old Testament, and He is the end of all that the church is called to do. You can have the ceremonies without Christ and you can have Christ without the ceremonies.

The reason that we insist upon the simple and biblical use of baptism and the Lord's Supper is not to increase their efficacy, because they have none of themselves. We want to use the simple and biblical use of these ceremonies simply because we do not want what they represent to be corrupted by additions and subtractions.

Religious rites may be very pleasing to the flesh. It was to these false teachers among the Galatians. They "gloried in the flesh" of the Galatians, according to Paul later on in this book. But we will come back to that later.

But let us look at the words of the Scripture that is before us.

A. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another. These are sober verses and there are several things that need to be said.

1. We should note the use of the word "another," and an important idea that is not as clear in the English.
 - a. The second "another" means "one of the same kind." Illustration: if you eat a peach, and it is a good peach, you may desire "another," one of the same kind. When Christ said He was going away but would send them "another" Comforter, He was saying that the Holy Spirit was "one like Him." This is a strong passage for the doctrine of the Trinity and the Personhood of the Holy Spirit—for He is a comforter of the same sort as Christ.

- b. The first “another” means “one different from the other.” If you do not like the peach, you might say, “I will not have a peach, I will have another fruit,” meaning you will have one of a different sort. This is used John the Baptist in Matt. 11 when he sent word to Christ, “Are you the One, or should we look for **another**, that is, another sort of one.
2. Paul’s meaning is emphatic: There is only one Gospel—when you change the Gospel you move away from Christ to something else—something of a different kind. The so-called Gospel that was preached by the false prophets was not another Gospel—it was something of a different sort.
 3. We have to see the meaning of things, and not just the words. A person may speak of Christ, or the Gospel, or of Jesus, but we must see whether or not he is speaking of the same thing that the Gospel speaks of. The salesman tactic is to use words and to change their meaning to catch unsuspecting people. There is an old song that my grandfather used to sing that told of a country bumpkin that went to New York for the first time. He went into a auction. The auctioneer showed him a pair of socks, then said, “How much am I offered for this box.” Somebody bid two dollars and the country bumpkin said “Three.” The auctioneer emptied the box and handed to him. “I sold you the box, not the socks,” said he. The country bumpkin said he was never going to go there anymore. Liars and deceivers do not want you to look to carefully at the words because their lie will be found out. Thus it was with the false prophets among the Galatians.
 4. From Him: This could mean the Father; the Son, or the Holy Trinity—the meaning is the same in any case. To depart from the Gospel is to depart from God. It was no minor thing that they did. If you change the reason for doing the ceremony, then you have a different ceremony, even if you keep the same form
 5. **Into the grace of Christ.** They had been called away from the grace of God. When ceremonies became the way the soul was justified, the Gospel has been changed, and salvation is no longer of grace. Warfield wrote a little booklet on the Plan of Salvation, pointing out that the real issue in religion is whether salvation is the result of man’s work or the result of God’s work.

This was the issue between the early Christians and the pagans. Stoicism and the other pagan systems all saw man’s redemption as coming from their own efforts, lifting themselves by their own boot-straps, so to speak. If a ceremony can transform the heart, then paganism has re-instituted itself. This was the major issue between Rome and the Reformers. Rome said, and still does say, that God transforms the soul through ceremonies which only Roman priests can perform. This puts men’s works between the soul and God, for the Holy Spirit is confined to ceremonies.

I remember years ago preaching a Gospel message. A man came up to me afterwards and complimented me on the message. “But you didn’t give people a chance to be saved,” he said. These were his exact words, and I have remembered them clearly. He meant that I did not give an altar call.

He showed his mind set, that the Finney altar call was the ceremony that God used to save people. As long as people have this mind set, it is reason enough not to give an altar call. The proposition of the Gospel is not to walk down and aisle and weep at an altar, but to believe in Jesus Christ and His saving blood.

6. They were “removing themselves.” It was going on at that time. “Changing their minds,” or “deserting.” Fickle abandonment. It was so soon—either soon after hearing the Gospel from Paul, or so soon after the false prophets had arrived. What Paul speaks of is a collapsing of the Gospel in a sudden and continuing turning away.

- a. This not merely a change of doctrine, but a turning from Christ. What connects us to Christ is the doctrine. People downplay doctrine because they want to deceive. These false prophets were attacking Paul, because they did not believe what Paul preached.
 - b. John tells us that we must abide in the doctrine of Christ in order to have Christ. II John 7-11. These are sober words.
 - i. When the true Gospel is preached to us, we are called to believe that it is true.
 - ii. The Holy Spirit convinces us that it is true, and we begin to act in terms of its truth. We are baptized and are united to a church, the fellowship of believers to confess the truth of the Gospel.
 - iii. We turn away from our former life which is based upon unbelief, and begin to live a life that is based upon the truth of the Gospel.
 - iv. Everything depends upon the truth of the message. We do not follow magical ceremonies or fables or men's imaginations, but the sober truth of the Gospel.
7. "Called," is a past tense, a once and for all. The Gospel comes with authority and power.

B. But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Note several things about this phrase:

- 1. Trouble means agitation of mind—contrasted with the peace that is in Christ.
- 2. "Would" They want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. Why do men hate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They hate it because of what the Gospel is in its essence. They do not like the Gospel of Grace and want to introduce human works into the formula. The Gospel of the grace of God says too much about the hopelessness of human nature—it is the offense of the cross that these people shrink from. This is exactly the charge that Paul makes in Galatians 5.
 - a. The offense of the Cross is what it says about our human nature: our flesh. The cross says that I am under the curse of Adam's sin and am prone to all evil.
 - b. I am bent to hate both God and my neighbor.
 - c. But God, in sending His Son to the Cross, condemned sin in me—pronounced me in bondage to sin, but announce my deliverance in Jesus Christ, so that I no longer am bound in sin and bondage.
 - d. Let me go through it again:
 - i. I am under the curse of Adam's sin, and bound in a kingdom of sin and misery.
 - ii. I may not consider myself a slave to sin, but I am, because I sin. No reasonable person would break God's law if he were not in bondage to sin.
 - iii. The bondage that holds me is guilt—not only my own guilt, but primarily the guilt of Adam's sin, because I was guilty before I was born, because of Adam. I am born in sin and misery, not because I had done anything wrong, but because I am a member of a fallen human race. I am just like everyone else born into the world, bound by sin and misery.
 - iv. I cannot take my own guilt away. A ceremony won't do it. The ceremony under consideration in this book is circumcision—but did circumcision make Israel a godly people? Does baptism make men godly?
 - v. This is the root of the whole problem: Adam's sin. This is the awful barrier that stands between my soul and God. This is the reason I am alienated from God and without God and without hope.
 - vi. This is the meaning of the cross: the removal of Adam's guilt, so that I as a member of Adam's race can be restored to favor and grace. This is the offense of the cross:
 - 1. Man, especially modern man, doesn't want to think that he can be held accountable for another man's sin. This is the hard kernel that he cannot chew.

But if you cannot accept that, you will never accept that you can be saved because of another man's righteousness. It is all or nothing.

2. The cross tells me that I must confess that I am a sinner like every other man—how hard this was for the Jew; how hard it is for the Gentile.
3. No man wants to confess this truth: I am a sinner, without hope, and without God. I have nothing to distinguish me from other people—I am a sinner and an outcast, just as they are. I cannot despise them without despising myself, but we are all from Adam's stock, and we do the works of Adam. The devil is our master, the curse of God follows our every action, and we cannot be saved if we do not repent and cast ourselves upon Christ alone.
4. No ceremony or religious rite—no matter how beautiful, can make me whole. Only Christ and His blood. He alone is meat and drink for my soul unto eternal life. It is to Christ that I must come.

May God bless you. We will continue this next week.