

“Defend the Gospel”
(Galatians 1:1-9)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Galatians is one of the books of the NT

That gives us the “so-what” of the Reformation:

What difference it makes

Whether we believe the truth –

As God reveals it in the Bible –

Or choose to believe something else.

Most don’t think it matters what you believe:

After all, “Isn’t everyone going to heaven when they die?” –

As RC put it in one of our Wednesday meetings:

Most believe in justification by death –

Paul tells us it does make a difference:

If we don’t believe the message he preached –

If we’re not looking to Jesus,

And to Him *alone* for our acceptance with God,

We’re not going to heaven –

We’re not safe:

We’re still under God’s curse,

And in the end, we will be condemned.

B. Preview.

The Galatians had listened to Paul –

When he preached to them

On his first missionary journey –

And had turned to Christ.

But shortly after that,

The Judaizers showed up –

Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah,

But who also believed that both Jew and Gentile

Needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses

If they were to be justified/accepted by God;

Jews who also had a very low view of Paul –

Their proselytizing –

Not only in Galatia,

But also in Antioch (Acts 15:1-2) –

Was the reason for the Jerusalem Council

We read about earlier in Acts 15.

To win them back –

Literally, to keep them from falling away –

Paul needed both to defend his ministry,

And defend the Gospel he preached.

II. Sermon.

A. And so he begins

By telling them why they

Should listen to him

Rather than the Judaizers –

And why we should as well

As over against the many “prophets”

There are in this world –

Because he is an apostle –

Apostle means “one who is sent” –

The same as “missionary” –

Jesus was sent from God –

He was the Father’s missionary to this world –

And so He is called –

Not just an apostle –

But *the* Apostle:

Hebrews, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (3:1).

Those sent from a church

To plant or minister to another church

Were also called apostles:

Paul, “As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers [*i.e.*, apostles] of the churches, a glory to Christ” (2 Cor. 8:23).

And, of course, those sent by Jesus

Were called apostles –

Aside from Jesus,

These were the highest kind –

There were only twelve

Who were specially gifted and called by Jesus,

Not only to plant churches,

But to establish them in the truth –

This is what Paul was.

After Judas – one of the original twelve –

Betrayed Jesus,

Jesus called Paul to take his place.

He writes in verse 1, “Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)” (Gal. 1:1).

Paul goes on through the rest of chapter 1,

And the whole of chapter 2,

To defend this apostleship:

How he received his Gospel from Jesus Himself;

How it transformed his life –

Before he was working so hard to destroy the church,

But now was doing all in his power to build it –

How his Gospel was given him

Directly by Jesus,

And how it was the same Jesus had entrusted to His apostles,

Even though Paul had never met them;

How one time,

He even rebuked one of the greatest among the twelve –

Peter –

When he was being tempted to fall

Into the very error Paul was writing

To warn the Galatians against.

Paul's claim to apostleship –

And to the truth of what he was about to defend –

Didn't come from him alone:

But also, verse 2, "All the brethren who are with me."

Jesus was once challenged by the Pharisees –

When He claimed to be the Light of the world –

"You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true" (John 8:13).

According to the Law,

If He was the only witness,

They weren't bound to receive what He said –

But He wasn't alone:

Jesus, "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me" (vv. 17-18).

The same is true here:

Paul testifies of his call

From Jesus and the Father;

And of his message –

And so do those with him.

The Galatians should listen –

And we should as well –

Because Paul's message comes

From Jesus and with His full authority –

This is God's truth –

B. After giving his customary apostolic greeting –

In which he again emphasizes *the Gospel* of Jesus Christ –

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (vv. 3-4);

And how the Father should receive all the glory for it –

“To whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen” (v. 5) –

Soli Deo Gloria –

Not just the credit for this salvation –

Remember –

But the devotion of our whole lives:

He begins to defend his Gospel.

First, by telling them in no uncertain terms

That what they heard from the Judaizers

Is no Gospel:

“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” (vv. 6-7).

Over the past six weeks,

We’ve been looking

At what the Gospel is:

Justification –

Our acceptance with God –

Is by the *grace* of God alone –

His free gift –

That we receive through *faith* alone –

Through *Jesus alone* –

That God alone might be honored.

The Judaizers believed Jesus was the Messiah –

That we needed His work:

His life, death and resurrection –

But also circumcision –

The sign of the Old Covenant –

And the Law of Moses.

Luke, “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’” (Acts 15:1).

Paul didn’t agree:

To receive circumcision

Was to fall into works,

And away from grace/Christ:

“Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:2-4).

If we start down the road

Of working for our salvation,

We will have to do it all.

Adding works destroys grace.

Paul, “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace” (Rom. 11:6).

Jesus does it all,

Or we do it all –

There's nothing in between.

What does this say about Rome?

They're guilty of the same thing as the Judaizers –

They've added works,

As the way to get grace,

And so destroyed grace –

But that isn't only way

The Gospel can be distorted/destroyed:

There are many others.

Believing in another god does the same

Because only the true God can save.

The Lord, "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*" (Isa. 45:22-23).

There is only one true God

Who is three in Person:

This eliminates every other religion,

And every Christian cult.

Believing in a Jesus

Who isn't both *God* and man

Also destroys the Gospel:

Jesus, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

We must believe

That He is the eternal Son of God

Who became man for us and for our salvation.

We've seen already

That adding works to the Gospel does the same –

But so does having a faith that doesn't produce works –

That doesn't make us like Jesus –

James, "Faith without works is dead" (2:26).

Any of these things distorts/destroy the Gospel –

And if it is destroyed, so are we:

If we want to be saved,

We must listen to Jesus

As He speaks to us

Through His Word,

Given by His apostles.

C. What about those who distort the Gospel?

Paul, "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!" (vv. 8-9).

If those who listen to false teachers end up ruined,

How much more the false teachers?

James, "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (3:1) –

A "greater" or the "greatest" "condemnation" or "punishment."

We need to be careful

How we represent the Gospel –

That we get it right –

We also need to avoid

Those who preach a false Gospel,

And warn those who listen to them.

Not all of these teachers will be destroyed –

The Lord will save those who are His –

Paul, the Pharisee, believed, by God's grace;

There have been some saved

From Rome, Islam, Mormonism, JW's,

Even those who were teachers –

But that doesn't mean

That what they're doing while teaching their false gospel

Isn't a very serious sin:

Paul says we must consider them accursed.

D. Finally, we need to be willing to defend the Gospel:

Paul, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

We need to stand up for it –

As Paul –

In a world that believes a lie –

If we have God's Spirit,

That's what He will move us to do.

If we are Jesus' bond-servants

We will do as He commands

It won't make us popular

In the world's eyes –

Jesus says the world will hate us as it hated Him –

But it will in God's;

And that is what's most important. Amen.

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