

“Hold Fast to the True Gospel”
(Galatians 1:6-9)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we saw Paul begin his letter by reminding his readers of his divine credentials:
 - a. Paul was no ordinary elder, minister, evangelist, missionary.
 - b. Jesus Christ had called him to the highest office a man can have: An Apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - (i) The apostles had a very special office.
 - (ii) All together, the Lord only appointed twelve, not including Judas: anyone who has claimed to be an apostle since that time was either deceived or was being deceptive.
 - (iii) To be an apostle, they had:
 - (a) To have seen the risen Lord.
 - (b) To be personally called and commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself.
 - (c) God had to testify to their calling through signs, wonders and miracles.
 - (d) These things have only been true of the twelve.
 - c. The Apostles had special authority.
 - (i) It was through Jesus and His Apostles that God laid the foundation of teaching for His church.
 - (ii) Speaking of the Gentiles the Lord was bringing into His church, Paul writes, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).
 - (iii) That foundation was laid in their teaching and preaching ministry – since it was inspired by God – and it forms the basis of all we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us.
 - (iv) This letter of Paul to the Galatians is a part of this teaching.
 - (v) That’s why they needed to listen to it, and why we need to as well.
2. Paul, in his apostolic greeting, also began to preview his message:
 - a. He reminded us that all grace – the blessing of the Holy Spirit and the gift of salvation itself – comes freely from God.
 - b. He told us that all peace – between God and us, and between man and man – also comes from God.
 - c. And he reminded us that Jesus Christ was the One He sent into the world to pay for this gift, to die that He might reconcile us to God, and that He might change

our hearts so we wouldn't go with the rest of the world down the path of destruction.

- d. Salvation is from first to last of God, which is why He is to receive all the glory, not us, not any man.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, Paul goes on to express his amazement that they could so quickly throw all of this away for a "Gospel" that isn't good news at all: The Gospel of good works.
 - a. Every false religion that claims to be Christian includes something man must do in addition to what Christ has done to be saved.
 - (i) The Judaizers added circumcision and obedience to the whole Law.
 - (ii) The Mormons – remembering that they deny the true God and believe in many gods – add obedience to the laws their god gives and membership in their organization to be saved – make it to paradise.
 - (iii) The Jehovah's Witnesses – remembering also that they deny the Trinity and believe only in the Father – also believe that membership in their organization, studying their system of teaching, and door to door proselytizing, is necessary to make it to paradise.
 - (iv) There is always obedience to this law, belief in this teaching, faith in this teacher, submission to this man that is added.
 - (a) We believe that obedience to God's Moral Law is important – you are not saved without it.
 - (b) That believing in the truth is important – if it really is God's truth.
 - (c) That we receive what God's teachers have to teach us – if it agrees with God's Word.
 - (d) That submission to the leadership of God's elders is important – if they tell us to do what God wants.
 - (e) But we do not believe these things earn our salvation; it is only the evidence that the Lord has saved us through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. A Gospel of works isn't "Good News," it isn't a Gospel.
 - (i) The Bible is clear on two points:
 - (a) Our works aren't good enough.
 - (b) And to try and save ourselves by works puts us under God's curse: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them'" (Gal. 3:10).
 - (c) Outside of Christ, we are already under the broken Covenant of Works – under its curse.
 - (ii) A religious system that can't save us isn't good news, but a bad deception.
2. Let's consider for a few moments Paul's response to the Galatians who were tempted to go down this path. We'll look at three things:

- a. First, that it's not only possible, but astonishing that any Christian would want to give up a Gospel of grace for one of works.
- b. Second, how this happens.
- c. Third, what God thinks of those who teach and proclaim a false Gospel.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, it's not only possible, but amazing, that any Christian would want to give up a Gospel of grace for one of works.
 - 1. First, it is possible for professing Christians to fall away, to become apostates.
 - a. The Galatians were in the middle of leaving Christ alone.
 - (i) Paul says they were deserting: the tense is present, which means they were in the process of doing so.
 - (ii) Some had already gone down that path and had been cut off from Christ, "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).
 - b. The letter to the Hebrews was written to Jews who had believed in Jesus to warn them not to return to Judaism because of Roman persecution.
 - c. John, in his first letter, spoke of members of the church leaving (1 John 2:19).
 - d. We know from our own experience that some fall away from the Christian faith and either become "atheists" or join some other religious group.
 - e. It is possible for professing Christians to fall away from the true Gospel and even to embrace a Gospel of works, which we have already seen is not a Gospel at all.
 - (i) Paul says they left for another Gospel.
 - (ii) But it is really not another: it is no Gospel.
 - 2. Second, it's possible for this to happen quickly.
 - a. Paul is astonished that they could desert God so soon.
 - (i) The Lord had called them by the grace of Christ.
 - (ii) But they were leaving it already for another Gospel.
 - b. Where was their conviction, their steadfastness in the truth?
 - (i) They should have held onto it tightly.
 - (ii) They shouldn't have let go of it even if it meant their lives (martyrs).
 - (iii) By leaving it, they were forfeiting the blessings Christ earned for them and were deserting God.
 - c. The Bible warns us to take heed when we stand, that we don't fall.
 - (i) So many have turned away from Christ in a moment.
 - (ii) They seemed so solid, but had no substance at all.
 - (iii) Some didn't even realize it until they were tempted with something they loved more than Christ.
 - (iv) Beware that you love anything more than Him.
 - (v) Guard your hearts that nothing takes you away, even if you should lay down your lives for Him.

B. Second, how can this happen?

1. They didn't do it by themselves. They were tempted – the Judaizers – “There are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ” (v. 7).
 - a. False teachers enticed them.
 - (i) Their traditional upbringing, what they were familiar with was held out to them.
 - (ii) They didn't have to give up the security they felt in their works system.
 - (iii) They might better be able to get along with the Jews.
 - (iv) They could do this and have Christ as well.
 - b. Cults prey on uneducated and uncommitted Christians.
 - (i) JW's challenge the deity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit.
 - (ii) Mormons the authority of Scripture alone and the Trinity.
 - (iii) UPC's challenge whether the Son and Spirit are separate persons from the Father, believing they're the same.
 - (iv) Health and wealth teachers tell us that God lives to serve us – our desires – and we don't live to serve Him.
 - (v) These catch many professing Christians off guard and carry them away.
 - c. Beware that you don't compromise the truth and become led astray.
 - (i) There are things faithful Christians can disagree on: recipients and modes of baptism, views of end times, whether or not to sing hymns as well as psalms, etc.
 - (ii) But there are truths that can't be compromised: the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the two natures of Christ, the sinless life of Christ, His death, burial and resurrection, His ascension, His Second Coming, salvation by grace through faith alone.
 - (iii) We can fellowship with brethren who disagree with us on many issues, but not on those essential to salvation: on those, we must stand fast in the truth.
2. But remember, it isn't possible for a true Christian to fall entirely away.
 - a. You'll remember that both Peter and Judas fell away from the Lord.
 - (i) Peter denied with an oath and curse that he even knew Jesus (Matt. 26:74).
 - (ii) Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15).
 - b. But Peter repented and Judas didn't.
 - (i) Peter was restored to his relationship with Christ and was used mightily by the Lord to build His kingdom.
 - (ii) But Judas went and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5).
 - c. What made the difference?
 - (i) Jesus prayed for Peter – “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32) – because he was one of His own.

- (ii) But He didn't pray for Judas, because he was not His – "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and *yet* one of you is a devil?' Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him" (John 6:70-71).
- (iii) Jesus prays for His people, so they won't fall away.
- (iv) He prays for you, if you are His child here this morning.
- (v) Those who fall away from the faith never really knew Jesus to begin with, "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).
- (vi) A true believer may leave, but he will return to the truth. A false professor may leave and never return.

C. Finally, what does God think about those who teach these false gospels? What should we think of them?

1. Paul is very straight forward: "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!" (v. 8).
 - a. To emphasize this, to show his earnestness, he repeats it again, "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!" (v. 9).
 - b. The word is anathema, which means, "He is under the curse of God."
2. It doesn't matter who brings it: if he does, he is accursed.
 - a. Paul says, "If he did, he was cursed."
 - b. If an angel from heaven did, he would be cursed.
 - c. If any man preached to you any other Gospel, he would be cursed!
3. I think it goes without saying that God takes this very seriously, and so should we.
 - a. I once asked a Jehovah's Witness what the Gospel was that they were bringing: the good news.
 - b. After the woman told me about their system of "good things" I was supposed to do to make it to paradise on earth – *e.g.*, studying the Bible, join the Watchtower organization, go door to door – I compared it with the Gospel Paul preached and then told her what this passage said: she was under God's curse.
 - c. If we don't receive Christ by grace alone through faith alone, we are under the curse of the broken Covenant of Works.
 - d. But if we actually promote a gospel that is not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are under God's curse.
 - e. This is another very good reason why the Galatians should listen to Paul's warning, and why we should as well.
 - f. Hold onto the true Gospel, promote only the true Gospel.
 - g. Escape God's wrath yourself, and help others do the same.
 - h. This evening, we'll consider what Paul says next: This isn't an easy message; it's not going to win friends and influence people; but it is the message we must believe and proclaim if we are to glorify God. Amen.