

Galatians - False Teaching

Message by Pastor Dallas, The Naz

Week 4 - October 12th, 2025

[Link to Sunday Service](#)

Summary

In this message, we address how the Galatian believers had been 'bewitched' by false teachers who were adding works of the law to the gospel of grace. Paul's frustration stems from seeing people who had clearly received the gospel of faith in Christ now being deceived into thinking they needed to add circumcision and law-keeping to their salvation. In this message, we see how salvation comes through faith alone, not works, using Abraham as an example of one who was justified by faith. We also see how 'moralistic therapeutic deism' - the belief that being a good person is enough for salvation - is a false gospel. We conclude with four practical ways to avoid being deceived:

1. Study God's Word,
2. Recognize and avoid false gospels,
3. Consider your sources of information and
4. Live in true Christian community.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You this morning with open hearts and minds, ready to discuss Your Word as You reveal it to us. We ask that You would help us to be receptive to the truth of Your Word and guard us against any deception or false teaching. Holy Spirit, work in our hearts as we gather together. Open our eyes to see clearly and our hearts to receive Your grace. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker (Optional)

What is something you've tried to put together or build recently (like furniture, a project, or even something simple) that turned out to be more complicated than you expected?

Key Verses

- Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1-9; 5:1
- Romans 10:9-13
- Psalm 119:105
- Hebrews 4:12

Questions

1. Paul calls the Galatians 'foolish' for being deceived. What are some ways Christians today might be 'bewitched' by false teachings or cultural messages? (Gal. 3:1)
2. How does Abraham's example of being justified by faith (Gal. 3:6; Gen. 15:6) challenge our modern understanding of what it means to be 'good enough' for God?
3. What is 'moralistic therapeutic deism' and how have you seen this false gospel influence people's understanding of Christianity? (See Appendix for a detailed description)
4. Pastor Dallas emphasized the importance of studying God's Word to avoid deception. What practical steps can we take to become more grounded in Scripture?
5. Why is it important to 'consider the source' when consuming media, teachings, or advice? How can we apply biblical discernment in our daily lives?
6. What does it mean to live in a 'true Christian community' and how does this protect us from false teaching?

Life Application

This week, examine the sources of media that you consume (phone, computer, radio, paper, etc.). Ask yourself: are these sources that I allow to communicate to me the truth about the world aligned with the Truth in the Bible or are they communicating a false gospel? Commit to spending time in God's Word daily this week, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any false beliefs you may have accepted.

Ending Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your grace that we cannot earn but can only receive through faith in Jesus Christ. Help us to rest in this truth and not fall into the trap of trying to add our works to Your perfect gift of salvation. Protect us from false teachings and give us wisdom to discern truth from error. Strengthen our commitment to studying Your Word and living in genuine Christian community with one another. May we be people who embrace Your grace fully and share this good news with others who are still trying to earn what You freely give. Guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, and help us to live as true sons and daughters of Abraham through faith. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Appendix

What is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)?

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The term Moralistic Therapeutic Deism was first coined by sociologists Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton in their 2005 book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press). Based on extensive research, they identified the predominant beliefs of American teenagers, even those that claim to be Christians. They named the core beliefs Moralistic Therapeutic Deism or MTD. The five core beliefs of MTD are as follows:

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

The beliefs of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism are “moralistic” in that they place a high value on “being good” as found in #2 and #5, above. Good is really defined by popular culture rather than the moral imperatives of the Bible. So tolerating behaviors the Bible calls sin might be seen as “good” while calling those behaviors “sin” might be seen as intolerant or hateful, which is bad.

The beliefs of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism are “therapeutic” in that the primary value is feeling good about oneself as articulated in beliefs #3 and #4, above. God’s “job” is to take care of us.

The authors used the word deism because, in Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, God exists as the Creator, but He is relatively uninvolved (beliefs #1 and #4, above). Deists have objected to this use of the term because, in true deism, God never intervenes in human affairs. He created us, but He leaves us alone. For this reason, some have suggested that theism would be a better term. Theists believe that God exists and that He can and does intervene from time to time when needed, in answer to prayer, etc.

The most important point concerning Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, however, is not the difference between theism and deism, but how far removed from biblical truth some young people are. The beliefs of MTD are not isolated to Millennials, either. It seems that many people simply view God as a “cosmic genie,” a “divine bellhop,” or a roadside assistance mechanic—you don’t know Him or need to, but you can call Him when you are broken down and He will come and get you going again. The most important thing, according to MTD, is to be good, nice, and tolerant, and God will ultimately receive you into heaven. This view is probably held by a lot of Americans and seems to be becoming the dominant “civic religion,” which emphasizes the horizontal relationships with other people but minimizes a relationship with God.

In short, MTD puts humanity at the center and, ultimately, each individual at the center of his or her own belief system.

Biblical Christians will have problems with all 5 key points of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism:

1. Not just “a god” exists, but the God of the Bible, who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whoever does not honor Jesus Christ as God does not honor God (see John 5:23).
2. God does not just want people to be “nice” but commands that they obey Him. He is the One who defines good and nice. He calls sin “sin” and promises to judge it (see Romans 1:18–32).
3. The central goal of life is to give glory to God. A by-product may be that we feel good about ourselves, but that is not the goal (see Romans 11:36).
4. Our primary goal as believers is to be constantly in tune with God, following His leading and in daily fellowship with Him. We are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
5. No one is good enough to go to heaven. All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23); no one is good enough, and that is why we need Jesus, God in the flesh. He lived the perfect life that we could not, and He died to pay for our sin so that we might be made acceptable to God. “‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’” (1 Peter 2:24).

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not an official religion. Probably no one would ever identify himself as a “Moralistic Therapeutic Deist.” The real problem is that moralism is not Christianity, and most people who hold these beliefs are likely to identify themselves as Christians when in fact they are living to glorify themselves!