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“Jesus Plus Anything Ruins Everything”

Galatians 1

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Many well-meaning people believe that being a good person is good enough to get to heaven. But the truth is, there is only one way—salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! Jesus is the only way to heaven. In Galatians, Paul addressed this important truth and said that any person or demon who tells you a “different gospel” should be accursed! In this study, we will define the Gospel and explore the dangers of false gospels.

## 1. Context

### a. First letter

- i. Galatians is thought to be Paul’s first letter, written around 49 A.D.
  1. The Bible is not in chronological order.

### b. Galatia

- i. The name “Galatia” comes from the Gauls who settled there.
- ii. Galatia was a province, or region, in Asia Minor, within modern-day Turkey.
- iii. Paul visited four cities in the province of Galatia:
  1. Pisidian Antioch
  2. Iconium
  3. Derbe
  4. Lystra
- iv. Paul planted churches wherever he visited.
  1. As Paul preached the Gospel, people would get saved and form a church.
  2. Paul would stay there, but not long, and then go off to evangelize in another city.

### c. Problems in the church

- i. Soon after Paul left, he heard there were some who were infiltrating the churches in Galatia, spreading false doctrine.
  1. This doctrine was so bad that Paul said of the false teachers, “*let them be accursed*” twice in **Galatians 1:8–9**.
  2. Some translations say “*damned*,” “*anathema*,” or “*condemned*.”

### d. Corrective epistles

- i. Often, the churches that Paul planted would go astray after he left.
- ii. Paul wrote corrective epistles to the churches he had started.
  1. Paul’s epistles speak to the tendency of man to stray rather than to a flaw in Paul’s teaching methods.

2. The further we get away from God and the Bible, the more we drift away.
  - a. **DISCUSS:** What are some things that tend to slow down your Christian walk or cause you to stumble?
  - b. **DISCUSS:** What measures of accountability can you take to encourage you to walk close to Jesus and avoid straying?
- iii. In 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul corrected the immorality of the Corinthians, who struggled with divisiveness, sexual sin, drunkenness, and suing one another.
  1. In **1 Corinthians 3:1**, Paul said, *"I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ."*
    - a. Some translations say *"worldly."*
- iv. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul spoke to the church plant at Thessalonica about the second coming. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul corrected the Thessalonians for being so wrapped up in the future that they quit their jobs rather than working as they waited for Christ's coming.
  1. Paul told the Thessalonians that *"if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"* (**2 Thessalonians 3:10b**).

## 2. The theme of Galatians

- a. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he addressed the Judaizers.
  - i. The Judaizers were Jews who believed in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, but they added the law as a requirement to salvation.
    1. **Galatians 1:7** says, *"There are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."*
    2. The NIV says, *"Some people are throwing you into confusion."*
- b. Doing good works is not good enough. Our good works cannot negate our sin. There is only one good Man—Jesus Christ.
- c. Jesus plus anything ruins everything.
  - i. Justification is grace through faith.
  - ii. We are saved by God's GRACE.
    1. GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense.
- d. Galatians is Paul's treatise against those who think the law can save.
  - i. Paul has been affectionally called the apostle of grace.
  - ii. Paul mentions *"grace"* over 100 times.
  - iii. Reading Galatians is what led Martin Luther to start the Reformation.
    1. Luther realized Christianity was not a works-oriented religion, but a love-motivated relationship.

2. **DISCUSS:** How has your motivation for doing what is right changed over the years? How does loving God and being friends with Him motivate you to obey Him?
  3. **Galatians 2:16** – *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”*
  4. Martin Luther said, “The little book of Galatians is my letter; I have betrothed myself to it; it is my wife.”
3. **Galatians 1:1–10** – *“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: 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 this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*
- a. Marveling at their turning away
    - i. Paul did not “marvel” in a good way; he was shocked and astonished.
  - b. Condemning false teachers
    - i. Paul said that those who preached a false gospel should be “accursed,” meaning eternally condemned.
  - c. Pleasing God over man
    - i. Paul was willing to risk offending people because he loved them enough to seek the good of their souls.
    - ii. **DISCUSS:** How does being mindful of eternity change how you understand what loving others means?
  - d. “Grace and peace” were common words of greeting in the Greek and Hebrew.
    - i. The Greek word for grace is **charis**.
    - ii. The Hebrew for peace is **shalom**.
  - e. The theme of Galatians
    - i. Galatians is about our freedom in Christ.

1. We have freedom—not to sin, but to obey the Lord.
2. **DISCUSS:** How has understanding that salvation is found in Christ alone freed you from living in bondage?
3. **DISCUSS:** How does the Lord want you to use your freedom in Christ (**Galatians 5:3**)?
- ii. Good works do not save us; they are the result of a person getting saved.
- iii. Jesus died for sinful humanity.
  1. **Galatians 1:3–5** – *“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 this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*
  2. The Gospel says that:
    - a. We have a sin problem.
    - b. We live in an evil age.
    - c. We need to be rescued.
    - d. Jesus gave Himself to save us.
    - e. **DISCUSS:** What are some ways that you can talk to others about the Gospel?
4. **Galatians 1:8** – *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”*
  - a. God did not give angels the Great Commission; He entrusted men with the Gospel.
    - i. Angels only preach the Gospel in **Revelation 14**, during the end times, because the church will have been taken up to heaven by then.
  - b. If an angel or person preaches another gospel, he is a fallen angel (demon) or false teacher preaching a false gospel.
    - i. Many religions were started when an angel (demon) preached a false gospel.
      1. Mormonism began with Joseph Smith’s claim that he was visited by the angel Moroni, who gave him a seer stone to decipher golden tablets. No one has seen these tablets since Moroni’s supposed visit; Smith said Moroni took them back in 1829.
      2. Islam began with Muhammad having a demonic encounter and believing he was possessed by a djinn. However, his wife took him to her cousin, who told him he was instead visited by the angel Gabriel. Later, Muhammad would claim that Gabriel dictated the Quran to him.

3. Christian Science began when Mary Baker Eddy, who did seances, claimed to be visited by an angel.
- ii. The truth regarding the origins of false religions offends some, but we must love people enough not to withhold eternal truths.
  1. **Galatians 1:10** – *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*
  2. **DISCUSS**: How do we become God pleasers rather than men pleasers?

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)