

Protect the Gospel
Galatians 1:6-9
Sunday, September 14th, 2025
By Ryan Perry

Scripture

Galatians 1:6–9

[6] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—[7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Let's Pray

Introduction

So right now, if you were to go to your phone or computer, hop on YouTube, and type in **“Blind Taste Test,”** you would get a ton of videos where people are tasting various food and drink products to see if they can pick out a specific brand.

One of these particular videos is of a grandma who has been an avid consumer of Pepsi for more than 40 years. And she believed she could pick out Pepsi from a line-up of other sodas just by tasting them.

So her granddaughter set up a blind taste test where she had to taste various other sodas, including Pepsi, to see if she could distinguish it from the other brands. Now, to be fair, the granddaughter was playing a joke on her grandmother, and so she made her drink **corn syrup soda, bacon soda, and a buffalo wing soda.** Which means that it wasn't that hard to pick out the Pepsi.

However, the first soda she tried was actually **Coke**, and her initial response in the video is what stuck with me when she said, **“That’s not my Pepsi.”**

Now, this morning, as we get into the first part of Paul’s heated letter to the Galatians, we are going to see that another blind taste test is happening. Between the true gospel of salvation through Christ alone that Paul preached (**Pepsi**), and the false gospel of salvation through Christ and works that these false teachers brought with them (**Coke**).

But the problem is that these believers in Southern Galatia are relatively new in their faith. They haven't been drinking from the well of the true gospel very long. So when these false teachers bring them the sweet-tasting message of their false gospel, the Galatians start to accept it.

They get misled into believing that the gospel of Christ plus works (**Coke**) basically tastes the same as Paul's gospel of salvation through Christ alone (**Pepsi**). And the reason that Paul is so upset at them is because he knows that any other gospel, besides the one he taught them, is not actually the gospel, and therefore, has no power to save their souls.

But that wouldn't happen to us, would it? I mean, we all could definitely taste the difference between the true gospel and false perversions, right? I would love to be able to say yes to those questions.

However, most of us have grown up in a culture that champions false ideas about human achievement and creating our own destiny and identity. **Which means that it is all too easy for these ideas to creep into the church, and into our understanding of the gospel and how we are actually made right with God.**

Whether we like it or not, we are susceptible to the same gospel errors that infiltrated the Galatian churches.

So we need these words from Paul this morning that are calling us to protect the gospel from false teachers. We need to protect it by discerning the false teachers that exist within **our own hearts** and **out in the world**, and by rejecting them and their false gospel substitutes.

But in order to do this, we need to begin by making sure that we have a clear understanding of the true gospel. So we are going to begin by briefly answering the question that we are working through in our 8-week Adult Sunday school class.

What is the Gospel?

Now, when we ask that question, there are generally two ways we can think about it. The first is what we would call the **wide or cosmic view of the gospel**. This is where we look at Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and see the effects that it has on all of creation.

That he came to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, to redeem a fallen creation, to bring all things in submission to himself, to gather his lost people, and eventually to restore his creation to its original glory (Acts 3:21).

This view of the gospel is important because it helps us to see that Christ came not just to redeem individual people, but he came to do a total and cosmic work of restoration.

Where Adam plunged all of creation into sin and death, Jesus came to renew it.

But this isn't the aspect of the gospel that Paul is thinking about as he is writing this letter to the Galatians. Instead, he is thinking about what is called the "narrow view" of the gospel.

How the gospel is applied to individual sinners so that they can be made right with God.

We can see this in the opening verses of Galatians 1 when he says in 3-4:

[3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,...

Throughout this letter, when Paul talks about the gospel, he is primarily thinking about it in terms of Christ dying on the cross for our sins, so that we could be delivered from the present evil age of sin and death.

Or to put it another way: We were dead in our **sin** (Eph. 2:1), but Jesus came to die on the cross to take the punishment for our **sin** so that we would no longer be enslaved to **sin** and the spiritual death that was leading us to eternal destruction (forever life apart from God, in a real place called hell).

Just to make sure that the Galatians understood what he was talking about when he mentioned the gospel in verses 3-4, he applies it to them in Galatians 1:6 by reminding them that God ***"...called you in the grace of Christ..."***

Meaning, that God freed them from sin and death and brought them into a new and forever relationship with himself, by giving them his free and unmerited favor through the death of Christ on the cross.

What Jesus did for them and us on the cross was a free gift that we could not and cannot earn ourselves, nor can we add to or subtract from it in any way.

This is similar to what Paul said in Romans 3:23-25, which says:

[23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

So when we refer to the true gospel or the gospel that Paul preached in Galatians, this is what we are talking about.

The gospel is the "good news" of salvation through Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose again, providing forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and eternal life to all who receive him by faith alone.

Or to put it in a simpler way: ***The gospel is the "good news" that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ's finished work alone.***

And so now, with this definition in place, we can begin to look at what Paul tells us about protecting the gospel of Christ. Here's our first point.

Protect the gospel by recognizing the false teacher within.

Galatians 1:6

[6] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

Illustration

Listen for a moment to the following list of products and trends:

- Pet rocks, Beanie Babies, Hacky sacks, trucker hats, Labubu dolls, crop tops, ice bucket challenge, air walking, tide pod challenge, and ASMR videos (for the 10 of you who know what that is).

All of these, in our culture, are what we would call fads. Now, according to the website Oxford Reference a fad is defined as, “A short-term obsession with a style, product, idea, or concept.”

It's usually characterized by a lot of people either buying or trying it in a short period of time, and then it's equally fast disappearance from popularity. So people get excited about it for a short time, and then it disappears, and they move on to another fad.

But why is that? Why do fads catch fire so quickly and then fizzle out just as fast?

One website made this point when talking about why people buy into fads in the first place:

People may often buy into trends (or fads) due to wanting to become popular or seeing someone famous using a product that is now a fad.

There is a form of popularity, acceptance, and being in the know that people want, so they buy into a product or trend that will give them the social capital that they desire.

Which means that once that trend or fad ends, they must move on to the next one to gain more social capital and acceptance.

The reason I am bringing up this illustration is to point out the truth that the human heart is easily led astray. This is especially true when a new teaching, trend, or fad comes to prominence around us. **This is exactly what happened to these Gentile Christians in southern Galatia.**

Text

It is very likely that Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the true gospel of salvation through Christ alone to them in A.D. 47.

And as a result of their preaching, many Gentiles in Southern Galatia came to faith, which is why this letter is written to many churches and not just one.

In fact, there was such a wide acceptance of the gospel of Christ among the Gentiles that in Acts 14:27, Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas returned home and declared all that God had done with them and how he opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

This was an exciting time as they were witnessing an explosion of God's kingdom in Galatia.

In fact, this is why Paul is so genuinely shocked and amazed that they are now turning to a different gospel. Because not only did they freely accept the gospel, but it couldn't have been more than 8-12 months since he and Barnabas had been with them.

But as we already pointed out, the human heart is fickle and it's easily led astray if we aren't careful.

So when these Jewish Christians came preaching a new and trendy version of the gospel: **Christ plus works**, they treated it like we do our phones. If Paul's gospel was the **iPhone 15**, then the Jewish Christians' gospel plus works was the **iPhone 17 Pro Max**.

They didn't fully understand that they were actually believing in a completely different gospel.

Which is why Paul sounds the alarm and tells them that they are “**deserting**” or “**setting aside**” God, and are “**turning to a different gospel.**”

Because they are running the risk of putting their faith in something that isn't actually Christ and can't actually save them.

Application

Now, most of us in this room are not new believers. In fact, many of you have been walking with the Lord for 20-plus years. Which means we can easily shrug this off as something that we don't need to worry about.

But let me ask you this. When's the last time you felt entitled to something because of the work you did? When's the last time that you measured someone else's faith by how good or bad it seems like they are doing on the outside?

Have you ever felt yourself desiring something, like money, status, a promotion, marriage, or family, **because you felt like you needed it, or that it would fill something inside of you that was missing?** Finally (be honest with yourself), have you ever felt yourself (even just a little bit) wanting something more than you want Jesus?

If you answered yes to these questions or thought of examples from your life, then you are vulnerable to the very real risk of putting your faith in something that can't save you.

Which means that we need to be continually protecting our hearts from false gospels that can seem attractive, but can't save us.

The way we do this is by continually soaking ourselves in the Word of God and the truth of the gospel that it contains. So that our hearts aren't led astray by the false gospels around us, but instead are transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we would know God, and live according to his perfect ways as they have been revealed in His Word, through Christ.

As Paul writes in Romans 12:2:

[2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So we must protect the gospel of Christ by first recognizing the false teacher within.

Protect the gospel by recognizing the false teachers without

Galatians 1:7

—[7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Text

So now, we are moving from the false teacher within that caused the Galatians to turn to a false gospel, to the false teacher without (outside), who brought them this false teaching in the first place.

And Paul, at this point in the letter, simply refers to them as ***“some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”***

We will, of course, learn more about these men as time goes on, but it is important for us to realize that this wasn't just one person; it was a group of people.

So-called Jewish Christians who specifically came down to these churches in Acts 15:1 (which we looked at last week) to bring these new believers a different teaching (in their minds, a better teaching) about Christ.

And as a reminder, what these Jewish Christians were teaching is that these Gentile believers needed to believe in Jesus, and they needed to obey the law of Moses in order to be saved and be made right with God.

Which, at its core, is again, **the gospel of salvation through Christ plus works.**

And as Paul talks about these men, there are two important things that he says about them. One, they are troubling the Galatians, and two, they are distorting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, the word “trouble” means that they are **“agitating or subverting their souls.”**

These false teachers are agitating and undermining the faith that the Galatians had in the true gospel of salvation in Christ alone.

The way they are doing this is by “distorting the gospel of Jesus Christ.” That word “distort” means that they are taking the gospel and making it the opposite of what it actually is.

Where these teachers thought they were making Paul’s gospel (good news) better, he’s telling the Galatians that they are actually making it the opposite. **It is no longer good news, but it’s bad news.**

Because it is no longer the gospel of salvation in Christ alone that is received as a gift from God, by faith alone. Instead, these false teachers have made it into the gospel of salvation in Christ by our human works, which are frail, faulty, and have no power to actually save us.

They have turned the gospel of the kingdom of God into the gospel of hell. Which is why Paul is emphatic at the beginning of verse 7 that there is no other gospel.

This isn’t merely one soda (**Pepsi**) versus another (**Coke**). This is more like the sweet and refreshing taste of **Pepsi** vs **strychnine**, which tastes horrible and will kill you.

Application

So, realizing that false teaching and false gospels are deadly, how do we go about recognizing a false teacher when we encounter them in the church or out in the world?

I want to briefly give you 4 tests you can use to recognize a false teacher. I want to say up front that I did not come up with these on my own; rather, I came across them within a Desiring God article on this very topic.

1. Fruit Test

Matthew 7:15–17

[15] “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [16] You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17] So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

Look, I alluded to the idea earlier that we don’t want to be measuring someone else's faith by what their life may look or not look like on the outside.

But the true gospel should bear the fruit of righteousness in someone’s life. So, if a pastor or teacher of the Word is willfully and consistently living in ways that are contrary to that gospel, then we should think twice about following their teaching.

2. Doctrine Test

1 John 4:1–3a

[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3a] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

The Apostle John is calling these believers to test the spirits of others who claim to know Christ. The way they are supposed to do this is by listening to what they believe about **central doctrines**.

If someone comes and tries to give you a teaching about God, Christ, the Word, Sin, Salvation, etc, that is contrary to what has been accepted as true for centuries, they might be a false teacher, and you should be careful not to accept their teaching.

3. Scripture Test

1 Corinthians 14:37–38

[37] If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. [38] If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Paul is making it clear in these verses that his writings are commands of the Lord. They are scripture because he is an Apostle. And if someone is unwilling to recognize or submit to his scriptural teaching as the Word of God, they should not be followed.

This means that every idea or teaching that you encounter, whether from believers or non-believers alike, that isn't grounded in the clear witness of scripture, and especially in the New Testament, should be rejected as false.

4. Gospel Test

Galatians 5:2–3

[2] Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. [3] I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

I want to be kind, but firm about this point. If you encounter a believer who tries to convince you to believe in a version of a gospel other than the gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, there is a good chance you are encountering a non-believer.

Unfortunately, this probably includes people you may know who belong to churches that preach works, baptism, or even speaking in tongues as a necessary part of salvation or keeping yourself saved.

You need to hear this, even though it may be hard, but they are not Christians and are preaching a false gospel that can't save.

So now that we know how to recognize false teachers both within our own hearts, in the church, and out in the world, how should we respond to them?

Protect the gospel by rejecting false teachers (V. 8-9)

Galatians 1:8-9

[8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

I can imagine, as I read these verses, there were two responses that probably happened in the room. One, some of you were fired up. You were saying, ***“Preach it Paul! Let's get rid of those people who would preach false gospels.”*** Two, you were squirming a bit and thinking, ***“Geez, Paul, that seems a little harsh, doesn't it?”***

But I think that both of these responses are tempered a bit when we understand what Paul is saying.

His main point is this: If anybody (**the false teachers, Paul himself, or even angel from heaven**) brings a so-called gospel into the church, beyond the original gospel that Paul and the rest of the NT authors taught, then they should be **excommunicated from the church**. Because they are not a true believer, they are on the path to eternal destruction, and there is a real danger that they will bring others with them. **Therefore, they must be accursed.**

Or to put it in the language of our church by-laws: If a member of LEFC is teaching a false gospel, we need to correct them and bring them to repentance. But if that doesn't happen, we must put them under biblical discipline, we must revoke their membership in the church, and we must treat them like an unbeliever who needs their eyes opened to the true gospel. **Or we run the risk that they may pull others away from Christ.**

So here is what all of this means for us.

1. It means that we need to take false teaching and false teachers seriously. You cannot and should not be okay with accepting any teaching that contradicts the gospel of salvation through Christ alone. **You must blatantly reject it and its teachers as false.**

2. We must protect our church from false teachers who teach false gospels because eternity is at stake. This means that it is good and right to not allow false teachers to be members, and it is good and right for us to excommunicate them when their false teachings become known.
3. This means that we pray for them and trust that God will either bring them to repentance or will judge them in eternity to come.

Here's where I am going to pause for a moment to let you know that I am going to go over my time limit for this morning.

Because something just happened in our country this week that is both horrific, but it is instructive for us on **how “not” to deal with false teachers.**

If you didn't know, our brother in Christ, Charlie Kirk, was assassinated by a 22-year-old man at a rally in Utah. And though we don't know all the reasons why he did this, it seems that this young man believed that Charlie was spreading false teachings about gender, sexuality, God, and politics.

Now, in the wake of this tragedy, you might find yourself in a place of fear today. And what you need to hear is the call of Christ that should compel you to pray for Charlie's family, to pray for this young man's repentance, to pray for our nation, **and to persevere even in your fears.**

Persecution is something that Christ says will happen. And yet, we are called to run the race of faith well, like our brother did, until the day Christ calls us home. **Because our hope isn't in today, but in an eternity with Jesus.**

But there is the other side of this, where you are angry and all you want is cold-blooded vengeance. If this is you, you need to hear the words of Romans 12:19, where Paul writes:

[19] Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

One of the beautiful realities of the gospel is that we are not fighting to build an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one. Which means that we don't need to take up arms and resort to violence when people disagree with us, when they spew hate at us, or when they hurt us.

Because we know that God's kingdom is ultimately built by Christ and his Spirit, and not by our zeal or our human efforts. Therefore, he will be the one who will judge false teachers, he will be the one who pours out his wrath on them, and he will be the one, if he chooses, who will also save their souls.

Conclusion

So when it comes to protecting the gospel, we do need to be on guard. We need to saturate ourselves with the word and it's truth so that we are able to recognize the false teachers both within ourselves and in the world.

And when false teachers try to bring a different gospel into our lives and into the church, we need to be willing to rejecting them, because eternity is at stake. **But we do it in love and not with violence.**

This means that we will confront them, we will discipline them, we will excommunicate them when necessary, and we will pray for them and entrust their souls to our great God, who will either bring them to repentance or to justice.

Let's pray.