
One True Gospel (Part 1)

Overview

The Apostle Paul quickly moves from his unusually brief greeting to a direct chastisement of the Galatian Christians. He rebukes them for listening to, turning towards, and trusting in a false 'gospel.'

Comparisons

See Paul's normal greeting in other letters:

- 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; Romans 1:8; Philippians 1:3-11; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; & 2 Thess. 1:3

Consider this...

Paul was tactful and communicated well. His letters, recorded in the New Testament, are evidence of his ability to use both encouragement and compliment when he delivered messages of stern fatherly admonition.

In fact, Paul does acknowledge some reasons for positive affirmation concerning the Galatian believers later on in the letter (4:12-15; 5:7). Why did he speak so differently here? Why does he skip all of the normal greeting and endearing expressions and go straight to frustrated bewilderment?

The difference here is that there is nothing less than the Gospel itself at stake. Paul is unwilling to speak softly when something so important is being threatened.

Passage: Galatians 1:6

Application

Find yourself in the passage

- The comfort of God's effective call
- The weakness of our own pseudo-solidarity
- Rely wholly on the grace of Christ

Rejoicing in the Truth of Christ (Phil 1:15-18)

"Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

Galatians 1:6

Intro: At some point in the recent past (less than 15 yrs, and shorter is likely), Paul had been missionary and church planter to the people of Galatia. He labored hard for the sake of the Gospel among them, and much fruit was gained because of it. Now he becomes aware that the Galatian Christians are dabbling in a common early church error (common to our day too - with slight adjustments to the standard).

I am astonished...

Though he is astonished, it seems clear that the Apostle Paul is set on leading them away from their desertion and back to the gospel.

- Paul is astonished, not thankful, concerning the Galatian Christians.
 - Fung - “[B]ecause they are deserting the one true gospel Paul can find in them no cause for thanksgiving to God, but can only express astonishment instead.”¹
- However, Paul is also gracious and hopeful in his approach.
 - The “opinion he had of them” seems to have been “a favorable and exalted one. For, had he ranked them among ordinary and easily deceived persons, he would not have felt surprise (or astonishment).”²
 - Martin Luther said, “He might have addressed the Galatians [by saying]: ‘I am ashamed of you. Your ingratitude grieves me. I am angry with you.’ But his purpose was to call them back to the Gospel. With this purpose in mind he speaks very gently to them. He could not have chosen a milder expression... It indicates his sorrow and his displeasure.”³

that you are so quickly deserting him... and are turning to a different gospel

The ‘different gospel’ was being called by the same name, and therein is the danger.

- Chrysostom - “Like the Jews who persecuted Christ, they imagined their observance of the Law was acceptable to the Father...”⁴

¹ Fung, 43

² Chrysostom, 14

³ Luther, verse 6

⁴ Chrysostom, 13

- The Judaizers “are more likely to have regarded their own teaching as ‘full’ or ‘complete’ gospel...”⁵
- Suggested FBC Resource - “In all likelihood the false teachers were saying that their gospel was not different from what Paul taught. But Paul says, ‘Yes, it is.’ There is nothing else like the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, false teachers have been using the same ‘Oh, we believe in Jesus, too’ line for centuries.”⁶
- Be ware those ‘gospels’ which parade in Gospel clothes, but share little resemblance.

The Galatian Christians were being seduced easily / quickly.

- Chrysostom puts Paul’s sentiments into his own words - “How is this your seducers need not even time for their designs, but the first approaches suffice for your overthrow and capture?”⁷
- Suggested FBC Resource - “The word translated ‘**turning**’ is a continuous present tense verb, which means that they were *in the process* (emphasis added).”⁸
 - “John Stott notes that the word *turning* means ‘**to transfer one’s allegiance** (emphasis added).’”⁹

The desertion, and Paul’s rebuke, was not merely squabble over semantics.

- turning to a different gospel... - “**In verse 6** [Paul] uses the word translated ‘different,’ the Greek word is *heteros*. It means ‘another of a *different* nature.’”¹⁰
- not that there is another one... - “But **in verse 7** Paul uses the Greek word *allos*, translated ‘another,’ which means ‘another of the *same* nature.’”¹¹
 - “Any gospel that differs fundamentally from the one which [Paul] preached to the Galatians is no gospel at all...”¹²

⁵ Fung, 44

⁶ Platt, 20

⁷ Chrysostom, 13

⁸ Platt, 18

⁹ Platt, 17

¹⁰ Platt, 20

¹¹ Platt, 20

¹² Fung, 44

him who called you...

What does “called” mean?

- The root: καλέω (*kaleo*) – I call, invite, name
- The word used in verse 6: καλέσαντος (*kalesantos*) – to be called out by name with a loud voice
 - 1 Peter 2:9 – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of **him who called you** out of darkness into his marvelous light.”
 - 2 Peter 1:3 – “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...”
 - See also 2 Timothy 1:9

Who called whom?

- In the Immediate Context – **God** has called the **believers in Galatia**.
 - “The Galatians were called to enter into, and remain in, Grace (cf. 5:4).”¹³
- In the broader context of Scripture – **God** calls **all those who will believe** from everywhere out of the darkness of sin, self-righteousness, and despair.
 - The very idea of what it means to be a church comes from this term.
 - ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) – *ek*, out from and to / *kaleo*, to call
 - 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 – “7b as you (the church of God in Corinth [v2]) wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ (His glorious return and the Christian’s resurrection to eternal life), 8 [Christ] will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (that is Christ will present His Church as guiltless and holy on that day when time as we know it comes to an end). 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- Remember **Who** it is that called you, and **Who** it is that keeps you!

¹³ Fung, 44

called you in the grace of Christ

What is the effectual calling of all those who will believe based upon?

- You (like everyone else who is counted as saved, righteous, and holy before God) were *called* 'in' or 'because of' the GRACE of CHRIST!
 - Abandon your prideful self-reliance
 - Throw off the exhausting weight of performance-based religion
 - Both stem from a wrongheaded view of the GRACE of CHRIST

Takeaway:

If these Galatian Christians were 'quick' to desert the One who called them, let us be careful to recognize our own potential desertion, and refocus ourselves upon the Gospel of Christ!

- **For our own sake**
 - Suggested FBC Resource - "When you turn from the gospel, you turn from God Himself... [and] you turn from the grace of Christ (v. 6)."¹⁴
 - Suggested FBC Resource - "Turning from the gospel is like stepping onto a performance-religion treadmill."¹⁵
- **For the sake of those we love**
 - Jude verses 3-5 - "I found it necessary to write appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed... ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God... and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
 - Suggested FBC Resource - "The word translated 'contend' was in athletic term, meaning to 'agonize greatly' or 'struggle.' Indeed, contending for the gospel is like participating in an agonizing athletic contest, and that is why many do not contend. But all Christians, not just clergy, are called to be such athletes. Each of us must be ready to give 'a reason for the hope that is in [us]' (1 Pet. 3:15)."¹⁶
 - "As long as our drifting friends are still breathing, let us not stop contending for the faith."¹⁷

¹⁴ Platt, 19

¹⁵ Platt, 20

¹⁶ Platt, 15

¹⁷ Platt, 19

- **For the sake of our church family**

- Martin Luther (thinking of the frustration that Paul must have felt) said, “A man labors for a decade before he succeeds in training his little church into orderly religion, and then some ignorant and vicious poltroon comes along to overthrow in a minute the patient labor of years.” Luther went on to thankfully recount the condition of his own church community and their solid grasp of the Gospel of Christ. Then he went on, “This happy condition, secured by many years of arduous labors, some lunatic might spoil in a moment. This happened in the churches of Galatia which Paul had brought to life in spiritual travail... The church is a tender plant. It must be watched. People hear a couple of sermons, scan a few pages of Holy Writ, and think they know it all. They are bold because they have never gone through any trials of faith. Void of the Holy Spirit, they teach what they please as long as it sounds good to the common people who are ever ready to join something new. We have to watch our for the devil lest he sow tares among the wheat while we sleep. No sooner had Paul turned his back on the churches of Galatia, than the false apostles went to work. Therefore, let us watch over ourselves and over the whole church.”¹⁸

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¹⁸ Luther, verse 6