

A Confused Gospel

Study #2 Galatians 1:6-10
by Bob Burridge ©2024

It's not hard to get people's attention, to get them to go after things that attract them.

Producers know how to get big audiences to watch **action TV shows and movies**.

Some fans **push and shove** to fill stadiums for **sports** events, to see **celebrities**, or to **get sales in stores**.

Sometimes they're taken in by things that distract them to go after what's not good for them.

They're **like moths attracted to a flame** where they're **incinerated** because of their cravings.

What they get taken in by might not always be the best thing for them.

Florida homes often get invaded by those little sugar ants.

They can **suddenly appear** by the hundreds around your kitchen or bathroom sinks.

You can put little **drops of a liquid poison** on squares of cardboard that **attracts them**.

They gather around it **drinking in the appealing poison** that they take back to the colony where it kills the queen and all those who have sipped at it.

Deceptive attractions have been used as **lures** for a long time:

Anyone who ever went **fishing** understands how lures are made to **attract fish to the hook**.

People can be deceived too.

They **crowd in** like those ants, **gladly taking in** things that **seem so good**, but they're *not*.

Influencers get them hooked on **drugs** that simulate pleasure feelings in the brain,

but they can become **irresistibly addicted** to things that **dissolve** away the brain and body.

Culture draws people to **immoral behaviors** that can feel good at the moment, but **horribly offends God**.

It **endangers lives** with disease, conceives **unwanted babies**, **corrupt values**, and it **tears apart families**.

Deceptive lures are **popular**, and become **accepted behaviors** infecting a lot of people.

The same is true about lies that appear in a form masquerading as the gospel of Christ.

The **gospel** has been a **prime target of evil** all through history.

The **truth that transforms** through Christ, is **replaced** by a **poisonous** but **appealing substitute**.

It **attracts masses** to something that *seems to satisfy* the soul, but *doesn't*. It's a **deception**.

The **popular** but *confused message* -- deceptively goes by the name "**Christian**".

It lures those **hungry** toward a false offer of **truth, hope** and **help**.

The word **gospel** is used **4 times** in these 5 verses in the **English** translations of **Galatians 1:6-10**.

This **root word** for **gospel** appears in this section either as a *verb* or as a *noun* **5 times** in the **original language**.

It's the **central theme** in every one of those verses.

The word for **gospel** here is **εὐαγγέλιον** -- it means "**good message**".

The **prefix** is **εὐ**. It simply means "**good**" -- as in the word **eulogy** which means **good words**.

The **main part** of the word: **ἀγγελ** -- means **message**.

It's the **word** that's translated as **angel**, a **messenger** sent out to deliver specific information.

The word **gospel** combines these two words to make it mean "**good message**".

English often **changes** the Greek "**u**" into a "**v**", so the word **εὐάγγελ** become **evangel**.

That's where we get the word **evangelism**, the **proclaiming** of a **good message**.

In this same passage the **true gospel** is referred to as the "**grace of Christ**" in verse 6.

It's what the Galatians **received** when Paul came there with **God's soul-liberating good news**.

You would think that such a life-changing message would be treasured and kept pure.

That's why Paul was so astonished.

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**.

It hadn't been that long since they received the true **gospel**.

When Paul left them, they were **trusting** in the **message of God's grace** in Christ.

But even those well grounded and **truly converted** can be **lured away** and **be misled**.

Today, as it was then when Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians,
we're surrounded by subtle and well crafted attempts
to get us to mold our thinking around what's popular and commonly accepted, what feels good.
That's why many good colleges, seminaries, denominations and local congregations
abandon their original soundness and fall into trendy deceptions.

They were "deserting" God's revealed truth, and turning to what was really a "different gospel".

These believers had been drawn away to a false gospel.

There's an important contrast pointed out here.

In verse 6 he says that the gospel they were being drawn to there was a different message. The word there is ἕτερον.

That's where the word *heterodox* comes from, a different teaching.

In verse 7 he says that there's not another gospel at all.

It's a totally different message. It's not really good news.

Those bringing this new message had introduced trouble.

It was a perversion of the good news of God's grace through Christ.

It doesn't matter what their motive was. Either ignorantly or intentionally - they were wrong.

What they taught didn't agree with what God said in his word. *Sincerity doesn't make something right or good.*

Those behind these innovations were obviously popular leaders who presented themselves as "Christian".

They were convincing. They had something that appealed to many of the Galatians.

But though it was popular and attracted larger numbers, it was motivated by the passions of hell itself.

If you change God's truth into an appealing lie, people will run toward it like those moths to a flame,
like those sugar ants that gather around the poison -- enthusiastically drinking it in.

Paul warned them not to let personalities persuade them.

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.

The word for *accursed* here is: ἀνάθεμα, "anathema".

That Greek word has directly come over into English to mean something horribly evil and cursed.

These weren't anti-religion people. They weren't consciously anti-Christian.

They appeared to be sincere and gifted Pastors or Elders.

They weren't just generally religious. They openly called themselves followers of Christ.

They quoted the Bible -- but they misunderstood or misrepresented what it said.

No one has the authority to teach a different gospel message.

Not the apostles themselves, not a messenger directly sent from heaven, not any one.

To recognize these misleading teachers, it's necessary to know what the true gospel is about.

The Bible needs to be studied as a whole book, as a consistent message from God.

The original languages need to be properly translated. The true context of every verse is important.

The individual parts need to be fit together systematically and carefully.

What God said is more important than what people may want to hear in a Sermon.

Even today, these methods of study are diminished in our post-modern churches.

Very few schools that prepare pastors spend much time on these disciplines.

Counseling classes often deal with making the counselee feel good or blame others for his problems,
rather than dealing with underlying failures to live and believe as God's word instructs us.

Pastoral classes are centered on marketing, making worship seem less serious and more fun.

They learn to choose words that can be taken in many ways so that nobody gets offended.

They cherry-pick the translations and use whichever one best backs up the point they want to make,
rather than the one that best tells what God actually said.

This leaves well intended leaders unprepared to see the problem with wrong teachings.

Some actually condemn and make fun of those who take a more careful and biblical approach.

They accuse them of making it all just "academic".

It **sounds so nice and appealing** in our times of so many conflicts to **avoid** and **marginalize differences**, and to make it all seem **simpler**.

But that's the **very essence of lies**, and a well known **tactic of Satan** all through history.

The **details** of the deceptive message are **expanded upon in the rest** of this **Galatian letter**.

The misled teachers there attacked the **liberty** believers have in Christ.

They felt **superior**, more **pious** and **spiritual** by **replacing** God's clear moral boundaries with bondage to **strict rules** and **false standards**. (2:4)

They **redefined** the relationship of God's **law** with God's **grace**. (2:16)

They **denied** the **unity** of **God's people**, denying the covenantal **link** between the **Old and New Testaments**. (3:14-29)

They **confused** who **Jesus Christ** was and did, while still saying they follow him. (3:16)

They **separated** the **Lordship** of Christ, from his work as **Savior**.

The **love of the Savior** became more an *emotional feeling* than a *thankful submission* to **God's truth**.

So Paul **reminded** them of **what had moved him to teach** what he did.

10. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul wanted the believers in Galatia to **think about** the *motives* of these **false teachers**.

They **decided** what was right by how it **benefited** the teachers, how people **responded**, what gave the teachers a **bigger audience**, **prestige** and **income**.

Paul obviously wasn't trying to **do any** of those things.

He was **plainly telling** what **God said** - sometimes **hard truths** -- but always *true truths*.

If he did what those popular teachers did, he **wouldn't** be a **servant of Christ**.

It was his **loyalty to Christ** that *compelled him* to tell the truth, even when it was **hard to hear**, and to many it was **unpopular**.

The differences between these **popular** and **seemingly successful** other gospels **aren't unimportant**.

They **aren't just theological details**, or **minor denominational differences**.

They **touch** (though sometimes very subtly) the **very foundation** of what should **guide our daily walk** with Christ.

All around us our friends and neighbors might be among those **caught up in deceptions**.

They **feed on substitutes**, and are **starved of the central hope** of God's truth.

The **influence and confusion** comes to them in **popular TV shows**, **music**, **movies**, **books** -- even from **friends**, and those they **work with** or go to **school with**.

It come from **political leaders**, and the influence of **bad laws** that create a confused culture.

Some who preside in our courts **protect criminals** more than their **victims**.

Cultural leaders and celebrities defend and practice all sorts of **moral perversions**.

Even religious leaders who dare to claim to be "Christian" preach a **perverted message**.

When you modify Christianity -- it's **no longer really Christianity**.

It becomes *another gospel*, one of a **different kind** that's **not really** a **good message** at all.

That's what Paul's letter to the **Galatians** was about.

And **God preserved this letter** in the Bible because this **has been a danger** to Christians all through **church history**, and it's **still a major issue today**.

The **influences** that surround us **can even draw believers** to the **poisons**.

The popular message **seems** so appealing, well accepted, and satisfying **for the moment**, but in the long run, it **robs them** of their **peace of mind**, and **peace with God**.

The **false hope** it offers **isn't what's needed** as people face **life's real challenges**.

So what can you do about it?

First: You need to **know the truth, the whole truth** as God gave it to us in his word.

Don't be taken in by a message that's **watered down** and **twisted around**.

Just as you need to **study and learn** to know how to **read, write, do math**, and know **history**,

- you need a **systematic and careful plan to study God's word**.

- You need to **personally** be a student of the Bible every day.

- You need to use **family time** to train and educate your **children** and **spouses**.
 - You need the **regular and systematic teaching** of a *sound Bible-teaching church*.
- Sound churches promote **regular Sunday Worship, Sunday School, and Bible Study Groups** to **combat the wrong teachings** that surround us and try to **indoctrinate** us all week.

Second: You need to **get that truth to others**.

You do it *personally* by explaining what you've learned when it's appropriate, by **inviting** them to church to worship, to attend **Sunday school, Bible studies**, and by **directing** them to good **websites**, solid **books** and **devotionals**.

Third: You need to **be a good example** in your daily life.

- You need to be **consistent** in your **commitment** to God's ways as they're taught in the Bible.
- You need to **live kindly and compassionately**, in spite of your inner urges to be rude or apathetic.
- You need to **love Christ above all else**.

Others need to *see* that this is what **matters most to you**, and that **it benefits you**.

Lies and confusion spread very easily because they **appeal** to what people want to hear.

By saying nothing, you give the impression that you go along with the popular beliefs of our fallen community.

The truth spreads by telling it, living it -- by **appreciating** it first and foremost **for yourself**.

Paul didn't just shake his head in sadness when he heard about what was going on in Galatia.

He wrote this important letter to **help them come out** from the confusion and get **back** into the **light**.

Don't just quietly let those around you feed at **soul-numbing poisons**.

Let them know about the **liberating truth** that may not be popular, but **it's right and good**.

You can do this by drawing from the **power of the Risen Christ** in you,

by **knowing his word** well, and by **living** the way it teaches you.

It's **never too late** in your life to become a *true evangelist*, not the ordained type, but a **personal messenger** of the **true good news**.

You can make a difference -- and enjoy doing it.

1st John 4:4 says, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for **he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**"

Note: Bible quotations are from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

ESV: Galatians 1:1-5

1. Paul, an apostle--not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--
2. and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:
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,
5. to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:6-10 (ESV)

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.
10. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Greek:

- 1 Παῦλος ἀπόστολος οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν,
- 2 καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας,
- 3 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 4 τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἐξέλῃται ἡμᾶς
ἐκ τοῦ αἵωνος τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος πονηροῦ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,
- 5 ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

- 6 Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτω ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον,
- 7 ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- 8 ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζηται ὑμῖν παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.
- 9 ὡς προειρήκαμεν, καὶ ἄρτι πάλιν λέγω· εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ' ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.
- 10 ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν Θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν;