# No Other Gospel

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[0:00] So just a little context before we read Galatians chapter 1, 1 to 10. Since we haven't been in the book of Galatians, it may be a while since you've looked at this letter of Paul or studied it.

So Paul wrote this letter to churches in Galatia that he had helped establish on his first missionary journey. Think of modern day Turkey. And after he moved on from Galatia, some Jewish Christian fanatics or false teachers moved right in and started perverting Paul's teaching of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone.
And they were teaching that to be right with God required more than simply receiving God's grace through faith in his perfect work. They were requiring some human effort and adherence to the Mosaic law, particularly circumcision, the requirement of circumcision.
So their formula was Christ's sacrifice plus circumcision equals right standing with God. And Paul was justifiably angry with these false teachers distorting the gospel.
There's only one gospel story of salvation. It's God's story and it can't be improved upon by men's desire to contribute something to his own justification. So the Apostle Paul, in a lot of his letters, he starts off with an introduction and then he writes, you know, he says how thankful he is for them.
[1:36] But in Galatians, he starts out with a little introduction and then he just goes right into the attack. And he's attacking this understanding of adding something to the gospel.

So you can stand with me as we read from Galatians 1. We'll read verses 1 to 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 brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to 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'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
But even if we are an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 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.
[3:03] 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.

Amen. These are the words of the Lord for us today. Let's ask his blessing. Father, we need you as Alvin prayed this morning and acknowledged our helplessness, even to ward off illness and sickness and emotional difficulty and stress in our lives.
We come to you this morning again, just helpless before you, asking for your Holy Spirit to come and to teach us, to illumine the words of the Scripture to each person's heart and mind.
Everybody is different. Everyone has a different story who's here this morning. And you know each one. You know exactly what we need and where we need to apply your Word.
And so we praise you that you're, that's what you do. When we read the Scripture, you are right there. Whenever we open your Word, you are there knocking at our door, wanting us to hear from you.
[4:18] And so we ask you again to come and do that for us this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.
Amen. You can be seated. So can you add something to grace alone in the Gospel and it still be the Gospel?

You know, can you supplement, can you tweak the Gospel just a little bit? As supplement Christ's saving work and still have the true Gospel?

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Or does it become something else? Does it become something unrecognizable? You know, the matter of circumcision eventually would be addressed by a council of elders in Jerusalem.
And it's possible that Paul wrote this letter to Galatia, to the churches in Galatia, while he was on his way to the Jerusalem council. And they met together, and you can read about it in Acts 15.
After much debate and study, they settled the matter, and they wrote a letter to the Gentile Christians. And Gentile Christians were comforted and assured that they didn't have to identify as Jewish.
[5:33] They didn't have to come under the Mosaic Law to be right with God. And our God is a missionary God, and he intends to reach people from every Gentile nation, and every people group, every ethnic group.

And he wants our unifying identity to be in Christ alone, not in the work that we can somehow perform, or not in our ethnic or national identity.
And the Apostle Paul, he wants these churches in Galatia, and he wants us at New City Fellowship to understand this far-reaching truth, that God's Gospel of grace, centered on Christ's self-giving sacrifice, can never be altered, or never be supplemented, or replaced with an imitation Gospel.
If there's anything, or any effort to try to tweak it, it becomes an imitation. It ceases to be the true Gospel of God. His perfect and complete sacrifice, it can't be altered, it can't be supplemented, or replaced.
Paul is saying, there's no other Gospel. And these false teachers were very subtle, because they weren't denying Jesus. You know, they still honored Jesus, but they just wanted to add something to Jesus.
[6:53] And that's true of a lot of world religions that have respect for Jesus. That's true of a lot of people in our culture who would call themselves Christian.

They have a respect for Jesus, but they might just want to add something, or supplement something, that they can contribute. And these Judaizers had taken a theological position that goes like this.
Faith plus law equals justification by God. Faith plus law. And the Jerusalem Council of Elders, they authoritatively rejected this distortion, and they set their record straight, and Paul was angry.
Our Lord Jesus himself was often angry with false teaching and false teachers. In Luke chapter 18, Luke records an encounter Jesus had with some religious leaders who also had this distorted view of grace.
Luke 18, he says, To some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. And you're familiar with the parable. He says, Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and one a tax collector.
[8:02] The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers and evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, Jesus said. But he beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
And Jesus said, I tell you this, that this man rather than the other went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
So we see Jesus is saying there's a connection between the gospel and humility. He was teaching that to be proud and to be arrogant and to be self-righteous is really believing in a different gospel, which is no, there is no other gospel.
True prayer can be defined simply as acknowledging your weakness and need. So in Jesus' parable, the Pharisee, he thought he was praying, but God wasn't hearing his prayer.
[9:17] I'm reading through this, I just started reading through this wonderful little book on prayer by O. Halsby, a classic on prayer. And he writes, prayer and helplessness are inseparable.

Only those who are helpless can truly pray. Your helplessness is your best prayer, he says. So if you're a mother, if you're a mother of an infant, if you have a child that's under a year old, maybe you understand this more than most.
He says, your infant children can't formulate in words a single petition to you, yet the little ones pray the best way they know how. All they can do is cry.

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But you understand very well they're pleading. See, the Pharisee, he was pretending to pray. He was performing in prayer.
He was trusting in his contributions, his morality, his fasting, his tithing. The tax collector was that little child who was helpless, calling out on God's mercy alone, and God heard his cry.
[10:26] And Jesus says he went home justified. See, the Pharisee, like those Judaizers, thought he could supplement or replace God's free grace and salvation with some work, fasting, tithing, or moral living.

And the attack on the gospel, it's rarely a frontal assault. You know, it's rarely somebody coming and saying, Jesus is not who he says he is, you know, and attacking Jesus' character.
He was not a good person. But the world and our flesh and the devil are much more subtle in trying to alter or supplement or replace Christ's sacrifice alone.
So think about today in modern day, 21st century Christianity in our context. Where do we see the subtle attacks on the gospel?
One example would be the prosperity gospel teaching, right, that says you need God's grace plus his material blessings of health and wealth in order to really be right with God.
[11:32] That's one formula. And you shouldn't only be rescued from sin, but you must also be rescued from discomfort. So the more comforts you have in life, the more evidence of God's favor, right, the more successful you are materially.

And who are some of the modern day Judaizers, if it's all right, I'll call their names. Joel Osteen would be at the top of the list, right, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Paula White, T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, on and on and on.
They go, a lot of them, America, this is unique, it's not completely unique to American Christianity. It's a big problem in South America. But we probably export more the, this prosperity teaching than anyone else.
and it's a shame on the church in America or those who call themselves Christians but really have a distorted view of the gospel.
Paul says in verse 4, Jesus gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age. Not necessarily from discomfort while we continue to live in the present age, right.
[12:53] Apostle Paul, he was angry, justifiably so, with these Galatian Judaizers and he was angry with these Christians, these new Christians who had been led astray by these ones who were perverting the gospel.

So another modern day distortion could be approval based Christianity. So God's grace, here's a formula, God's grace plus man's approval equals gospel effectiveness.
We know that's false. this is really an attempt to adjust or downplay biblical teaching in order to avoid offense. And we see it all the time.
For example, a church we know of chooses to adorn their communion table with the pride flag. So, they want to make a statement that they're affirming of everyone, you know, and we believe that God tells us, He instructs us to be welcoming of everyone at whatever place they find themselves in their journey.
That's important. And we acknowledge that the church is full of sinners, right? We should acknowledge the new city is filled with sinners and the elders and the pastors are chief among sinners, right?
[14:10] We should be the chief repenters. However, you know, we should be clear that God doesn't leave us where we are. God has a plan to change us and continually transform us moment by moment and day by day and His word is true and it's there for us even if it does offend us sometimes, right?

So, when Paul speaks to this approval-based Christianity in verse 10, he says, Am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Whose approval is more important?
Man's approval so I can somehow feel like I'm being more effective or I'm being nicer or the approval of God. One other modern-day distortion of the gospel I think we could mention is cultural Christianity or the temptation to add cultural identity to God's grace alone.
So, similar to circumcision, this formula goes something like this. My faith in Christ plus my cultural alignment or you could say plus my political loyalties equals true belonging and acceptance with God.

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And this is not just a problem. We know it's a problem here in American Christianity but it's a human problem. It's really a temptation for every culture and every political persuasion.
[15:39] So, think about your own heart and mine. I know this is, it's sometimes difficult for us to really examine our own hearts. It's easier to examine someone else's heart.

So, I don't want you to think about somebody else who comes to your mind but think about yourself. Think about your own temptation to believe that if someone identifies with my cultural alignment or my political loyalties then they're really on God's side.
You know, if we give in to that temptation then our culture and our politics become as important or more important than the grace of the gospel. The world, our flesh, and Satan himself will use anything.
It doesn't matter. He'll use anything whatsoever, any good thing to add to the gospel of Christ's self-giving sacrifice for your sin. And if the Apostle Paul were writing to us as American Christians today, maybe he would be a little bit upset with us, you know.
He might say something like, I'm astonished that you American Christians are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and you're turning to a different gospel.
[16:56] You're turning to something else to provide true belonging, not that there is another gospel. There's no other gospel. So we need to be aware of these modern day distortions to the gospel that really play into our pride and our self-righteousness.

And we're called to identify with the self-giving sacrifice of Christ alone on our very sinful behalf. And we're to reject anything that adds something to the gospel like health and prosperity or man's approval or cultural identity or political loyalties because there's no other gospel.
right? There's only one gospel. It's God's gospel. And our human problem really is this. At the root, the problem that we have with these distortions of the gospel that tempt us is God's free, unearned, and undeserved grace feels insufficient to our sinful human nature because it's always trying to be in control, always trying to gain approval.
Your sin nature that you still have the remnants of corruption with you even though you've been saved by God if you're a Christian, you've trusted in Him and He's declared you righteous.
There's still this temptation, this corruption that wants to make grace feel insufficient. So, your sinful human heart and mind prefers justification that's earned rather than humbly received by faith.
[18:40] Do you realize that you have a little Pharisee living within you? You ever thought about that? You know, Jesus confronted the Pharisees, but there's a little Pharisee living inside of us.

It's true. And he or she likes to be in control and have others' approval. for our efforts, our Pharisee within doesn't trust grace alone and tends to fall into the fear of man more than the reverence of God.
And our little Pharisee is sometimes confident in his or her own righteousness and tempted to look down on everyone else. This is why Jesus told that parable.
Luke says, right? He points out that there's a little Pharisee inside all of those who Jesus was his audience for that parable.
And someone came up with a few really good diagnostic questions, I think, to help us recognize when our little Pharisee is acting up. So, think of this as a little multiple choice gospel checkup.
[19:49] Okay? So, when you sin, this is question number one, when you sin, what do you instinctively run toward? Shame and punishment?

Extra-religious effort? Hiding from God or others? Or do you make a confident appeal to Christ's finished work for you on the cross?
You know, if you instinctively want to pay God back for your failure, then Paul would warn you that you're drifting toward another gospel.
Because you can't pay God back. He's paid the price completely, and so there's no paying him for your sin. That's another gospel.
Another question might be, what makes you feel spiritually secure? Okay? Is it when you have a great devotional life one week, or you've been very productive in ministry, or others affirm you as just, you're such a wonderful servant of the Lord?
[20:56] You know, or does recognizing Christ as your perfect substitute make you feel spiritually secure? If your sense of peace rises and falls based on your performance, then again, Paul would say, hey, check yourself, because you are supplementing something to the gospel.

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The gospel of grace is being altered, and you're being tempted to believe another gospel. One more question. You guys okay with one more question?
Okay? So what makes you angry with other Christians? Would it be their moral failure, their theological errors, their lack of discipline or immaturity, their unwillingness to see things as you see them?
you know? Sometimes our anger reveals that we believe our righteousness is achieved rather than received, freely received on Christ's righteousness alone.
So we need to acknowledge, all of us need to acknowledge this little Pharisee problem and recognize that there's a solution to the problem. And what's the solution?
[22:15] Well, the gospel solution to our problem is simply believing that Jesus rescues us from our flesh and sin's curse through his sufficient self-giving sacrifice that can in no way be supplemented.

Well, the Galatian believers, they were led astray by these false teachers and they were defecting from the gospel. the deserting from the gospel and that word that Paul uses for deserting the gospel is really a military term that speaks to treason, that you are really being treasonous.
You can be tried for treason, right? If you are defecting from the true gospel, Paul is saying to them, they had received this true gospel from Paul and others who planted the churches there in Galatia of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and they were being led astray by another gospel just as we can be led astray as we know in those modern examples today many of us are led astray by the distortions of the gospel but the good news is that Jesus always remains faithful to the gospel.
Jesus never distorts the gospel. Jesus is the gospel. Jesus will never go back on his promise to be our perfect substitute who lived for us and died for us perfectly lived a perfect life died for us rose again intercedes for us Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly and won God's favor for you.
You can truly glorify God through a life of faith in him because Paul says he gave himself for your sins and Paul is using explicit substitutionary language in verse 4 that counteracts the false gospel of Christ's sacrifice plus circumcision.
[24:22] He gave himself for your sins and every world religion teaches the same formula do something to gain approval. you have to do something.

Justification by grace through faith in Christ it doesn't mean that good works aren't important and that good works shouldn't accompany faith. R.C. Sproul writes that justification is by faith alone but not faith that is alone.
So in our Christian life good works of obedience follow freely out of what's the motivation? It's not performance right?
What is our motivation for wanting to obey? It's gratitude. It's because we are just so happy in what we have freely received so obedience is important but you must not confuse this father child relationship as being dependent on obedience.
You know once adopted in the family you're forever God's beloved child and you didn't do something to earn adoption and Paul declares this double curse in verses 8 and 9 he says but 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 as we have said before so now I say again if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you have received let him be accursed and this Greek word that Paul uses here for translated accursed is anathema it's really our word anathema is really a transliteration of the Greek word and it means something that's hated with a passion so the word is used in Greek translation of the Old Testament the Septuagint in the account of the fall of Jericho and you recall God told Joshua and the people to march around the city and when the walls fell down they were to destroy the city they were to destroy the residents of Jericho and Joshua 6 reads on the seventh day they rose early at the dawn of day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times it was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times and at the seventh time when the priests had blown the trumpets
[26:46] Joshua said to the people shout for the Lord has given you the city and the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction that's where he uses the word anathema shall be anathema only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers whom we sent and Paul is saying to the Galatian Christians and to anyone who's preaching the gospel contrary to the one that was received even if you were an angel from heaven distorting the gospel you know let the same thing happen to him that happened

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to the people of Jericho so even if Joel Osteen were an angel from heaven or Paula White or any of those prosperity teachers Paul would be angry he said let anathema let them be accursed for distorting the gospel and the good news of the gospel for you who have trusted in Christ is that you can never be accursed right you can never be damned by God you can't be harmed by God you can never be accursed you can't be devoted by God for destruction why why not because somebody else was right because your substitute

Jesus as your substitute he was accursed for you right Jesus he took the excruciating death and destruction of his physical body because of you and me and because of our sin and Jesus willingly experienced the wrath of God and his passionate hatred for sin so that you wouldn't Jesus cried out you remember from the cross in spiritual and emotional anguish my God my God why you know why have you forsaken me and the father turned his face away from Christ you know what exactly happened there on the cross between the father and the son you know this break in the relationship between the eternal father son holy spirit relationship I mean Jesus couldn't be excommunicated from the trinity right you know in an ontological sense no because you know the essence of the three persons can't be broken
God would cease to be God if the trinity was severed however Jesus experienced the treatment of excommunication in a judicial sense Jesus was treated as a sinner Paul writes that God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us you know in a relational sense Jesus was cut off because God cannot look at sin in a legal sense Jesus took the curse he took the anathema and in an experiential sense Jesus felt the absolute horror of total abandonment by God and he willingly did all this so that you could receive his perfectly righteous record applied to you applied to your account so what happened on the cross was really the ultimate paradox God's son experiencing what it's like to be outside of
God's favor so that you could be brought inside so that others could experience the inside favor of God Jesus was put outside you know think about that that should make you weep with tears of joy for what God has done for you in Christ what he's accomplished it should change the way you look at yourself it should change the way you look at your sin it should change the way you look at other people because of this understanding of the good news of the!
so what should be your response how should you respond as a Christian or maybe as a non-Christian somebody who has not trusted yet in Christ you should continually believe this wonderful good news of the gospel so that it frees you to seek God's approval alone and helps you to love others well you know believing the gospel of grace centered on Christ self giving sacrifice what it does for you the more you believe it the more you are enamored by the good news of the gospel of what Christ did for you it produces love and loyalty for God and his will it produces freedom in your walk with Christ it resists legalism and self righteousness believing the gospel you've received insulates you from these imitations and distortions it's kind of like you know handling counterfeit money the more you handle the real thing the more you recognize the imitation so the more you believe the real thing the more you'll recognize you'll be able to sniff out the imitation and the more you believe the true gospel the quieter and more restrained your inner [32:24] Pharisee becomes hopefully to the point where you don't even hear him anymore or you call him out right as soon as he starts to speak up you say quiet you know I believe in the gospel right believing the gospel protects you from performance based living and approval based Christianity it helps you keep the gospel of Christ self-giving sacrifice for sinners more prominent in your life than anything else any cultural or political identity it produces freedom not fear it produces humility and sacrificial love for others it resists judgmentalism and self-righteousness believing the gospel will lead you away from also living a life of any way you please right it will recognize that obedience to God's commands is very important and my motivation for doing that is gratitude for what

God has done for me so believing the gospel more and more will lead you to glorify him in whatever you do whether you eat or drink or whatever you do to glorify the Lord it will give you greater love for God and his word and it will empower us to walk in the spirit amen amen so maybe you've never repented of your sins and put your trust in Jesus Christ as your savior maybe you know if you're listening to this message you've never received God's favor of declaring you righteous just as Christ is righteous just as if you never sinned well I invite you to pray with me as we close you can pray this prayer in your heart and mind father in heaven I thank you for all that Christ Jesus has done for us through his willing self-giving sacrifice for our sins thank you for your grace and salvation as well

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as your grace and offering to make us more and more holy as you are holy thank you that we don't earn a righteous standing with you father but when we put our faith and trust in Christ righteousness we are fully accepted and approved by you because of what Jesus has done for us forgive me for my sins

I receive your offer of grace by faith in Christ alone and for any believers who have responded to you in faith father may this good news be ringing in our ears all the time because we know that the frailty of our flesh will not allow us as Martin Luther said to take hold of it perfectly and to believe it with all our hearts so we need to be reminded over and over again we need to remind ourselves of this good news and we believe the good news Lord we just say help our unbelief and we pray these things in Christ's name amen amen Amen.

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