

NO DUAL CITIZENSHIP

GALATIANS 1:6-10

There is only one way to be in a right relationship with God

I. THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL (VS 6-7a)

Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life. No One Comes To The Father But Through Him.

- A. THE TRUE GOSPEL
- B. THE GOSPEL IS A RELATIONSHIP
- C. REJECTING THE GOSPEL IS REJECTING A RELATIONSHIP

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL (VS 7b-9)

To Add Or Subtract From The Finished Work Of Jesus On The Cross Is A Perversion Of The Gospel.

- A. PERVERTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE
- B. PERVERTING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE GOSPEL
- C. THE END OF THE PERVERTS

III. THE OFFENSE OF THE GOSPEL (VS 10)

We All Must Choose Between the Kingdom Of This World Or God's Kingdom.

- A. THE GOSPEL IS OUT OF STEP WITH THE WORLD
- B. THE GOSPEL IS OFFENSIVE TO MODERN DAY PEOPLE
- C. THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT A KING AND HIS KINGDOM

No Dual Citizenship

Galatians 1:6-10

Today, we will see that the Apostle Paul is going to use some shock therapy to get his congregation's attention. He is going to use some in-your-face confrontation and some good old-fashioned shame. All of us have experienced the shame when our parents have said, "I'm really disappointed in you."

Even though this book of Galatians is all about grace, Paul doesn't use much grace in his presentation. He just finished evangelizing the region of Galatia on his first missionary journey, and he was able to plant several churches. But as we will see, there were people trying to add to Paul's message of salvation.

All throughout this letter, we can see that Paul is a little defensive. It seems as if people were always ready to undermine his basic message of salvation. You get a little defensive when working in a hostile environment.

Of course you all remember that church I used to pastor, the one that was so tough. It was so tough that they were often critical of ministers soon after they had arrived. Thank God I was already gone, but this happened to the pastor who took my place.

One day, an elderly woman walked into the church. The friendly usher greeted her at the door. "Where would you like to sit?" he asked politely.

"The front row," she answered.

"You really don't want to do that," the usher said, "this minister is really, really, boring."

"Do you know who I am?" said the woman indignantly.

"No," responded the usher.

"I am the minister's mother!" the woman responded.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked her.

"No," she said.

"Good!" said the usher, as he disappeared for the rest of the service.

It seems that everywhere Paul preached the Gospel, there were people just waiting to distort it once he left.

Throughout the book, the Apostle Paul challenges his congregations to make a choice. Either they will surrender their lives to Christ and live in His kingdom, or they will reject Jesus and take up citizenship in the world. The whole Bible makes it clear that we cannot hold dual citizenship. Either we are citizens of Heaven or citizens of this world. Either we belong to God or we belong to Satan.

The main idea of this morning's text is this. **THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO BE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.** In other words, the good news is that we can be in a right relationship with God. However, since we have no right to be in a relationship with Him, we must enter the relationship under His terms.

I. THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL (VS 6-7a)

Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life. No One Comes To The Father But Through Him.

Verse 6 and the first half of verse 7 lays out the message of the Gospel. It is simple. JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH HIM.

A. THE TRUE GOSPEL

In order to understand how people were trying to pervert the Gospel, we must first know what the true Gospel is all about. The basic message of the Gospel is this. There is only one God. He created the universe and everything in it. This God is perfectly holy and righteous. He cannot allow anyone or anything that is not perfectly holy and righteous to be in His presence. God created us to be in a relationship with Him. However, since we are born with a natural bent towards evil and because of our selfishness and self-centeredness, we have tainted ourselves.

All religions are basically an attempt by human beings to clean ourselves up so that we can be acceptable to God. However, the bad news of the Bible is that no one can ever do enough good things to be acceptable to God. No one can ever be religious enough to deserve to be in God's presence. The upshot is that we find ourselves separated from God. He is holy and righteous. We are not.

However, the good news (that's what the word *Gospel* means) is that God designed a way for the relationship to be repaired. God the Father sent Jesus, God the Son, to fix the problem. Jesus would become a man, take on human flesh, suffer, and die on our behalf. Jesus would take upon Himself the punishment that you and I deserve. The way we are forgiven of all our sin and rebellion is to place our faith in Jesus. That means that we admit that we are evil and that there is nothing we can do to repair the relationship. That means that we embrace what Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus paid the price we could not afford to pay. We humble ourselves and receive this free gift from God. From the time we come to Jesus in faith, God the Father looks at us through the blood of Jesus.

B. THE GOSPEL IS A RELATIONSHIP

And that brings us to the heart of the Gospel. The Gospel is a relationship. The Good News is not some new set of religious duties or chants or incantations or special prayers. The Good News is that even though we have hopelessly estranged ourselves from God, He has made a way to repair the relationship. You have heard me say this several times but we have to keep reminding ourselves of this. Christianity is not a religion.

Look at verse 6. God is the One Who has called us by the grace of Christ. When we become a Christian, we are not joining a religion; we are entering a relationship with God. Look at the phrase "Who called you." The word for *church* in the New Testament is *ecclesia*. It means, "The ones who have been called out." In other words, God has called us out of worldly ideas and human religions. We are the church because God, through the blood of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit calls us to Himself. He does this through the grace of Jesus. It is humbling to have to say that I am worse than worthless. There is nothing good in me.

If you stop to think about it, the Gospel really is Good News. In the Old Testament and in the secular Greek world the word *Gospel* meant glad tidings. It could mean the announcement of victory over enemies, and it certainly meant that God was drawing near to His people with blessings. The fact that Jesus came to rescue us from ourselves, from bondage, from sin, and from death is certainly Good News. No longer do we have to be afraid. No longer do we have to be enslaved to sin. No longer do we need to be estranged from God. The Good News is that our lover, God has made a way for us to be right with Him. And it is free. The rich, educated, and powerful have no

advantage. This salvation and this relationship are free and available to every person. All we have to do is say "yes" to God.

C. REJECTING THE GOSPEL IS REJECTING A RELATIONSHIP

When people refuse to hear about or submit to Jesus, they think they are rejecting a religion; when in fact, rejecting the Gospel is rejecting a relationship. I really want you to feel the force of Paul's words. Paul is not going to be very polite in this letter. He is not going to be politically correct. Let me just point this out. Just because Paul uses this polemic language throughout the book, doesn't mean that we have the same permission to speak as rough. Scott McKnight has written in his commentary that all schools of philosophy debated like this. This type of rhetoric was common in the day. However, we don't live in that type of society. We should be careful to be gracious in our presentation. The Gospel message is offensive to the world in which we live. We must make certain that we are not offensive, only the Gospel message.

But another reason I think Paul is pulling out all the stops is because he is afraid for the salvation of his congregations. Most of you who know me, know that I am very much against spanking or hitting or demeaning children in any way; physically, verbally, or emotionally. I think the only reason to spank a child is when he is doing something very dangerous that could kill him, such as running out into the street, or putting his finger in an electric socket, etc.

Paul is going crazy here right from the beginning. For those of you who have ever seen the television show or movie "Lost in Space," it is like the robot when he senses the little boy is in danger. He flails his arms, starts to circle wildly and shouts out, "Danger Will Robinson! Danger!"

Paul starts out, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting." Paul is alarmed, amazed, and shocked. He can't believe what he has heard about these young congregations. After all, it has not been too long since he brought them this message of reconciliation from God. It is definitely less than a year. They enthusiastically gave their lives to Christ. By faith, they entered a relationship with Jesus. And now it seems as if they are deserting their relationship with Jesus.

The word *deserting* means to literally change places. In other words, they are changing their allegiance. In Greek, repentance means to change one's mind. In other words, in order to enter a real relationship with God, we must change our minds. We must give up all our ideas that we are good or desirable or clever. We must learn to simply accept the free gift of salvation. So repentance means to change our mind. Here Paul uses the Greek word for deserting which means to change places. In other words, they have become confused and it seems that they are backing off their commitment to Jesus. We will learn later that they are being confused by people who want them to start obeying religious laws in order for them to earn God's acceptance.

The upshot is that they are starting to once again think that there is something they have to do to earn God's love. It starts to sound too good to be true to them that all they have to do is believe in the finished work of Christ to be saved. Look what Paul says. Not only are they changing their minds about how they were saved, they are actually buying into some religious mumbo jumbo that tries to pass itself off as an addition to the Gospel. Paul says that the Gospel, plus or minus anything, is no Gospel at all.

When we refuse or change the Gospel message in any way, then we are actually refusing and rejecting Jesus. The message of true Gospel is this. JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH HIM.

I think that it would be appropriate for us to make sure we have embraced the true Gospel before we go any further. If you are not a Christian yet, then as I pray this prayer, join it and make it yours by saying Amen. If you are already a believer, then join in with me at the end of the prayer by saying Amen to reaffirm our dependence on Jesus and Jesus alone. Let us pray:

"Lord God, we acknowledge that You are pure and holy and righteous. We have each one of us sinned against You. We deserve to be separated from You in Hell for all eternity. All our attempts at being good or religious are total failures and are like filthy rags before you. We believe and acknowledge that through the death of Your Son,

Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven of our sins and be made right with You. Lord, we ask that you apply the blood of Jesus to our lives and that You make us right with You. We believe that You raised Jesus from the dead. We believe that by placing our faith and trust in Jesus, You will give us new life and a new relationship with You. We submit to You Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We are Yours. We thank you and praise You in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL (VS 7b-9)

To Add or Subtract From the Finished Work of Jesus on the Cross is a Perversion of the Gospel.

As we affirm our relationship with God, the second half of verse 7 through verse 9 reminds us of the uniqueness of the Gospel. We must keep in mind that TO ADD OR SUBTRACT FROM THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS IS A PERVERSION OF THE GOSPEL.

There is a great tendency to simply interpret the issue of legalism in Galatians and simply bring that into our culture. However, the issue of legalism in our modern day is not the same issue that faced the churches in Galatia. In order to understand the issue that faced the churches Paul was writing to it is imperative to understand the social, religious, and political context in which this letter was written. Jesus had died and rose from the dead around 20 years before this letter so the Christian movement is probably less than 20-years-old. The movement comes out of Judaism. In other words, Jesus was the Promised Messiah. Jesus was the complete fulfillment of the Hebrew Law as spelled out in the Old Testament. All of the Apostles and the primary leaders of the church were Jewish. So for the most part, the primary target audience of the Gospel was Jewish.

To be Jewish meant to be religiously Jewish, politically Jewish, and socially Jewish. Religiously they would try to keep the religious laws spelled out in the first five books of the Bible. Socially, they would try to avoid the rest of the world. For the Jews there were only two types of people in the world: Jews and non-Jews. The non-Jews were referred to as Gentiles. Politically, they were hoping that the Messiah would come and destroy all worldly governments and establish the Jews as the world leader with Jerusalem as their capital, with Messiah as their King. So as you can see, their religion, society, and politics were all tied up in one.

For Jews who came to recognize Jesus as the Promised Messiah, it would still be difficult for them to understand how Gentiles would fit into their world. Yet, Jesus made it clear that salvation was for Gentiles as well as Jews. That was promised throughout the entire Old Testament as well. The question the early church faced was not whether Jews could become Christians like the question is today. Rather the question was whether Gentiles had to first become Jews before becoming Christian. The question was solved at the Jerusalem Council within a year of Paul writing this letter. So you see, the issue Paul faced was not simple legalism as we define it today.

A. PERVERTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

What was at stake was if demanding Gentiles become Jewish in addition to becoming Christian was perverting the Gospel message. In the second half of verse 7 Paul says that there were people throwing his churches into confusion by perverting the Gospel. As we go through the letter, we will discuss the issues in more and more depth. But for now, it seems that there were zealous Christians from Jerusalem, following Paul around. After the Gentiles were converted to Christianity by receiving Christ, these Jewish Christians would then come in and say to the Gentiles that they couldn't be authentic Christians unless they also accepted and followed the Jewish religious, social, and political laws as well.

If you look at every cult, you will see immediately that they attempt to add to the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses add the *Watchtower Magazine* to the Bible. The Watchtower ministry tells their people how to read and interpret the Bible. Mormons add the writings of Joseph Smith to the Bible. Christian Scientists add the writings of Mary Baker Eddy to the Bible. All cults add some other writing and elevate it to the same status and authority as the Bible. What happens in the end is always that the nature, the person, and the work of Jesus Christ are diluted or distorted.

Let point out that there are also false expressions of Christianity who ignore the clear commands of Scripture. For example, we have movements that say as long as you believe in Jesus and are sincere, it doesn't matter what you do. We actually have major Christian denominations that are ordaining practicing homosexuals. There is no way we can ignore the clear commands of Scripture. You see, if people define the issue in Galatians as modern day legalism, you can come up with all sorts of crazy interpretations.

There are many Christians today who believe they can be sexually promiscuous and immoral, unrepentant, and still be saved. This too is as distortion of the Gospel because we are commanded to be holy just as God is holy. Freedom in Christ and salvation by grace through faith does not mean we can do whatever we want. Acceptance of the Gospel means that we accept the commands of the Gospel as well as the grace of the Gospel. We are to pursue both grace and holiness. To add or subtract from the Gospel is a perversion of the Gospel message.

B. PERVERTING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

But also, trying to add to, subtract from, or twist the Bible is a perversion of the relationship of the Gospel. Keep in mind that we have defined Christianity not as a religion but a relationship with God, His Kingdom, and His people. I think this is a very important point.

Look at verse 8 Paul talks about the Gospel that he preached to them. In verse 9 he talks about the Gospel they accepted. The Gospel puts us in relationship with God and other believers. We are people of the book. As we will see later, people will try and distort the Bible. They will either omit parts that condemn them or add their own little twists to justify what they are doing. We will see that these people's lives are usually characterized by all sorts of immorality: especially sexual immorality.

Let me give you an example. I don't want to make it sound like homosexual sin is the only sexual sin, because there is just as much heterosexual sin as well. And I do want to go on the record that I am for homosexual rights in the social context of our society. However, to be a practicing homosexual and to be a child of the Gospel is impossible. One cannot be submissive to the Scriptures and ordain practicing homosexuals to ministry. Now to be sure, people who distort and pervert the Gospel can make clever philosophical arguments, but they cannot change the words of Scripture. The same goes for unrepentant heterosexually immoral pastors as well.

C. THE END OF THE PERVERTS

Throughout church history, today, and more so in the future, people pervert the message and the relationships of the Gospel. However, there will come a time when God puts an end to the perverts. Paul says in verse 8, "Let him be eternally condemned!" and in verse 9, "So now I say again ... let him be eternally condemned!" These are pretty strong words but they are consistent with the words of God throughout the Bible.

This word *condemned* comes from the Hebrew concept of *harem*. When nations, people, and cities had become so perverted, God placed them under the ban. When the Hebrews conquered the city, they were to kill every man, woman, child, and animal. They were to burn everything to the ground. Listen, the Gospel clearly spells out salvation to those who receive Christ as Lord and Savior. However, the Gospel just as clearly spells out eternal punishment in Hell for those who reject or pervert the Gospel. Let's make it simple. TO ADD OR SUBTRACT FROM THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS IS A PERVERSION OF THE GOSPEL.

III. THE OFFENSE OF THE GOSPEL (VS 10)

We All Must Choose Between the Kingdom Of This World Or God's Kingdom.

Again, I think this is worth repeating because we have so many bad examples of vocal Christian leaders. We should not be offensive in our presentation of the Gospel because as verse 10 points out, the Gospel itself is offensive enough. In other words, the Gospel forces us to accept the Bible's view of our wickedness, stupidity, and helplessness. And in the end, WE ALL MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD AND GOD'S KINGDOM.

A. THE GOSPEL IS OUT OF STEP WITH THE WORLD

I always want the issue to be between God and them. I don't want to be the issue of them accepting or rejecting the Gospel. Please note that the Gospel is offensive to most people in our culture because the Gospel is out of step with the world. Paul says to his churches, "Do you think I preached the Gospel to win the approval of people or of God?" The answer would of course be that he was not trying to be a people-pleaser. He was trying to be a God-pleaser. The people Paul preached to worshiped false gods and they were passionate about worshiping false gods. In fact they were beaten and jailed for preaching against the false gods of the Gentiles. Further, these people were sexually perverted. They were involved with temple prostitution; they were heterosexually immoral, and homosexually immoral. Further, they separated morality in everyday life from religion. So they could be very religious and immoral in their business practices and community practices. A murderer and a thief could be very religious. Paul preached holiness to them. He preached a God that excluded every other god. This message was offensive to the culture in which they lived.

The gospel is out of step with the world in which we live as well. Our culture teaches that all religions are just as true and valid as others. In other words, as long as people are sincere about their beliefs and follow their faith they are fine. If that is the case, then we should not criticize people who strap bombs on their backs and blow up innocent people. We should not condemn terrorists because they are all sincerely following their religion.

The thing about Christianity is that there is no room for other gods. Christianity is a relationship with the God of the Bible: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is offensive for people to hear that the only way to eternal life is through faith in Jesus and Jesus alone. There are some modern day versions of other religions that try to paint Jesus as a holy man, a great prophet, a moral teacher, and even angelic. However, they are all wrong. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is God and there is no other. Jesus is the second person of the Godhead. When God the Father sent Jesus to die for our sins, and when He said that Jesus is the only way to salvation, He meant it. Now we should not be offensive in our presentation because that message is offensive enough in our culture and its worldview.

B. THE GOSPEL IS OFFENSIVE TO MODERN DAY PEOPLE

In addition the Gospel is offensive to modern day people. Paul is certainly not trying to please people when he tells them that they are completely morally bankrupt and evil. People in our culture think they are good, morally upright, and deserving of God's love. Their idea is that if God were to weigh their good against their bad, they would come out okay. The message of the Bible is that all of us are evil. We are morally bankrupt. There is nothing good in us. We deserve to burn in Hell for an eternity.

And further, people today do not want to be told how to live. They think they are moral. No matter how immoral their lifestyle, they present themselves as self-righteous. Just look at some of our celebrities. Rosie O'Donnell has got to be one of the most immoral and unethical people in public life. Yet she manages to point out the so-called immorality of others. People in our culture do not like to take a good hard look inside ourselves and come to the conclusion that we are evil. All of us should be able to pick out the most immoral people of our time and as we evaluate our lives say, "I

am just as evil as that person.” I am as bad as a brutal dictator, as a mass murderer, as the most horrible pedophile.

So people are offended at the Gospel’s assessment of us. We are evil. We are morally bankrupt. There is only way to be rescued from our deserved destinies of Hell. And that is to believe in and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT A KING AND HIS KINGDOM

Which brings us to the heart of the Gospel. The Gospel is about a King and His Kingdom. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are not just saying, “I believe in this nice story.” We are actually saying that we believe Jesus is the King of the entire universe. There is no other king. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Paul refers to himself as a servant of Christ. Actually the Greek is much stronger. Paul is saying that he has become a slave of Christ.

The point is this. When we confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, we have changed our citizenship from the kingdom of this world to the Kingdom of God. In this kingdom, we willingly serve its King, The Lord Jesus Christ. It is a whole way of life. Either we belong to God’s Kingdom or we belong to the world. Every person is not a child of God. Every person is either a child of God or a child of this world. WE ALL MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD AND GOD’S KINGDOM.

Since God is offering grace, we should be gracious in our presentation and living out of the Gospel. The Gospel itself is offensive enough. THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO BE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. The way we enter a right relationship with God is to realize our helplessness and place our faith in and give our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have heard Tony Evans preach this illustration and he can preach it much better than I. I will simply read this illustration to you. It comes from John Wesley White’s work, The Devil¹:

“A famous painting had long hung in a European gallery – no one seemed to know for how long. It showed a chessboard with the devil sitting on a chair on one side, a look of gloating triumph all over his face. Across from him was a dejected, forlorn youth, defeat stamped on a still studying countenance. The title told the story; ‘Checkmated.’

Paul Murphy, the only American chess champion of the world prior to Bobby Fischer, once toured Europe and visited that gallery. He gazed at the painting in silent reflection for a long time. Then excitedly he exclaimed, ‘Bring me a chessboard; there’s one – only one, mind you – but there’s one move whereby I can save him!’

Christ the Lord of the universe looked down from Heaven and saw our plight. The world was checkmated by the devil, but the Redeemer of man made the one move that could free us from gloom in life, and doom in eternity – he died to free us from Satan’s bondage.”

But in order for us to be saved from bondage in this world and eternal torment in the next, we have to first admit that we are in bondage and headed for Hell. We can only receive the wonderful grace of Jesus when we first realize how much we need it. I hope today has been the day of your salvation or the day in which you have reaffirmed the miraculous wonder of your salvation.

1. The Devil: What the Scriptures Teach About Him, by John Wesley White, Tyndale House Publishers, 1977