

There is No Other Gospel

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Date: 07 February 2010

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[0:00] in my physique of late, but my wife and I have been doing a bit of running. Actually, that's not entirely true. Renee's been doing a lot of running since about November.

Like serious running, like, I don't know, 10Ks every day of the week, no rests, which is foolish, but she's been doing it. And so I've kind of sat on my lazy behind watching her do this over the last few months and finally she got me to go along with her around a couple of weeks ago.

And so we're doing it together and it's great. I mean, we go down to Ruffy Lake Park down the bottom here, about a K away, and it's a great place to run. We take the dog, we walk down there talking and then we run around, mainly me behind her trying to catch up, and then we walk back together.

It's a great time, good marriage time. But one thing I've noticed is that as we're taking Chester, our dog, down there, is that he is absolutely focused the whole way.

Like, if you know our dog, he's quite playful, he's quite observant of people. But on the way down there, he is absolutely looking deadbolt down the road. He knows where he's going, he knows his destination.

[1:16] It's Ruffy Lake Park. It's the greatest place that's ever been created. There is a lake he can swim in. All the tracks pretty much are off-leash tracks, so he just gets to throw along with us.

And he loves it the whole way down, focused on getting to Ruffy Lake Park. And here's the thing that I've noticed. When he gets there, I take him off the leash.

He goes crazy until we bring him back into line. But he bolts and bounds and runs. He dives into the lake. He checks out other dogs. He says hello to whoever he meets.

He goes a little bit crazy. He's free. He's released. And here's the thing. Not once, not once, has he ever come back to me begging to be put back on the leash.

Never happened. It will never happen. He will never come back to me in the middle of Ruffy Lake Park and beg me to put him back on the leash. Now, this relates to the situation in Galatians very sweetly.

[2:24] Here's what's happening in Galatians. Paul's been there in his first missionary journey. So, you read about that in Acts. He's gone through the Galatia and it's in sort of the southern part of what is now Turkey. And he's planted churches.

He's been evangelizing. People have become Christians. He's taught them the gospel as he knows it, as passed on to him by the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And they've become Christians.

And now it's a year later, like one year later, around the year 48. And the people in those churches are begging to be put back on the leash.

What I mean by that is this. When Paul came along, he preached a gospel of grace and liberty from the law. That they don't need to observe the law in order to be saved.

They don't need to, particularly they don't need to be circumcised in order to be counted as the people of God. And yet, after Paul's gone, a year has passed. And now, they're falling back into their old ways.

[3 : 21] They're believing a perverted gospel that is telling them to get back on that leash of the law. They need to observe the law in order to be right with God. That they need to be circumcised in order to be counted as a Christian.

They're begging to be put back on the leash. And that's where we find ourselves. And Paul's got a lot to say. And he's really, really ticked off. So, let's take a look at it. Verse 1.

We'll just do the first two verses. He says, What Paul's going to say over and over again in this book.

And what we're going to hear over and over again, if you come for the next ten weeks, you're just going to hear a lot of repetition. And that's okay. Because Paul repeats himself a lot. And he says right from the start that the gospel is about Jesus Christ.

If you go away from tonight thinking one thing, learning one thing, is that the gospel is about Jesus Christ. What he has done for us on the cross. Also, in addition to that, over the next few weeks, we're going to see that the gospel is about faith in Jesus Christ.

[4 : 42] Not about works. It's not about what you do. It's about who you have faith in. He also talks about being appointed by God. That he is an apostle. Not appointed by men. Not voted in to the position that he's got.

But appointed by God himself. He also says that the gospel itself, the good news about Jesus that you're going to hear about over and over. It's not invented by humans. No one came up with it one day and wrote it down and palmed it off as the gospel.

No. It came from God himself through Jesus Christ. And also, a major thing we're going to see is that, what I've said already, Christians have been taken off the leash.

They've been set free from the power of sin, from the power of the law. And so, Christianity is all about faith and freedom.

Before we get into the guts of it, I really think I should pray. So, let's bow our heads. Let's pray for God's blessing on us because this is some pretty heavy stuff. Dear Father, we pray that you would please give us eyes to see your truth in this letter to the Galatians.

[5 : 47] Lord, we know that the inclination of our hearts is going to be away from truth. We know that Satan is active in this church to try and distract us from the truth of your word.

That like a little bird, he will try and peck away the seeds of truth that come out of this text. Lord, please bind him up. Lord, please enable us to learn and to grow and to become more like Jesus through the preaching of this word.

We pray for Jesus' sake. Amen. All right, let's continue on. Let's go verse 3 through to 5. He says, And this is the big picture of Galatians.

This is the big idea that the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age. And I reckon this is really important for us to hear because I wonder sometimes when we present the gospel, and I do this all the time, when I tell people the gospel, I say things like, Jesus died on the cross for your sins, to forgive you from your sins.

Your slate has been wiped clean if you put your faith in him. That sounds like a gospel talk, does it? Is that what you say? But I think we miss so much of it if that's all we say.

[7 : 15] Because according to Paul here and throughout the New Testament, Jesus not only died on the cross for our sins, but he also set us free. That if you want to talk about an analogy, maybe you talk about Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There's death and there's resurrection. There's forgiveness of sins and there's liberty and freedom for Christian believers. This is a massive point. I'm going to come back to it right at the end with some points of application.

But you need to know this. God has not only saved you from sin. You're no longer a slave to sin. He has set you free from it. So that if you're sitting here and you are habitually looking at pornography and you cannot stop and you want to stop.

Or if you are drinking every night to excess. If you are beating your wife or girlfriend. If you are sinfully racking up debt.

And you want to stop and you can't and you feel defeated by sin. Well that's not what the Bible says about you. Not that we'll ever be perfect or that we'll ever be free of sin until the new heavens and new earth.

[8 : 25] But actually God in Christ in his death and resurrection has set you free from the power of sin. So that God promises. If you repent. And it does require quite a bit of effort on your behalf.

You need to be serious about overcoming the sin. But God says he will supply the power to you to overcome that sin. This is what we call kind of perseverance.

That God saves you by grace quite apart from your own works. But then he expects great works of you in striding forth in godliness. And so if you're going to be set free from the power of sin as the Bible says that you are.

You need to strive for that day by day. And ask for God's help day by day. The Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins has set us free from the present evil age.

We'll come back to that a little bit at the end. So the question is why is Paul making this big point about freedom in Christ?

[9 : 30] Why is that? I mean in other books of the Bible he wrote this isn't the major point. Why for the Galatians is this the point that he goes to straight away? Answer to that is in the next couple of verses.

Let's look at it. Six. We go six through to seven. And by the way just before we get to this. If you've read Paul's letters before. Paul you'll know that his general style is to do a little introduction.

G'day I'm Paul the Apostle. How are you going? We've heard really good things about you guys. Like even to the Corinthians. Mainly to the Romans. Everyone's heard you know about your faith throughout the world.

You're doing a great job. Here are some things you're not doing so well. But I want to encourage you. Here he's got no commendation at all. He's ticked. Alright. So listen to it.

Verse six and seven. I am astonished. That you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ. And are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another gospel.

[10 : 29] But there are some who are confusing you. And want to pervert the gospel of Christ. He says you guys have turned so quickly away from what you initially inherited as the gospel.

It's been one year since he left them. This should scare us a little bit. That Paul's church took a year to wander away from the truth to another gospel.

We should not think that we're above these people. We've seen it before in churches. In whole kind of regions. That very very quickly people can go from being Bible believing Christians who trust in Jesus alone for their salvation.

Into complete unbelief. It happens. I mean if Paul's your pastor and it happens. Then we've got a lot to worry about. Perhaps not to worry about.

But a lot to be careful about. Let's keep going. How have they wandered away from this faith? He says they've gone from the grace of Christ. That's verse 6. To a different gospel.

[11:32] And the implication there is that they've gone from the gospel of Christ which is about grace. To another gospel which isn't about grace. Do you know what I mean? They've gone from a gospel that says you are saved despite yourself.

In spite of your good works. To a gospel that's teaching them you've got to do this, this and this in order to be saved. That's the key issue. And he says that some are in the end there in verse 7.

Some are confusing you and perverting the gospel of Christ. These are false teachers. Paul was left. False teachers have come in probably from Jerusalem.

They're kind of the big wigs. They're coming in. They've done their doctorate in theology. They've got big churches. They've done the book deals. They're number one on iTunes at the moment. They've come in and said forget about Paul.

He's a little bit crazy. It's not about grace. It's about Jesus. But then there are some other things you need to do. Circumcision being one of them. We're going to see this over the next weeks.

[12:34] What these guys are on about. But Paul says here. Whatever they're saying. It's perverting the gospel of Christ. It's making the gospel of Christ into something entirely different.

It's taking something beautiful and making it utterly abhorrent. It's taking the grace of Christ to us. The gift of Christ. And making it into a burden. And turning people back to slavery.

To the law. Let's keep going. Verse 8 and 9. He says. Even though these false teachers seem to be great men.

He says. But even if we are an angel. That is. It doesn't matter who comes to you. It doesn't matter how great they are. It doesn't matter if they're Billy Graham. Or Mother Teresa. Or the Pope.

It doesn't matter who it is. Even if we. The apostles. Or an angel from heaven. Should proclaim to you a gospel. Contrary to what we proclaim to you. Let that one be accursed.

[13:37] As we've said before. So now I repeat. If anyone proclaims to you a gospel. Contrary to what you received. Let that one be accursed. A few points of clarification here.

And then we'll get to application. Some clarification. First of all. Paul is deadly. Deadly serious right here. Like he's not mucking around at all.

That word accursed. That's the Greek word. Anathema. You might have heard that. If you've looked at anything to do with the Catholic Church. The excommunications. Anathemas. That word means to be damned.

It means to have God's wrath poured out upon you. He's saying. If anyone does what these guys are doing. Even if it's an angel. Even if it's me. Myself. If they lead you away from the gospel.

That we proclaim to you. Let that person go to hell. And be damned forever. It's not mucking around. Point of clarification though on this.

[14:40] You can go overboard. In your damnation of people. Alright. If you've spent any time on the internet. Particularly looking at blogs.

Written by American guys who live in the woods. You'll know what I'm talking about. I did a bit of research. And. There are a lot of people out there.

Who want to throw around this damnation tag. Like. He's a false teacher. He's going to hell. He's a false teacher. And. And. And. I saw it this week. Particularly in. A great hero of mine. Is a guy.

A pastor in America. Called Mark Driscoll. And. His reputation precedes him a little bit. Because he's. He's quite. In the pulpit. He comes across quite. Quite. Across quite rough.

[15 : 36] And. He gets. Hacked down a lot. I mean. He really gets. Pulled down by these guys. These very. Fundamentalist guys. And they will. Say things like. Mark Driscoll is.

Damned. He is accursed. For things like. The fact that he doesn't wear a tie. In the pulpit. Like he wears a t-shirt. And jeans. And. And. For using words. Like naughty words.

Like. Damn. Or. Hell. Or words like that. They will say he is going to hell because of that. If you get the chance to meet him, you'll find that he's a really nice guy.

He's a great father and husband and just a really genuine guy. But they will damn him on account of his style. You can never, ever damn someone on account of their style.

You can never say that church down the road is unchristian because their music is too loud. That's an issue of style. Paul is not talking about style.

[16:37] He's talking about major doctrinal differences between the true gospel and these other gospels that he's talking about. And so the question is, what for us today, what would one of these other gospels be?

It's a good question. Because you might come across one and you need to know which is which, right? Which one to damn, which one to be critical of. You can still be critical of the music being too loud, but you can't say it's unchristian.

So an easy one. Like this is just candy from a baby. It feels kind of weird to do this. I got this off Matt Sheffer, by the way.

This isn't mine. But this is the Book of Mormon. Do we have any Mormons here tonight? That's a shame. So this is the Book of Mormon. And I mean, this is such an easy target for me.

Because let's just take a look at what Paul has said about another gospel that needs to be damned. Ready? He says, first of all, that it is another gospel, apart from the one that was originally preached.

[17 : 36] He also says that even if it's delivered by an angel or someone of great integrity, it still shouldn't be trusted. And he says, another gospel diminishes the grace of Christ.

So what have we got here? Another gospel? I don't know. It says on the front, another testament of Jesus Christ. In other words, another gospel of Jesus Christ. So I think we've got one out of three there.

Are you with me? You can nod your heads. No one's going to blow up your car or your house. Okay. We've got one out of three. The next one was, okay, where did it come from?

According to Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, he said that he was given these gold plates that he translated into this book by the angel Moroni. That's two out of two.

Even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you another gospel. And finally, does it diminish the grace of Christ that salvation comes by faith alone?

[18:41] Absolutely. If you get guys knocking on your door all the time, which I do, which is a lot of fun for me. I love it. But for them, what they're doing is absolutely earning their own salvation.

If you look them in the eye and say, are you going to heaven? They will hesitate. Have they knocked on enough doors? Have they got enough converts? Have they traveled to enough countries? They're unsure.

Another testament of Jesus Christ. Another gospel. Given by an angel. So what? That diminishes the grace of Christ.

That is an easy picking. That's another gospel. That needs to be damned. Right there. What about in your day-to-day interactions with other people?

Maybe even with other Christians. Here's my advice to you in trying to figure out this stuff. The clue to understanding what is absolutely central, like absolutely non-negotiable, is in his words, Paul's words.

[19 : 43] He says, verse 9, as we've said before, so we repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received. Where have we heard that kind of wording before?

If you want to, you can dial it up or I'll just read 1 Corinthians 15, verse 3. Paul says this, For I handed on to you, this is another church, but in a similar way to the Galatians, I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

That is absolutely non-negotiable. That's not tie or no tie. That's not volume of music. That is central Christian doctrine and theology.

There are other areas of theology that are non-negotiable, like the fact that we're sinners in need of grace, like the fact that God is creator, the fact that there is eternal destinies for all of us.

But the absolute non-negotiables are those things right there. Christ died on the cross for our sins. He was buried and on the third day he rose for our salvation.

[21 : 08] Any time you hear someone wanting to mess with that, alarm bells need to ring. The question that you need to ask people who approach you on the street, or people who want to engage you in the workplace, the very simple thing that you want to know is what do they believe about Jesus?

That's going to reveal very quickly where they're at. People might fudge it. Like I got asked by, I think it was the Hari Krishnas.

I don't know, I was in Swanston Street and they came and talked to me and I said, I just said, I was kind of busy, I didn't really want to talk. So I just said, oh, I'm a Christian.

And this guy said, oh yeah, so are we. I was like, what? Really? You're a Christian. And I went to this and I said, so you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, died on the cross for our sins, was buried and was raised for our salvation.

He's like, oh no, no, no, we don't believe that. I was like, well, don't call yourself a Christian because you're not. That's a non-negotiable. So as you navigate the minefield of modern day spirituality, from Oprah through to Deepak Chopra and all the Eastern religions and everything that's cool, the thing that you need to have in your mind every time, what are they saying about Jesus?

[22 : 36] What are they saying about the non-negotiables of the faith? When anyone ever says, like these guys did in Paul's day, that you need Jesus plus something else, or whenever anyone tries to diminish the grace of Christ, or whenever anyone tries to diminish the completed work of Christ on the cross, you need to let them know that they're wrong or run.

We need to be very wary of other Gospels. Final thing by way of application, just to bring us back to that major point of this passage. that Christ not only died for our sins, to save us from our sins, but also was raised for our salvation.

This is something I really want us to look at over the coming weeks. So many of us are burdened by a massive burden of guilt. So many of us are defeated by our habitual sins.

And we're never in this church going to say that you can ever attain perfection. The Bible does say that if you continue in habitual sin, without repentance, that you will not be saved.

The Bible also says that Christ, by His Holy Spirit, can give you power to overcome sin, that you're no longer a slave to the law or to sin. So what we want to do is to help you to overcome those sins in your life.

[24 : 06] It's absolutely a work of God, but it's something that we need to cooperate with. So here's what I'm going to offer to you. I'm going to offer to you the opportunity to pray with someone after the service.

If you want to grab anyone you've seen up here at the front, we'll come and pray with you up the back. We've got an old church there. It's a great place to pray. Additionally, there's other people in church who'd be happy to pray with you.

Also, we're kicking off, particularly for young adults, small groups starting in the start of March. These are great places to pray and to be kept accountable for these sins. That God wants us in community to overcome these things together.

So pray with us after the service. Join a small group. Speak to someone about getting an accountability partner. These are all ways that we can, through the work of the Holy Spirit, overcome our sin.

Christ not only died for your sins, for your forgiveness of sins, but He died so that you might not be a slave to them anymore. All right, we'll leave it there. I'm going to pray for us once more and just ask that God would enable this to be true in our lives.

[25 : 13] Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this book of Galatians, for the strong message that Christianity is about faith and freedom. Lord, please save any one of us now who is tempted to go back to the days of being on a leash, to being slaves of sin, to being slaves of the law.

Lord, please save us from ever thinking that we can add to our own salvation, to ever thinking that coming to church tonight has given us a few more points with you, that being in a small group, that reading the Bible, that doing anything at all has earned us any merit, but rather that we come to you as spiritually bankrupt people in need of grace.

We thank you for the good news of the gospel, that it is good news for hopeless, miserable sinners like us. I pray now for those of us here who are struggling with habitual sin.

Lord, please enable us to get victory over that as we struggle with it day by day, as we pray, as we fast, as we read the Bible, as we are kept accountable by our brothers and sisters.

Lord, please make us strong to overcome sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. I'm just going to stay in...