

The Only Gospel

Sunday 15th October 2023

Last time we considered what it means for the gospel to be whole and how Paul showed us this by reminding us that as long as Jesus is God, we have a gospel that can resurrect us, unify us, and rescue us from the present evil age. Paul opened this letter placing such stress on the integrity of the gospel because we are all weak enough to become bewitched by 'other gospels'.

Paul continues this theme of addressing the issues they faced whilst reminding them (and us) of the gospel in which they first trusted – the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today we will take verses 6 to 10 to identify three things – (1) **where**

our faith has drifted to trust in other good news, (2) the thinking that leads to a drifting faith, and, (3) the sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 says,

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel

Paul clearly identifies the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ – God calling us to new life through the grace of Jesus Christ. He is also clear that it is us who turn from God, not the other way around. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” God doesn't turn, He doesn't change, He remains always the same.

Ask yourself this question: **where would I be if not for the grace of Christ?**

As Paul moves into verse 7, there seems a slightly jarring combination of two ideas. He writes from verse 6 into 7,


turning [...] to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another

What does he mean? If there isn't another how can I turn to another? Let's

listen to a conversation between Peter and Jesus from John 6:66-69,


From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

⁶⁸But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”


 Peter knew there was no one else but Christ who could give him (or any of us) the words of eternal life, words of grace, words of truth – in other words, **only the gospel of Jesus Christ has matchless power to save and transform**, as Paul said in Romans 1:16, ‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.’

 Let’s follow up with second part of verse 7,

but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

 **Other gospels can only trouble us if our belief in Jesus Christ shrinks back from 100%.** The word translated as ‘pervert’ literally means to change the direction of someone. This can only happen when we start to wonder if Christ is enough. Will He really, in the end, save me? How is He enough when the world offers so much ease and comfort? How is He enough when following seems to test me to the point of breaking? Let me bring you the words of Jesus again from John 14:1,

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Paul now reveals how convinced he is of the sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the insufficiency of any other gospel. Or to put it another way – the gospel of Jesus Christ is enough; any other gospel is not enough. What follows  in verse 8 and 9 seals this truth.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

He calls upon these Galatians to realise that if the great apostle Paul or even an angel from heaven starts preaching and sharing another gospel they should be under a curse from God. And he says that twice! Why?

▶ Taking the gospel of Jesus Christ out of this world is like taking the steering wheel out of a car and hoping to get to your destination safely. There would be no hope of resurrection, no hope of lasting peace, and no rescue from this present evil age. It would be gone! And the world would be reduced to a hopeless spinning mess heading towards its own eternal destruction. (Story of Franco Maggiotto and the steering column).

▶ Paul finishes this section with two simple questions. These questions, if we will ask them of ourselves will arrest all kinds of flawed thinking and keep us on the narrow way that leads to life. (Verse 10),

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

▶ The Holman Bible translation helpfully puts the first question as, 'For am I now trying to win the favour of people, or God?' And that is God's question to you today. **Do you want people treating you favourably or do you want God's favour to rest on your life?** What do you want? (You can't have both).

▶ The second question deals with another equal threat to the gospel of Jesus Christ remaining the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Do you want to please people?** I believe people-pleasing is as damaging to our health and well-being more than most physical illnesses. When you want to please people you will constantly be looking to them for their reaction and your eyes will no longer be looking unto Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith. If I am trying to please people I will have to serve them above all others.

Do you want to know what a world looks like that has taken it's eyes off Jesus? Look around you, it is everywhere.

Winning the favour of people can only be temporary – a bit like winning the lottery. And pleasing people will steer us in all kinds of directions and many strange and toxic behaviours will flow from our lives. Both these problems are rooted in a lack of contentment in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Is He enough? If your physical, material, educational, and financial challenges were all frozen in time until you die, would your Christ be enough?

So where do we go from here? How do we avoid this danger of another gospel?

1. If you are feeling like you need the favour of this world, come back to the cross, ask the Lord to rest His favour upon you.
2. If you are people pleasing you need to smash that idol and look again at the words of your Saviour through the gospel of John.
3. Maybe you have never been set free by the only gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say, today is the day of salvation, and Jesus said, whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst again – never thirst for the favour of people, never thirst to please people.
4. Be the only gospel where you are
 - a. Be kind
 - b. Be honest
 - c. Be trustworthy
 - d. Be of good reputation
 - e. Go the extra mile
 - f. Lend hoping for nothing in return
 - g. Love your enemies
 - h. Be a friend to the friendless
5. When it seems like all hope is gone, get on your knees