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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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The Deadly Danger of a False Gospel

Galatians 1:1-10

The story of Martin Luther's spiritual deliverance through the gospel of Jesus Christ is well known to any who study church history

Here was a super-conscientious monk who lived in daily terror of death and hell; he was terrified of the righteous judgment of God on him for his sins

He began his spiritual pilgrimage in a terrifying electrical storm, face-down in the mud, pleading for his life. He was a law student at that point, but all he wanted was to save his soul from the fires of hell. He was terrified the lightning was sent by God to finish his sinful life and hurl him to hell. So he turned to his defective medieval Roman Catholic theology, and pleaded for his life with the patron saint of miners—St. Anne: “Help me, St. Anne... I shall become a monk!”

This was the standard barter system of Roman Catholicism... trading some pattern of works, of obedience, to pay for sins. He entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt and began trying to earn his salvation by a scrupulous life of being an exemplary monk. But no matter how much he prayed and fasted and beat his body and confessed his sins to his priestly confessor, he just grew more and more terrified of the righteous wrath of God against sinners. Nothing could liberate his soul from the bondage of fear... nothing except the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Just when things seemed the blackest, Luther was entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the Bible to students at the Wittenberg University... and the daily exercise of searching the scriptures became eventually the avenue of salvation for him.

He rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith alone... that sinners are made righteous by faith in Christ and not by what they do! It was especially the study of the Book of Romans that taught him the gospel and liberated his soul.

But the Book of Galatians was in some ways even more precious to Luther. In this brief epistle, the Apostle Paul fights against the legalism of the Judaizers, some people who said that faith in Christ was not enough... that you had to add the works of the Law of Moses on top of faith in Christ. Luther was convinced that this is exactly what the false teachers of Roman Catholicism had done with the true gospel of Jesus Christ... added extra burdens on the souls of those Christ came to save... the burdens of religious requirements that were essential to salvation

Luther delighted in the brief, clear, simple, powerful message of Galatians:

“The epistle to the Galatians is MY EPISTLE. To it, I am, as it were, in wedlock. Galatians is my Katie.” (that was his wife’s name)

Every time he read it, it breathed FREEDOM for him... freedom from SATAN’S dark kingdom, from SIN’S CHAINS, from his own guilt and the righteous judgment of God; freedom also from the faulty religious systems that Satan has thrown up to enslave the conscience either to PRIDE on the one hand, or DESPAIR on the other

Luther poured out his convictions in his incredible, history-changing COMMENTARY... one of the most significant Scriptural studies in church history.

Over a century later, John Bunyan, the future author of *Pilgrim’s Progress* discovered Luther’s commentary on Galatians and it set his soul free from the guilt that had plagued it...

Bunyan wrote: “I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all books that I have ever seen.”

I. The Liberating Message of Galatians

A. This Morning, We Begin a Study in Galatians

1. Called “Magna Carta of spiritual freedom”
2. The “Battle Cry of the Reformation”
3. The “Christian’s Declaration of Independence”

B. The Gospel is the Power of God for Salvation

1. All over the world, sin has enslaved people in Satan’s power
2. People are in chains they cannot see and cannot break
3. The only liberation from this enslavement is the gospel of Jesus Christ

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

4. Charles Wesley spoke eloquently of this bondage:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray –
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,

I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee

5. But this liberation comes only through faith in the deliverer, Jesus Christ
6. There are many thrilling “escape” stories in history...
 - a. Escape from Alcatraz: epic and mysterious, how three convicts were able to slip out of a maximum security prison, get to the water’s edge, and float in a manmade raft across frigid, treacherous, shark-infested waters
 - b. “The Great Escape”... from a German POW camp in WWII; March, 1944, 76 Allied POWs escaped through a 102 meter long tunnel; it was made into a hit movie with Steve McQueen
 - c. Harry Houdini was known as an astonishing escape artist... his most daring escape was the famous “Chinese Water Torture Cell” in which he was held upside-down in a glass tank, in full view of the audience, with his feet manacled in steel stocks...
7. But these escapes are all thrilling stories that leave us astonished at the people who do the escaping... the stories are told to the glory of the prisoner who escapes
8. Self-salvation through good works is exactly the same: the story would be told eternally of how we saved ourselves from Satan, sin, death, and hell by this or that act of kindness, or courage, or cleverness, or obedience
9. Jesus Christ liberates sinners from Satan’s power and from their sins and from the hell that they deserve... but He does it in such a way that He alone gets the glory
10. So, God ordained justification by faith as the centerpiece of the gospel

Romans 1:17 For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

11. Galatians was written to refute a false gospel that was based on human works of obedience, not on faith

C. Galatians Emphasizes the Liberation by Christ... it is the Epistle of Freedom

1. Vs. 4

Galatians 1:3-4 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age

2. Galatians 2:4

Galatians 2:4 This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

3. Galatians 5:1

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

4. Galatians 5:13

Galatians 5:13 For you are called to freedom, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.

D. Context: The Churches of Galatia

1. The name “Galatians” is derived from the barbarian Gauls or Celts who settled in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) after centuries of plundering the Greeks and Romans
2. The Roman Empire made the province of Galatia a part of Asia Minor
3. Paul visited the region on his first missionary journey with Barnabas, going to the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; while Paul had been in Galatia, he almost died for the work of Christ; he was stoned and left for dead by hostile Jewish leaders who followed him from Antioch and Iconium to Lystra
4. At the end of that first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas revisited the small churches he had planted and strengthened the disciples to continue in the faith
5. Before his second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas took part in the Jerusalem Council on the circumcision controversy (Acts 15)
6. That controversy is a HUGE part of the issue in the Book of Galatians, and we’ll get to that in a moment
7. After the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Silas visited the Galatian churches, delivering the decrees of the Council for all the believers to obey... Acts 16:1-5 says the churches in that region were strengthened in the faith and were growing daily in numbers
8. Paul wrote this letter to ALL the churches in Galatia, not just one church (like in Corinth)

9. He was writing because, after he'd left, some false teachers had come and were disturbing their faith

II. False Teachers Enslave the Church

A. Consistent Warnings in Scripture

1. Jesus' warnings

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

Matthew 24:10-11 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

2. Paul's warnings

Acts 20:29-30 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

3. Peter's warnings

2 Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them-- bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

4. John's warnings

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

B. Who Were the Judaizers?

1. They were enemies within the camp... Jews who claimed to be Christians but who were really preaching a so-called gospel of good works mixed with faith in Christ
2. The trigger issue: circumcision as a doorway to a full life of obedience to the Laws of Moses

Acts 15:5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

THAT SUMS UP THE JUDAIZER'S MESSAGE

Circumcision was a doorway into a life of comprehensive obedience to the Laws of Moses... a burdensome life that no one has ever been able to handle

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

3. Jerusalem Council made their views clear... and the apostles and elders came to a clear decision

Acts 15:6-11 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

4. Paul mentions them in Philippians...

Philippians 3:2-3 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-

5. Galatians is the clearest exposition of the false doctrine... and of its remedy, the true gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone

Galatians 2:14-16 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? ¹⁵ "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

C. Opposite Enslaving Dangers: Legalism and License

1. False teachers in the NT generally go two directions

2. In Galatians and Colossians, they are teaching legalism: that only by obeying the laws of God can we be saved; present obedience to the law will cover past disobedience
3. In Peter, the false teachers are saying that salvation means you are free to live however you want... they preached freedom from all of God's laws—license

2 Peter 2:18-19 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

D. The Most Popular Religion in the World: Self-Salvation

1. Other than genuine Christianity, all other religions in the world are offering some form of works salvation... self-salvation
2. Islam is the most legalistic religion in the world... it's all about the five pillars of Islam: the reciting of the creed, the five times of prayer, the giving of alms to the poor, the fast at Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca... this is how Muslims expect to go to Paradise
3. Buddhism is about self-salvation through meditation and self-denial

For a Buddhist salvation is reaching Nirvana. Nirvana is a transcendental, blissful, spiritual state of nothingness--you become a Buddha.

To reach Nirvana you must follow the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is:

1. Right Understanding: accepting the Four Noble Truths. (The existence of suffering; the cause of suffering; the end of suffering; and the end of pain.)
2. Right Resolve: renounce the pleasures of the body. Change your lifestyle so that you harm no living creatures and have kind thoughts for everyone.
3. Right Speech: do not gossip, lie or slander anyone.
4. Right Action: do not kill, steal or engage in an unlawful sexual act.
5. Right Occupation: avoid working at any job that could harm someone.
6. Right Effort: heroically work to eliminate evil from your life. Through your own effort develop good conduct and a clean mind.
7. Right Contemplation: make your self aware of your deeds, words and thoughts so that you can be free of desire and sorrow.

8. Right Meditation: train your mind to focus on a single object without wavering so as to develop a calm mind capable of concentration.

Following the Noble Eightfold Path requires that a person do the above eight things. Salvation is through what a Buddhist does. It is through human works.

4. Hinduism:

Salvation for a Hindu is called Moksha. Moksha is when an enlightened human being is freed from the cycle of life-and-death (the endless cycle of death and reincarnation) and comes into a state of completeness. He then becomes one with God.

There are four ways to Moksha:

1. The Way of Action: This involves carrying out certain religious ceremonies, duties and rites. The objective is to perform works without regard for personal gain.
2. The Way of Knowledge: This requires using your mind and philosophy to come to a complete comprehension of the universe.
3. The Way of Devotion: Salvation is reached through acts of worship, based upon the love for a God (there are thousands of gods in Hinduism).
4. The Royal Road: The use of meditation and yoga techniques. This method of reaching salvation is typically only used by wandering monks.

Each of these ways to salvation in Hinduism requires that a person do certain things. Salvation is through what a Hindu does. It is through human works

5. Cults: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. all basically works-righteousness
6. Other philosophies and approaches to life all emphasize moralism—being a good person by some standard, helping others
7. Only Christianity teaches justification by faith alone

III. Paul's Apostolic Greeting (vs. 1-5)

A. Paul Establishes His Apostleship: Sent Not from Men

Galatians 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--² and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia:

1. "An APOSTLE": Paul here asserts his authority and right to teach doctrine and correct false patterns of thinking and living
 - a. An apostle is one who is sent from a higher authority... an emissary, an ambassador
 - b. This is the bone of his contention with the false teachers, both here and in Corinth: by discrediting his authority, they discredit his message
 - c. Paul wants them to know that his role was given him directly by God and by Jesus Christ
 - d. Even more importantly, he wants them to know that the gospel he preached is the TRUE gospel from God... the only message of salvation for the entire human race
2. Paul did not get his apostleship from any human source... he wasn't recruited by any people, he wasn't trained by anyone
3. Paul was called into this ministry directly by Jesus Christ, and through him, by God the Father
 - a. Paul (Saul) was a bitter enemy of the gospel and of Jesus Christ
 - b. He makes his appearance in the Bible as a young man who approved of Stephen's death by stoning
 - c. He then goes around destroying the church... dragging off Christians and throwing them in prison
 - d. He gained letters of authority from the Sanhedrin to go to Damascus and arrest Christians there

Acts 9:3-6 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

4. When Paul arose, he was blinded; Paul began praying fervently for God to spare him; Christ made his mission clear to him

Acts 22:21 "Go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:16-18 I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to

God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

5. This was confirmed to Ananias

Acts 9:15-16 the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

6. When Ananias went to heal his blindness and baptize him, he said:

Acts 22:14-15 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵ You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

7. This is what Paul means by "Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by men but by Jesus Christ

8. The RESURRECTION is essential to this calling:

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead

a. Because a living Christ appeared to him on the Road to Damascus, that was conclusive evidence that Jesus was truly the Son of God

b. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was the centerpiece of the gospel and of Paul's own joy and hope

B. "Grace and Peace to You"

1. Standard apostolic greeting, but in Galatians, it takes on a little more significance

2. Grace = more than unmerited favor, but it is God's determination to do us infinite good, we who deserved infinite punishment; this determination to save us and give us eternal blessing is always given us IN CHRIST

3. There is salvation by GRACE vs. salvation by WORKS

4. Grace will be the operative principle that Paul will be preaching in this epistle

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

C. The Deliverance of the Gospel

Galatians 1:3-5 *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

1. A brief summary of the saving work of Jesus Christ
2. Jesus “GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS”
 - a. Substitutionary atonement... he died in our place
 - b. He laid down his life for us...
3. “To rescue us from the present evil age”
 - a. This is the deliverance I was mentioning at the beginning of the sermon
 - b. We were slaves, in bondage to sin and Satan and death... headed for hell
 - c. Christ DELIVERED US from all of that by his death
 - d. “this present evil age” = the world of rebellion and sin under Satan’s dominion

Colossians 1:13 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves*

Ephesians 2:1-3 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

4. Think of the POWER of that statement!!!
 - a. Christ by his death on the cross... by his giving himself for our sins HAS DELIVERED US from the present evil age
 - b. ALL ACCORDING TO THE WILL of God the Father... it was God’s WILL for Christ to rescue you
 - c. That deliverance is from Satan’s power, sin’s power, death’s power, hell’s power
 - d. That defeats legalism AND license
 - e. We are free from sin, so that we are now free to serve God fully

- f. This “freedom” is not the freedom the libertine teachers Peter was writing against claim it is... it is the power to do what is right in God’s sight

D. To God be the Glory

Galatians 1:4-5 according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1. This is the point of it all
2. Salvation by law results in human boasting
3. Salvation by grace through faith in Christ means God gets all the glory!!

IV. Paul’s Bitter Astonishment (vs. 6)

Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- ⁷ which is really no gospel at all.

A. Paul’s Usual Pattern: Warm Thankfulness

1. Paul usually begins by thanking God for the people he’s writing to

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

Ephesians 1:15-16 ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

2. He does this in every single case BUT THIS ONE!!
3. Amazingly, he even thanks God for the Corinthians, who were screwed up in so many ways...

1 Corinthians 1:4-6 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way-- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-- ⁶ because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.

4. Why? It’s because of the seriousness of changing the gospel message itself!!

B. Here: Abrupt Astonishment; a Severe Rebuke

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel

1. The word translated “astonished” is very strong...

2. Usually used to refer to a crowd's reaction to a miracle by Jesus
3. He's astonished not only that they are DESERTING GOD (the one who called them by grace), but that they are doing it SO QUICKLY
4. We have no idea the time frame here, but it seems to have shocked Paul
5. This isn't several generations later; this isn't even several decades later
6. It's like a newlywed that sneaks out on her wedding night to go be with another man... the timing is STUNNING to Paul
7. So also the sense of personal desertion
 - a. Paul had invested in preaching the true gospel to these people
 - b. And he must have felt a sense of personal wrong
 - c. But it wasn't really him they were rejecting

As God said to Samuel when the people of Israel demanded that he give them a king:

1 Samuel 8:7 And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.

C. Deserting God for a "Different Gospel"

1. They have turned their backs on God who called them by the grace of Christ
2. Instead, they are running after a false "gospel"
3. The word "gospel" literally means "GOOD NEWS"
4. But Paul says the Judaizers' so-called "gospel" is no gospel at all

D. But... that "Gospel" is "No Gospel at All"

1. How could it possibly be good news that the death of Jesus is just the beginning of forgiveness from God; that His blood shed on the cross is INSUFFICIENT to cover your sins
2. How could it possibly be good news that you have to save yourself from now on by carefully obeying all the Law of Moses?
3. What is the GOOD NEWS here? No one can do it!!!
4. This legalistic message is NO GOSPEL AT ALL!

E. Grace and Law are Opposites

1. We're either saved by the grace of God in Christ or we're saved by our own efforts
2. Salvation by law is the way we could save ourselves by our efforts... but only if we have perfectly obeyed the law from childhood on
3. The law made no provision for genuine forgiveness

Hebrews 7:18-19 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect)

Hebrews 10:4 it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

V. Paul's Curse on the False Teachers (vs. 7-9)

A. Satan Sends Messengers of Confusion

Galatians 1:7 Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

1. The beauty of pure biblical teaching is the clarity of mind that it brings
2. Everything suddenly makes sense!! You understand at last both the big picture of God's creation and rulership over all things AND how you fit into that
3. This clarity of mind is a gift of the Holy Spirit that comes when He makes you a new creation
4. It's likened to being blind and then being able suddenly to see

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see!"

5. But Satan is the "god of confusion"... and so his servants spread confusion by raising questions and contradicting sound doctrine
 - a. The Greek word here is *tarrasso*: to trouble or agitate or cause inward commotion, to disturb one's peace of mind
 - b. He does it here
6. Just as Satan in the Garden of Eden assaulted Eve with three things
 - a. Questioning God's Word: "Did God really say...???"
 - b. Contradicting God's Word: "You will not surely die!"

c. Telling half-truths in the service of a lie: “God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil!”

7. So Satan’s false teachers spread confusion in the same way

a. Judaizers: “Yes, Jesus saves you! Yes, He is the true Messiah! Yes, He is the Son of God...” But you still have to earn your own salvation by keeping the Law of Moses!!

b. They have fine-sounding arguments, but they leave confusion in their wake

c. They are PERVERTING the truth and confusing the minds of God’s people

B. Paul’s Curse on Anyone—Angel or Man—Who Preaches a False Gospel

Galatians 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

1. This is the most severe thing that Paul could have said

2. He reaches for extreme language... even if an angel should come down in blinding light and preach a different message, let that angel be eternally condemned

3. Remember 2 Corinthians 11

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

4. He even includes himself... if WE should return to your town with a new message, may we be condemned

5. Strongest possible language... OT version was “set apart for destruction” under the wrath of God

6. Like Joshua and the City of Jericho under the “herem” of God... the ban

Joshua 6:17 But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction.

7. So any teacher of a false gospel is liable to eternal destruction!!

C. Paul Repeats His Curse for Emphasis

Galatians 1:9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

VI. Paul's Ultimate Goal: To Please God (vs. 10)

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

A. Falsely Accused of Being a People-Pleaser

1. The Pharisees claimed Paul had abandoned Judaism to be popular with Gentiles
2. They said he was eating and drinking with Gentile dogs just to win their approval
3. Paul is about to spend the rest of the chapter proving that he got his message directly from God; even more importantly, the entire purpose of the gospel itself is the glory of God... God is the audience for everything

B. The Shoe is on the Other Foot: The Judaizers are living for human praise

1. In actuality, it was the Judaizers who were living to please a human audience... the Sanhedrin was the Jewish audience; the religious power elite who gave out the treats to those who dance according to their tune
2. Jesus exposed those Pharisees plainly, and how they loved to call the tune for everyone, and woe to you if you refused to dance to it
3. Later in Galatians, we will see how these legalists even intimidated Peter into changing his behavior patterns
4. Amazingly, legalists are very attractive to people: they are very certain of God's favor, very confident that they know what God wants everyone to do all the time; it's very daunting to appear to be the liberal one, the one loosening the standard
5. Paul had to be very confident that God was speaking this message of freedom, of grace... "No, you don't have to be circumcised. No, you don't have to obey the ceremonial Laws of Moses. No, you don't have to follow the dietary regulations. Yes, you are free to associate with Gentile non-Christians and to eat with them in their homes."
6. The legalists stand off and gasp in horror at each assertion... It takes a real God-centered focus to face the legalists unafraid and say, "God is leading to a new phase of church ministry."

C. False Prophets Tickle the Ears... and their Disciples Seek to Please Them

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

2 Timothy 4:3 *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*

D. Ultimate Goal: Pleasing God

1. God does everything for the praise of His glorious grace
2. Legalism is intrinsically man-centered
3. Paul had to keep his eyes on pleasing God and God alone... he is willing to be persecuted for right doctrine

Galatians 5:11 *Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?*

E. Yet... a Balance: "All things to all people" vs. "People-pleasing"

1. Here, he clearly gives pleasing God the top priority
2. BUT all ministry is built on pleasing people too... no preacher or missionary seeks to anger every person he talks to... they want a favorable response
3. Note what Paul says in 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 9:20-22 *To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

4. BALANCE: please God first (by not changing the message of the gospel, no matter how offensive it is); then, please people however you can without violating God's standard

VII. Applications

- A. Come to Christ!
- B. Treasure the Gospel... the Freedom of Justification by Faith Alone
- C. FBC: Let's Not Give Up on Sound Doctrine While We Try to Grow in Weak Areas
- D. Learn to Resist Legalism... to Seek to Please God, Not Men
- E.