

Different Gospel

Galatians 1:6-10 (New American Standard Bible)

Distortion of the Gospel

⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different** gospel, ⁷ which is not just **another** account; but there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of people, or of God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Introduction

Go to the Scripture lesson today in your bulletin: Go to verse 6 and circle the word “different” and write down “heteros” right next to the word. Go to verse 7 and circle “another” and write down “allos” next to it. We will come back to them later.

Background of the text: Inspired by God’s Spirit, Apostle Paul has written today’s text. Speaking of Paul, he was an itinerant preacher. That means, he didn’t stay in one place for a long time. Sometimes he stayed in one place for three months, other times six months to 2 years. He was always on the move. For years, with the gospel message, he would go around different provinces and towns crisscrossing the Roman Empire. From Greece to Turkey. From Jerusalem to Rome. The Mediterranean Sea was his backyard.

One of the regions he spread the gospel was Galatia (modern day central Turkey). He started a congregation there and moved onto the next place. When he was away, some Jewish believers came down to the church in Galatia and taught the believers that their faith in Christ wasn’t enough for their salvation. Circumcision, they insisted, was a must for their salvation. Understandably, it confused and misled the believers in the church who never heard Paul their teacher talking about it. Paul taught them: you are by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Completely and thoroughly. No other requirements. No other conditions.

When they heard of this circumcision requirement, some decided to wait for Paul to clarify things. Others, however, accepted this new teaching and agreed to be circumcised for their salvation. Right away. When Paul heard about what was going on in Galatia in his absence, he was quite upset and wrote a letter to the Galatian believers. That’s the letter we read today. We read the few verses in the first chapter. Let me read the verses one more time for you:

⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different** gospel, ⁷ which is not just another account; but there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be **accursed!** ⁹ As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be **accursed!**

See the tone of his letter. Very strong! Really strong! Whoever is preaching a different gospel, Paul utters, he is to be accursed! Those who preach a different gospel from what I had preached, Paul cries out, let them be accursed. He repeated twice such a strong condemnation (v. 8, 9)! Boy, he sure was adamant about the gospel he preached, wasn't he?

Now, please turn to your bulletin. I asked you to write down two Greek words: 'heteros' and 'allos.' Paul called the teaching that requires circumcision for salvation a "heteros gospel (v. 6)." 'Heteros' means, *different kind*: E.g. apple and orange. Beef and pork. They may not look much different from each other outside, but totally different kind. Like Paul's gospel and the circumcision gospel. The other gospel is not acceptable and must be rejected.

Another Greek word 'Allos' (v. 7): 'another' yet in *the same kind*: E.g. apples (Washington, Granny Smith, Fuji, Royal Gala). It's like John's Gospel, Luke's Gospel, Peter's letters, Paul's letters, and so forth. They may highlight different emphasis, but they are the same gospel. They are acceptable.

Applications:

Throughout the Christian history, there have been 'heteros' gospels and teachings. E.g. Jesus was a spirit, not in the flesh. E.g. 2. There is no resurrection.

Even today, there are 'heteros' teachings/teachers out there even in the Church of Jesus Christ. Here's one example.

Falsehood: If the teaching says that as long as you are a good moral person, regardless of your choice of religion, you go to Heaven.

Truth: no one ever becomes so righteous before God through their own goodness that they automatically enter into Heaven. The only thing that ensures our entry to Heaven is God's *grace* (gift) through our *faith* (not works) in *Jesus'* name (Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9).

You may argue, "Pastor, that's not fair. There are many nice people who are far nicer than Christians. You mean, such good people go to Hell because they don't believe in Jesus?" Yes, folks. That is the truth of God. God sets up that way. Jesus *said to him, "I am

the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father except through Me**” (John 14:6). Here’s why it is so. Seeing Him is seeing God (John 14:9). He is equal to God (John 1:1, Philippians 2:6). Not knowing Him is not knowing God (John 16:3). Hating Him is hating God (John 15:23). Rejecting Him means rejecting God who sent Him (John 15:21). That’s why no one comes to the Father except through Jesus.

You may also argue, “What about those folks who had/have no chance to hear about the name Jesus in their entire lives? God shouldn’t send them to Hell, should He?” You are right on this account. Please remember that God will be fair to all. He is the fairest of all. For instance, to those who haven’t had a chance to hear the gospel or the name of Jesus at all in their life time, God would be fair and will apply different standards for judgment. They will be judged either by the God-given conscience (Romans 2:15—conscience judgment) or by the Law (for the Jews). However, here’s one Scripture to keep in mind: the gospel was preached to those souls who had lived and died before Jesus was born (1 Peter 3:19). The bottom-line is this: no one will be able to complain that God is unfair.

Two things to consider:

1. Understanding of being good/moral. Ask yourself: being good and moral in whose eyes? In whose standards? Yours or God’s? The world’s or the Word of God? Very likely, we go with the morality in human eyes. The standards of our own, not God’s. Furthermore, we focus only how it appears outside. Not inside. Remember God looks inside of our heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Not outside. Before you complain about God’s unfairness of having Christ as the only way to Heaven, consider how vastly different God’s standards are from your own understanding of good and bad. Jesus says, ²⁷“*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matthew 5:27-28).

E.g. 2. You may say, “I am not a murderer, because I’ve never committed such a horrible crime.” However, did you know that if you hate someone in your heart, in God’s eyes, you are a murderer (1 John 3:15)? Just remember God doesn’t use our goodness as the yardstick for salvation because all of us would fail. Rather, He uses faith in Christ that everyone and anyone can satisfy the condition of salvation.

2. What about hypocrites in the church? Will they be in Heaven because they confess that Jesus is their Lord? E.g. One employer cheated on the employee’s social security taxes for years. The employer claimed to be a Christian. Will she go to Heaven, simply because she intellectually agrees with the gospel message and even calling Jesus her Lord? The answer is ‘No.’ Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23: not everyone who calls Him Lord will enter God’s Kingdom, but only those who do the will of Heavenly Father.

Conclusion

Paul’s strongest language ever: *whoever is preaching the ‘heteros’ gospel, he is to be accursed*. Why is he so deadly opposed to the ‘heteros’ gospel? Because our eternal life is at

stake. Also, the 'heteros' gospels distort and contradict the true gospel that Paul had received directly from God through revelation (Galatians 1:12). You may think Paul was so intolerant with others and harsh against 'heteros' teachings, but, can you really blame him who wouldn't hesitate to condemn false teachings and teachers, all because our eternal destination is at stake?

We ought to hold onto the genuine gospel in the Church today. Beware of false teachers who would teach that you can still be a Christian even though you don't believe in resurrection. Beware of the false teaching that there are other ways to be saved besides Jesus. Guard against other salvation requirements such as our own good deeds or circumcision. Remember genuine gospel requires only faith in Christ and recognizes no other name but Jesus for our salvation. Amen.