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No Other Gospel

1: 6-10

No other gospel DIG: What were the believers in Galatia doing that caused Paul to write this letter? Why would a person who was set free from slavery want to go back to slavery? What does it mean to “fall from grace?” What is a God-fearer? How is a God-fearer different than a Proselyte at the Gate, or a Proselyte of the Covenant (see Acts, **to see link click Bb - An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**)? Why did Paul assert his authority? What happened to those churches that Paul himself had begun (Acts 13-14)? What elements of the gospel does Paul stress? Why? Otherwise, what might happen due to the distorted gospel (4:8-11, 6:12-13 and 17)? What accusation is Paul refuting in verse 10? How might Paul be labeled as a “pleasure-pleaser?” With this opening gauntlet thrown down, what do you expect to find in this red-hot letter?

REFLECT: Grace is God’s unearned favor and activity in our lives. How have you seen His unearned favor and activity in your life? What “distorted gospel” upsets you most? Why? How can the Galatians help you refute it? There are those today who would add baptism, or immersion, to faith; others add speaking in tongues; others add certain ceremonies; others add church membership and repentance. Yes, the Bible commands us to be baptized, but immersion itself is never said to be added for salvation. Have you encountered any of this false teaching? What did you do? How did you react? How can you help others avoid such a trap? How would you explain the gospel to someone who asked you today what you believe?

Apostasy means slowly drifting from the seashore of faith on a raft of doubt, driven by the winds of disappointment and carried by the currents of false teaching.

After **Paul’s** salutation, the urgency and severity of the matter at hand prohibited

him from commending **his** readers, which was **his** normal custom. Not wasting any time, **he** declared: **I am amazed that you are so quickly (Exodus 32:8; Judges 2:17) turning away from the simple gospel** (Greek: *heteros*) of **faith in Messiah, the One who called you by grace, to a different gospel** (Greek: *allos*). In **1:6 Paul** used two Greek words, both of which mean **another**, but have a distinct meaning of their own. **He** was not surprised by what **the false teachers** were doing but was shocked by the favorable response **they** received from **the believers in Galatia**. *Heteros* means *another of a different kind*, and *allos* means *another of the same kind*. *Heteros* sometimes refers however, not only to *difference in kind*, but it can also speak to *difference in character*. And since **Paul's** doctrine of **grace through faith is God's truth (Ephesians 2:8)**, anything that differs from **it** must be false. Anytime works are added to the simple gospel of salvation = **faith** + nothing, it is **a different gospel**.

When **Paul** speaks of **the Galatians** turning to a *heteros* **gospel**, **he** means that **they** are turning to a **gospel** that is false in **its** doctrine. It is not only *different in character* from **the gospel he** preached to **the Galatians**, but **it** was *different* in a bad way. It was, and is, essentially evil. A salvation-by-works is not **Good News** to a lost sinner, it is bad news, capable of drawing to sh'ol people who began on the road to salvation. Thus, **Paul** stamps the message of **the Judaizers (to see link click Ag - Who Were the Judaizers)** as a false doctrine. Then **he** says that it is not **an *allos* gospel**. **It** is not only *a different kind*, **it** is no **gospel** at all.¹⁷

This **different gospel** reminds us of **the strange fire** whose offering before **Ha'Shem** led to the deaths of **Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 3:4 and 26:61)**. The penalty for declaring a message not from **God** – one of the signs of a false prophet – was death (**Deuteronomy 13:6a, 18:20; Jeremiah 23:9-40, 28:1-17**). As believers, we don't execute false teachers, but the principle in the TaNaKh is still valid today as it was in **Paul's** day: **You will purge the evil [one] from your midst (Deuteronomy 13:6b)**.

There is no modern substitute for the **gospel**. Some today may speak about a "social gospel," a "new gospel," or some other kind of "gospel," but there is only one **gospel** and it is **a timeless message of Good News to proclaim to those who dwell upon the earth (Revelation 14:6)**. The idea that there is an absolute truth that matters absolutely is the constant basis for both the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah. Any other view relegates the Word of God to the category of "great literature" or "valuable historical evidence" or "wise sayings of great men and women." It is all of these, but, more than that, it is **YHVH's** unique Word to

humanity, containing the only completely reliable guide toward everlasting life and away from everlasting death.

It becomes clear in what follows that the particular bad news to which **the Galatians** had been exposed is **works righteousness**, which is the false principle that **Ha'Shem** grants acceptance to people, considers them **righteous** and worthy of being in **His** presence, on the ground of their obedience to a set of rules, apart from putting their **trust** and **faith** in **Messiah**, relying on **Him**, loving **Him**, and accepting **His** love for them.¹⁸

It is important to understand, however, that if a Messianic believer desires to eat kosher food, celebrate the feasts of **Isra'el**, or any other of the 613 commandments of the Torah. They have the freedom in **Messiah** to do so just as long as those actions are viewed as merely following **ADONAI's** blueprint for living (see the commentary on **Exodus Dh - Moses and the Torah**), and have nothing to do with salvation.

Not that there is another, but only some who are confusing you and want to distort the Good News of Messiah (1:7). What were some of these things that were of **a different gospel** that we will explore later? The first was perfection in **the flesh (3:3)**; the second was adding the observance of special **days and months and seasons and years to the gospel (4:10)**; thirdly, **the Judaizers** added **circumcision to the Gospel** for Gentiles **(5:2)**; **they** felt that **they** were **justified by** means of **Torah**, which is **a different gospel (5:4)**.

Then **Paul** reiterated the principle of **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** when **he** said: **But even if we (or an angel from heaven) (1:8a). The rabbis teach that angels were instrumental in the giving of the Torah. Paul** would later write to the **Corinthians that even satan masquerades as an angel of light (Second Corinthians 11:14)**, and **he** probably had such thoughts in mind here. Likewise, there is a flood of literature in Ancient **Judaism** indicating that **angels** delivered important messages to people, and **the Judaizers** may have said that **their** message was received from **an angel from heaven**.¹⁹

Should announce any gospel to you other than what we have proclaimed to you, let that person be cursed, or in the Greek, *anathema* (1:8b)! The biblical incident that this most obviously refers to is **Achan, the troubler of Isra'el who unfaithfully** (Hebrew: *ma'al*) **violated the ban of devoted things (1 Chron 2:7)**. The Greek word *anathema* comes from the Hebrew concept of

cherem, meaning *untouchable and devoted for destruction*.

The *cherem* judgment was the ban that **Ha'Shem** placed upon the city of Jericho in the days of **Joshua**. While **the Israelites** were allowed to take the spoils of war from other cities, **YHVH** told **Joshua** that nothing was to be taken from Jericho because it was under the *cherem* judgment. But when **Achan** decided to take **a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels and buried them in the ground in the middle of his tent, he and his whole family became cherem** because **they** had touched that which was *devoted to destruction*. As a result, **Isra'el** lost a second battle at **Ai (Josh 7:4-5)**. Also, there was no way **Isra'el** could win any more wars until they found out who was **cursed**. Then **God** directed **Joshua** to the guilty **tribe**, the guilty **clan**, the guilty **family**, and finally the guilty **man (Josh 7:16-23)**.

Then Joshua, and all Isra'el with him, took Achan, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, and his sheep to the Valley of Achor and stoned them all to death, burned them with fire, and buried them along with the silver, the Babylonian robe, and the wedge of gold under a great heap of stones that stands to this day. Then ADONAI turned from the fierceness of His anger (Joshua 7:24). The family, having touched the untouchable, then became *devoted to destruction*. Now, **Paul** used very strong language here, and **he** must use very strong language because **he** was not addressing small theological differences, or denominational differences, **he** was dealing with something that touches the essence of **the gospel**. Either we are saved by **faith** alone, or we are not saved by **faith** alone. There is no middle ground. The addition of anything in **the gospel** other than **faith** is to be declared *cherem, untouchable, and devoted to destruction* because it touches the very essence of **the gospel**.

But what are the "other gospels" that we face today? There are primarily three of them. First, there is the "prosperity gospel." This "gospel" says that if you just believe enough, it is not God's will for anyone to have a physical or financial need. If you have a problem with your heart, it will go away; if you have a problem with your finances, it will go away if you just have enough **faith**. And if it doesn't go away, the problem is you. You don't have enough **faith**. That is **a different gospel**. **God** is not anyone's spiritual vending machine. You can't play **God** and determine your own destiny. **He** is sovereign and holy, controlling the events in our lives.

Secondly, there is the "bargaining gospel." This is the "quid-pro-quo gospel." **God**,

“if” **You’ll** get me out of this mess, “then” I’ll serve **You. God**, “if” **You** heal me of this disease “then” I’ll attend services more regularly. **God**, “if” **You** fix my financial problem, “then” I’ll tithe. “If” You do this, “then” I’ll do that. But let me tell you something. You don’t have anything that **God** needs. **He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10)**. You have no chips at the poker table of life. You have nothing to bargain with when it comes to **God**. But more than that, you need everything that **God** has, and everything **He** offers you. People who use the “bargaining gospel” wash their hands of **God** when they feel like **He** hasn’t lived up to **His** end of the deal.

This is merely **a different gospel**.

Thirdly, there is “gospel light.” Some people will tell you part of **the gospel**, part of **the truth**, but not **the whole gospel**, and that makes it **a different gospel**. They love to say, “**God** loves you.” And **He** does (**John 16:27**). And they will say, “**God** has a plan for you.” And **He** does (**Jeremiah 29:11**). So, while the whole truth is that **God** loves you just as you are, **He** loves you too much to leave you just as you are. At the moment of **faith** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**), **He** begins a process of conforming you into **His** image. **He** begins to sanctify you. We need to accept that we are sinners, repent of our sin, turn around and go in a different direction, believing that **Yeshua is the Messiah**, who died on the cross for us, and rose on the third day (**John 3:16**). That is **the only gospel**. There is only one way to **God the Father** and that is through **Yeshua His Son**. These other “gospels” are *untouchable and devoted to destruction*.

Whether as restrictive legalism, permissive liberalism, or cultic perversion, any teaching that adds to, or takes away from **ADONAI’s** revealed truth is a **distortion** of **the simple gospel** and perverts the nature and work of **Messiah**.²⁰ **Paul** then applied the ban which **Achan** violated to those who were **confusing (5:10b)** his disciples: **As we have said before, so I now repeat: if anyone proclaims a gospel to you other than what you have received, let that person be under a curse (Greek: anathema) (1:9)!**



From the very beginning, the battle between good and evil has been a battle for truth. The serpent, in the Garden of Eden, began his temptation by questioning the truthfulness of **God's** previous instructions (**Genesis 3:1, 4-5**). Casting doubt on the straightforward revelation of **ADONAI** has been the Adversary's tactic ever since (**John 8:44; Second Corinthians 11:44**). With eternity at stake, it is no wonder Scripture reserves its harshest word of condemnation for those who would put lies in the mouth of **God**. Consider **Ha'Shem's** attitude toward those who would exchange **His** true Word for a counterfeit (**Isaiah 30:9-13; Jeremiah 5:29-31, 14:14-16; Ezekiel 13:3-9**). **YHVH** hates those who misrepresent **His** Word or speak lies in **His** name. It is an offense that **He** takes personally, and **His** retribution is swift and deadly. To sabotage biblical truth in any way – by adding to it, subtracting from it, or mixing it with error, is to invite divine wrath.²¹ So **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** inspired **Paul** to write: **If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be *anathema*, or cursed! Come, Lord (First Corinthians 16:22)!**

The Judaizers accused **Paul** of **trying to win people's approval**, in this case Gentile approval, by preaching an "easy" **gospel** that did not demand that the Gentiles become Jews and thus be required to be circumcised and observe all 613 commandments of **the Torah**. But **Paul** responded to **them** by asking: **Am I now trying to win people's approval, or God's? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Messiah (1:10)?** It was as if **Paul** were saying, "Hey, I am not doing this to make friends. I am not preaching **to please** other **people**. I am preaching the message that **Messiah** gave **me** to preach." In this statement, **he** was answering certain critics that we know from the book of **Acts**. **Paul** was criticized because **he** was a zealous keeper of **the Torah** (see **Acts Cy - Paul's Witness before Agrippa**), while continuing to believe in **the Way**. So, **his** enemies would criticize **him** by saying that to **the Jews** **he** claimed to be **Torah** observant, but **he** told the Gentiles not to be **Torah** observant. **They** accused **him** of the means justifying the ends for **his**

own ministry. To win **Jews** he kept **the Torah**, to win Gentiles he set aside **the Torah**. But they misunderstood **Paul's** position. While **Paul** was **Torah** observant, he never made it mandatory for others.²²

Believers are to have nothing to do with false teachers, no matter what their credentials. It is both naïve and unscriptural to believe, for instance, that staying anywhere that denies the Bible and distorts the gospel gives a believer the opportunity to be a positive influence for **the Lord**. Even a leader like **Timothy**, well trained in divine truth, was warned to stay away from error and to concentrate on the pure truth of **God (First Timothy 4:6-7 and 13; Second Timothy 2:15-17)**. To subject oneself to false teaching, no matter how orthodox one's own convictions may be, is to disobey **YHVH** and to compromise and weaken one's testimony and to tolerate distortion of the grace of **ADONAI** in **Messiah**.²³

*Dear **Father God**, How much we love and worship **You!** We praise you that we can trust the gospel which you have given us as the absolute truth! We do not need to run to any other book, person or country, for **Your** Word is Truth! What wonderful truth it is – that **You** paid the full price for our sins on the cross. Then **You** rose victorious from the grave, conquering death and opening the door for us to enter heaven. Thank **You** that the gift is living and not something which can perish, spoil or fade (**First Peter 1:3-5**). Fantastic! That the gift is an awesome relationship-to be “in **Messiah**” (**Ephesians 1:3,4,6-7,9,11 NIV**) and that both **Jew** and **Gentile** are included when they hear the word of truth and then believe (**Ephesians 1:12-13 NIV**).*

*Praise **Your** wisdom that **You** see each heart and you know which **sheep** are **Yours** (**John 10:27**). **You** know if someone claims to be a believer, but follows their own heart. No one can fool you- for you say even if someone says: “**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and preform many miracles?**” Then I will tell them plainly, “**I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!**” (**Matthew 7:22-23 NIV**). Praise **You** for the truth and greatness of **Your** love – offered so graciously. We desire to respond by loving you back and giving **You** all of ourselves- our time, thoughts, money and affection. We joyfully wish to present ourselves to **You** as a gift (**Romans 12:1**). **You** are the best! In the name of **Your Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*