



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Galatians 1:1-9

- “Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ & God the Father who raised him from the dead—<sup>2</sup> and all the brothers who are with me: To the churches of Galatia.
- <sup>3</sup> Grace to you & peace from God the Father & our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God & Father. <sup>5</sup> To him be the glory forever & ever. Amen.” (Gal. 1:1-5 CSB)
- <sup>6</sup> I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ & are turning to a different gospel—<sup>7</sup> not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you & want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!” (Gal. 1:6-9 CSB)
  - **SUMMARY:** Paul began this letter holding nothing back. He came out ‘firing on all cylinders.’ Why was he so emotional? It wasn’t because the Galatian believers rejected him. He was so upset because they had rejected what God had given to him to give to all people! So, in a very real sense, they were not rejecting him, but GOD! And that is why this book, like no other in the New Testament is so fiery. You & I, just like the Galatian believers, need to be clear on the essentials of the gospel. We can be sure that what the Apostles presented in the New Testament is what will not only save us, but will also enable to follow God until our salvation is complete. Don’t be fooled by counterfeit gospels. They may sound the same, but at their core they are not! And following them will cause you all kinds of grief as you try to follow them.” [IB]
  - “More often than not, *the false gospels I am drawn to are not patently false at first glance.* They dance on the line of biblical orthodoxy, skirting around it & often adding to it. A real Christian should live this way! they say, along with a pseudo-salvific claim to living out

some expectation of modern life. *Today's false gospels bend Scripture*, asking it to do or be something it's not—adding to it to say something it does not say, or twisting what it actually does say, which is exactly what the false teachers in Galatia were doing: adding a requirement of circumcision & following other Jewish laws to become a Christian. I actively fight against the temptation of false gospels every day by *engaging in Scripture, the 'North Star' that always points us exclusively to Christ. Filtering out falsehoods & embellishments is the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart through...the Word of God. I am so thankful for it.* [Melanie Rainer, "No Other Gospel," in *She Reads Truth*]

## 1. Some Were Troubling the Galatian Believers (Gal. 1:6-7)

- a. They distorted the gospel, the message of Jesus, that Paul presented (Gal. 1:7)
  - "...there are some who are troubling you & want to distort the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:7b)
- b. What was this "different, distorted gospel"?
  - "What could this 'other gospel' have been?...It appears that the rival message had to do with Jesus as *the fulfillment of a different narrative*: not the story...in which the creator God defeats the dark [cosmic] powers to rescue his people from the present evil age [Gal. 1:4], but some other kind of Jewish narrative, a story *that would merely add 'Jesus' onto the life of the Jewish community* as it already was." [N. T. Wright, *Galatians*, 64]
- c. Paul fully expects all believers to be able to detect distortions (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-7)
  - "Paul's opening rebuke makes clear that in his view *there is one, and only one, 'good news,' the 'good news of Christ'* (Gal. 1:7). This news announces an event that is *incomparable & singular* in its effect..." [John Barclay, *Paul & the Gift*, p. 353]
    - a. "Different gospel" (Gal. 1:6) which is not 'another (true) gospel' (1:7a), but a 'distorted gospel' (1:7b)
      - Paul tells the Galatians: "I'm amazed that you...are turning to a *different gospel*. <sup>7</sup> *not that there is another gospel*, but there are some who...want to *distort the gospel* of Christ." (Gal. 1:6-7 CSB)
      - Paul tells the Corinthians: "I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere & pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if a person comes & *preaches another Jesus*, whom we did not preach...or a *different gospel*, which you had not accepted, *you put up with it splendidly!* [He's being ironic]" (2 Cor. 11:3-4) Note: "The instrument of Satan's deception [2 Cor. 11:3] is the opponents' preaching of another Jesus (instead of the Jesus proclaimed by Paul)...& a *different gospel* (rather than the gospel [proclaimed by Paul]). The 'gospel' of Paul's opponents may have promised everyone health & wealth, but no suffering, contrary to Paul's message." [ESV]
    - b. "Different (Gk. *heteros*) gospel, which is not *another* (Gk. *allos*) gospel" (Gal. 1:6b-7a)
      - a. Note the change in adjectives—'different' vs. 'another.' The KJV & CEB obscure this change; using 'another' 2x:
        - "I marvel that ye are so soon removed...unto *another* gospel: <sup>7</sup> Which is not *another*; but there be some that trouble you, & would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:6-7 KJV)
        - "I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting...to follow *another* <sup>7</sup> It's not really *another* gospel..." (1:6-7 CEB) b. "Paul may have...confused the Galatians if he would have...use[d] the same adjective [either *heteros* or *allos*, twice] in Gal. 1:6-7 to describe his opponents' gospel. Using the same word could have suggested ... they were turning to 'another gospel' (1:6) which is not 'another gospel' (1:7)...What? To avoid confusion Paul says they were turning to a '*heteros* gospel' (1:6) which is not an '*allos* gospel,' since there is only one [true] gospel. The reason for Gal. 1:7 is to defend that there's only one gospel." [Jarvis J. Williams, *Galatians*, p. ]
    - c. We need to know the essential gospel
      - "*The content of [the] gospel is so definite that the believers can not only recognize it, but also reject any 'other gospel' as false* (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul himself recognizes, & the believers also should recognize, no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-7) even though there were then—as there are...in every age—those who 'trouble you...' (Gal. 1:7-9)." [Stanley B. Morrow, *Paul*, p. 74]

## 2. What is the Gospel? (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:1-4)

- a. Christ died for our sins
- b. Christ resurrected from the grave
- c. Christ launched the new creation
- d. We are justified (made right with God) by faith, based on the faithfulness of Christ (Gal. 2:16)

- “This ‘Gospel of Jesus Christ’ (Gal 1:7) contained for Paul the whole novel experience with Jesus Christ. It certainly comprised not only the [proclamation] as expressed in 1 Cor. 15:1-11, but also the message on the justification through the faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16).” [L. Tichy, “*Gospel’ in Gal. 1:6-7 Revisited*,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 56 (2014) p. 364]
- e. We receive the Spirit to live in the new creation & mature (Ezek. 36:24-27; Jer. 31:31-34)
- f. We are being rescued from the present evil age (Gal. 1:4)
- g. Not just initial salvation
- h. Not Torah [Law] observance
  - “Paul has learned...that his converts have been listening to other teachers who have brought a message different from Paul’s, & that these teachers are close to persuading them to *adopt a Torah-[Law-] observant lifestyle as the means of cementing their place in God’s people & advancing in God-pleasing righteousness.*” [David DeSilva, *Galatians*, p. 124]
  - “Their departure was the decision to *live in B.C. days when the A.D. days had arrived*. It was a decision to *recede back in time* into the days of Moses & to *reject the epoch-altering revelation in Christ.*” [Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, p. 51]

### 3. Why is Paul so Upset? (Gal. 1:8-9)

- “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, I...say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!” (Gal. 1:8-9)
- “*Paul’s letter is explosive*. It is sharp-edged...& *full of emotion*...Paul is surprised (1:6), frustrated (4:15), puzzled (4:20), and angry (5:12). He calls believers in Galatia ‘foolish’ (3:1) & wishes that his opponents would use the circumcision knife to castrate themselves (5:12)! *Such extremes of emotion indicate how high Paul reckons the stakes to be.*” [John M. G. Barclay, *Paul & the Power of Grace*, 38]
- “*The rival teachers promoted Torah [Law-] observance as a complement to the Galatian converts’ trust in Jesus*, indeed as the *next step forward* in their spiritual journey toward becoming full-fledged children of Abraham and their ethical journey towards a transformed life of virtue. For Paul, the course of action they are contemplating is *not a complement to their faith in Jesus, but an act of desertion & repudiation of their divine Benefactor.*” [David DeSilva, *Galatians*, NICNT, p. 124]
- a. There is no other gospel!
  - “What’s most important is...the...point the apostle Paul expresses in Gal 1:6-7: *there is no other Gospel of Christ than that preached by him in Galatia*...Paul’s insistence on...*only one Gospel of Christ* [reflects]...the unique significance...the whole Christ-event...had for the apostle Paul, should have had for the Galatians, & must have for all those who believe in Jesus Christ.” [L. Tichy, “*Gospel’ in Gal. 1:6-7 Revisited*,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 56 (2014) pp. 371-372]
- b. Turning to a ‘*different gospel*’ (Gal. 1:6b) equals “*deserting Him [God] who called you in...grace*” (Gal. 1:6a)
  - “The phrases ‘*deserting him*’ & ‘*different gospel*’ show that these are not issues [Paul’s gospel vs. the ‘different gospel’] over which Christians might legitimately disagree. The Galatians are questioning the very gospel itself.” [ESV]
  - **Note:** “The One who called you” is God, not Paul—he’s merely God’s agent/ “Christ’s slave” (Gal. 1:10b). CJB is wrong!
  - “I’m astounded...you are so quick to remove yourselves *from me* [i.e., Paul], *the one who called you* by the Messiah’s grace...” (Gal. 1:6 CJB: Complete Jewish Bible) **Note:** It’s not a personal matter—forsaking Paul; it’s deserting God!
- c. What Paul gave them was from God, not humans! (Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:13)
  - Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ & God the Father who raised him from the dead” (Gal 1:1)
  - “...When you received *the word of God that you heard from us*, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as *it truly is, the word of God...*” (1 Thess. 2:13)

- “This, then, is our dilemma. *Are we to accept Paul’s account of the origin of his message, supported as it is by solid historical evidence? Or shall we prefer our own theory, although supported by no historical evidence? If Paul was right in asserting that his gospel was not man’s but God’s, then to reject Paul is to reject God.*” [John Stott quote in Scot McKnight’s, *Galatians*, NIV Application Commentary, pp. 55~56]

#### 4. False “Gospels”

- “If your preaching of the gospel does not naturally lead people to apprentice under Jesus as the logical next step, then you are not preaching the gospel of Jesus. You are preaching another gospel.” (Dallas Willard)
  - a. The John 3:16 gospel
  - b. The Prosperity gospel
  - c. “I’m saved, now I can live as I want.”
  - d. Jehovah’s Witness & Mormons
    - “The gospel is unchanging. Thus Paul pronounces a curse [Gal. 1:8-9]...on those who proclaim or receive a different gospel. Even if [Paul] himself, or an angel from heaven, were to preach such a gospel, the Galatians should reject it. *Mormonism* is an example of a religion that is based on revelation supposedly given by an angel & that teaches a gospel different from justification by faith alone in the substitutionary death of Christ.” [ESV]

#### QUESTIONS (IB):

1. Some Jewish Christian teachers troubled the Galatian churches with a “*different gospel*.” Is it possible for there to be two gospels, Paul’s & another? Discuss your answers.
2. Stanley Morrow said, “The content of [the] gospel is so definite that the believers can not only *recognize* it, but also *reject* any ‘other gospel’ as false (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul himself recognizes & the believers also should *recognize*, no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-7) even though there were then—as there are...[today]—those who ‘trouble you...’ (Gal. 1:7-9).” Are you able to *recognize* the gospel & *reject* false gospels? If not, what help do you need to do that?
3. What are the essential contents of the gospel presented in Gal. 1:1–4 & 1 Cor. 15:1–4? If someone believed Jesus didn’t die for sin or resurrect, how would you respond?
4. Why was Paul so upset? Was it because the Galatians rejected him? Think about what John Stott said: “This, is our dilemma. Are we to accept Paul’s account of the origin of his message, supported as it is by solid historical evidence? Or shall we prefer our own theory, although supported by no historical evidence? If Paul was right in asserting that his gospel was not man’s but God’s, then to reject Paul is to reject God.” Based on Gal. 1:1–9 & Stott’s words, now consider why Paul was so upset.
5. What kinds of false gospels have you encountered from Christians and from society