



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Are You Turning Away From Him?

GALATIANS 1.1-9

1/9/13

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / Don.Garner@capitolcom.org

Politicians are often accused of flip-flopping on important policy issues. Yet public servants experience first-hand just how quickly their supporters can desert them or turn on them. When you get right down to it, the human race is fickle by nature. Each of us must acknowledge our tendency to fail at this point.

In the opening lines of Paul's letter to the Galatian church, he moves quickly past the customary opening salutation to express his astonishment and concern at how quickly these Gentile believers were turning away from God. The Gentiles to whom he writes have received God's forgiveness and acceptance, granted to them by His grace alone. They are beginning to turn away from God as they give ear to a false gospel, one based upon adherence to the law.

This letter to the Galatians delivers Paul's most passionate defense of the gospel. As one of the earliest writings in our New Testament, it exposes the most subtle and dangerous corruption of the good news. This letter warns us of a troubling tendency for a believer to turn from God and His grace and drift back into a life of dependence upon one's own efforts at "goodness" to gain acceptance with God.

Galatians 1.1-10: Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

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. As 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.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE GOSPEL'S COMMISSION (1-2)

Paul's greeting immediately draws our attention to his authority or credibility as a messenger. In fact, the first two chapters of this letter are devoted to this very issue. His defense of his authority as an apostle makes it clear that his opponents have attacked him at this point. Paul does not defend himself for his own sake, but for the sake of the gospel and of those to whom he preached.

He first disavows his enemy's attempts to undermine his credibility by arguing that the *source* of his commission was men. "Not from men," Paul's commission to preach the gospel did not originate from men. "Nor through man," He did not receive his commission to preach or the message of the gospel itself through human *agency*.

Paul's received his orders to preach the gospel message and the content of that message "through Jesus Christ." God might have chosen to mediate through men to call Paul to preach and to pass along the good news to him. However, Paul's position is strengthened by the fact that the Lord dealt with him directly. His opponents could not make this claim.

AFFIRM THE GOSPEL'S FOUNDATION (3-5)

There are several passages in the New Testament that provide us what might be called the gospel in a nutshell. Paul begins to lay the foundation for what has already been mentioned as his most passionate defense of the gospel. "Grace and peace from God the Father"—a standard salutary blessing found in virtually all of Paul's letters leads seamlessly into this gospel in summary.

"[Christ] gave Himself" establishes the voluntary nature of the Lord's death upon the cross. "For our sins" points to His substitutionary atonement—He died on our behalf, in our place. Paul then defines the gospel as a message of deliverance. Finally, this has all been undertaken according to the sovereign will of God.

Paul will later devote two chapters to clarifying the gospel message. There is nothing more foundational in the development of your faith as a believer than a clear grasp of the gospel message. Familiarity with the essential aspects of the gospel is vital to protecting yourself from counterfeits.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)
OR THURSDAY BREAKFAST @7:30AM IN MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E.2.1002)

Texas

Are You Turning Away From Him?

ADMONISH THE GOSPEL'S DESERTION (6-7)

Paul expresses shock and disappointment. He is astonished that the Galatian believers are turning away, but turning away from what, or whom? They are deserting God—not just some dogma or cause or movement—but God Himself! The issue here is not their failure to hold to certain key teachings, but their disloyalty to God who had only recently reconciled them to a loving relationship to Himself.

“I MARVEL THAT YOU ARE TURNING AWAY SO SOON FROM HIM WHO CALLED YOU IN THE GRACE OF CHRIST...”

They are turning from a loving Father who has called them back unto Himself upon the basis of His grace revealed in the person and work of Christ. They are deserting the One who lovingly called them, but for what? They are turning to different gospel, a message that is in fact, not good news at all. They turn to an opposing message changed by the caveat of Paul's opponents.

ARREST THE GOSPEL'S ALTERATION (8-9)

Paul follows up his admonishment of these believers with the strongest warning found in his writings. He uses a hypothetical statement “even if” to make his point. Even if it were Paul himself, or an angel from heaven bringing an opposing gospel, they should be careful to reject it. The gospel that must be steadfastly maintained among them is the one that Paul preached to them when the first believed—the gospel they themselves had received.

Yet the conditional form of the statement makes it more than a warning. It is an indictment of those who oppose him. This is an “if” of a fulfilled condition. The statement could be translated, “given that someone has preached another gospel to you, let him be accursed.” Twice Paul uses the word anathema, which means dedicated to destruction. Scary stuff, indeed!

CONCLUSION

So what?...you may ask. What has any of this got to do with you? Are you careful to consider the source of the message upon which you have committed your eternal destiny? Does the clarity of the message itself, its most fundamental truths occupy your thoughts? Do you recognize the tendency within you to abandon the gracious acceptance of God based upon your faith in the finished work of Christ for a works-oriented religious observance? Do you reject every alteration of the gospel of grace?