

A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

Consider Galatians 1:6-7:

I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to **a different evangel**, which is **not another**, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to **distort** the evangel of Christ.”

Paul is warning the church of a gospel ... a message ... that had crept in, distorting the correct gospel. It is a different gospel. It is an incorrect gospel. And this is the problem that has prompted Paul to write.

1. We need to understand what this “different evangel” is

The gospel proclaimed by the mass of Christianity today consists of an offer of salvation if one is willing to believe, and it includes a sentence of an eternal hell for unbelievers.

On the interstate between Columbus, Ohio and Cincinnati, Ohio there are two large billboards. The first, poses a question to passing motorists ... “If you died tonight where would you spend eternity?” And then the second billboard, in huge letters ... “HELL IS REAL.”

But the gospel I proclaim says that God will ultimately save all.

Which is the correct gospel, and which is the distortion? Most pastors and Bible teachers today would say that they have the correct gospel, based upon the witness of the majority throughout church history ... and that I am the one bringing the “different” gospel ... the distorted gospel.

We cannot determine which is the correct gospel and which is the distortion based on a popular vote. In every era we read of throughout the Bible, the majority was never correct. The prophets were in the minority. John the Baptist was in the minority. Jesus was in the minority. Paul was in the minority. Never in Scripture do we read that the correct doctrinal position was in the hands of the majority. So we cannot determine which gospel is right and which is wrong simply by taking a popular vote. As is always the case with the things of God, we can only reach our conclusions based on the revelation God has given to us in His Word. And so we must turn to the Scriptures, in as pure a form as we can find them.

2. The false gospel was a “different” gospel ... not just “another” gospel

This distinction in what Paul is saying is lost in the King James Version, which reads:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto **another** gospel: Which is **not another**; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Note that in this translation Paul speaks of “another” gospel which is “not another...” Besides breeding confusion and appearing to be a direct contradiction within Scripture, this inconsistent translation loses the distinction that in the Greek two totally different words were used. Correctly stated, Paul is warning of a “different” gospel that is not simply another gospel of the same kind. In other words, it is not simply the same gospel stated in a similar fashion ... it is a “different” gospel.

For Paul to make such a statement should warn us that this “different” gospel might appear to be harmless enough, and similar enough ... but it is not correct. It is a “different” gospel ... an incorrect gospel ... a “distortion” of the gospel.

3. What specifically is this “different” gospel?

Let us look at some passages from this letter to the Galatians as we seek to understand what this “different” gospel actually consisted of.

Galatians 1:8

But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you **beside that which we bring to you**, let him be anathema!

In other words, the church was warned to take heed of “Paul’s message,” and not different messages brought by others. While Paul did not specifically say so, even if Peter were to bring a message ... and if it were different from Paul’s message ... the church in Galatia was cautioned not to listen. Obviously there were persons following after Paul and bringing a “different” message. Paul is adamant ... “listen to the message **I** bring to you!”

It is interesting that while most within the traditional church today consider Paul the evangelist supreme and a planter of churches extraordinaire ... most favor the words of Jesus found in the Gospels to the letters of Paul. It is difficult to understand Paul’s letters in light of the Gospels, because it is often difficult to reconcile the two messages. So today Paul’s message is largely ignored. Interesting, in light of Paul’s admonition to the Galatian church ... “listen to the gospel that **I** bring!”

Galatians 2:3

But not even Titus, who is with me, being a Greek, is compelled to be circumcised. Yet, it was because of the false brethren who were smuggled in, who came in by the way to spy out our **freedom** which we have in Christ Jesus, that they shall be **enslaving** us...

The “freedom” Paul proclaims is contrasted with being “enslaved” by those bringing this different gospel. And the reference Paul makes to the requirement of circumcision shows us that Paul is referring to the requirements of the law being added to the gospel he proclaimed. Paul preached grace, with no requirement of law attached whatsoever. But the judaizers followed, seeking to add requirements from the law to Paul’s gospel, creating the “different” gospel that Paul warns of.

Acts 15:1

And some, coming down from Judea, taught the brethren that, "If you should not be circumcized after the custom of Moses, you can not be saved.

When Paul subsequently travels to Jerusalem to report on this gospel he was sharing with the Gentiles, he did not attempt to change anything that Peter and the others were proclaiming to the Jews. He merely reported how God was working through him relative to the Gentiles, as he proclaimed the "gospel of the uncircumcision."

Think for a moment about the church today. How many sermons are preached from pulpits each Sunday that admonish believers to honor the Sabbath ... to tithe ... to be baptized (the New Testament equivalent of circumcision) ... to post the Ten Commandments on the walls of public buildings ... and on it goes.

Paul's gospel is pure grace ... but most preachers of our day, like the judaizers that challenged Paul in his day, heap requirement upon requirement to that grace.

Galatians 2:14

... I said to Cephas (Peter) in front of all, "If you, being inherently a Jew, are living as the nations, and not as the Jews, how are you compelling the nations to be judaizing?"

Peter himself was guilty of compelling the gentiles that heard Paul's gospel to be "judaizing." What more clarification do we need to recognize that Paul's gospel was "different" from Peter's gospel. And at least at this point Peter did not understand the difference, and tried to impose "judaizing" requirements upon the gentile believers.

Paul did not attempt to stop Peter from proclaiming the "gospel of the circumcision" to the Jews as God had called him to do. But Paul did object to Peter carrying elements from this "gospel of the circumcision" over to the gentiles ... distorting the "gospel of the uncircumcision" that Paul had been commissioned to proclaim.

- Paul was proclaiming, "Believe ... and nothing more."
- Peter was proclaiming, "Believe and be baptized, be circumcised, have good works."

Two gospels ... for two different groups:

- The Jews, awaiting the kingdom to be restored upon the earth, and needing to repent and be ready so as to be God's instrument upon the earth to minister to the nations
- The Gentiles, chosen by grace though they did not exhibit works that made them worthy (like Saul when he was converted on the Road to Damascus), to be entirely a work of God to display His grace to the world and to the universe, and to fulfill God's purposes in the heavens in the ages to come

And Paul warns that these gospels must not be MIXED, or DISTORTED, by adding requirements from one gospel to the other.

Galatians 4:21

Tell me, you who want to be under law, are you not hearing the law?

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:2

Lo! I, Paul, am saying to you that if you should be circumcising, Christ will benefit you nothing. Now I am attesting again to every man who is circumcising, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Exempted from Christ were you who are being justified in law. You fall out of grace.

Again we see that the problem Paul faced with this “different” gospel was the law ... and those wanting to bring the requirements of the law back to mix with the gospel he proclaimed.

Now listen to this next, most enlightening passage:

Galatians 5:11

Now I, brethren, if I am still heralding circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

Paul could apparently herald Christ as the son of God ... but he claims that his persecution comes because he is not heralding circumcision. This is made very clear in Acts 21:20, when Paul is warned when arriving in Jerusalem about those that were furious with him.

“You are beholding, brother, how many tens of thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and all are inherently zealous for the law?”

All the years I attended a traditional church I never caught this. If you were to ask me who it was that persecuted Paul, I would have said it was the Jews who denied Jesus Christ. But look at this passage! It appears that the most significant opposition facing Paul here were Jews “who have believed” but who were “zealous for the law.” If Paul had simply preached Christ, and also circumcision and requirements from the law ... he could have avoided much opposition.

But Paul opposed adding legal requirements to the gospel entrusted to him with every ounce of his energy.

Peter and the others did not understand Paul, because they did not understand how different his message was. This was not a message of Paul’s own construction ... but came to him directly by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11

For I am making known to you, brethren, as to the evangel which is being brought by me, that is is not in accord with man. For neither did I accept it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul message was ... FAITH ALONE!

But today most churches prefer the message of Peter and the others from the church in Jerusalem ...
FAITH PLUS WORKS!

But this is not the correct gospel for the church in this present age ... it is a “different” gospel ... different from the gospel Paul proclaimed. I hear the voice of Paul echoing in the sanctuaries of so many churches as they gather each Sunday morning ...

If ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you besides that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! (Galatians 1:8)

4. What is the harm brought by this “different” gospel?

Let us consider some of the problems faced today within the church, attributed to the mixing of the “circumcision gospel” with Paul’s gospel.

Our local newspaper recently carried a series of articles and letters to the editor concerning a controversial decision by the Public Library Board to open the Library on Sundays. The Christian community proclaimed the need to keep the Sabbath, and spoke of the Library Board’s decision as an affront to God. The first thing that comes to mind in this situation is that nowhere in Scripture do we find that the Sabbath was ever designated as Sunday. The change from a Saturday Jewish Sabbath to a Sunday Christian Sabbath is entirely the fabrication of church tradition, based on a bit of mis-translated and mis-applied Scripture. But even worse is the allegation that the Library Board should be governed by the Law at all. This is an attempt to place not just Believers, but the entire world, under the Law. Paul’s gospel makes it clear that we are not under the Law ... that we have been freed from the Law ... and why do we want to nullify grace and put ourselves back under the Law. But this is exactly what many pastors, teachers and others within the church would have us do today. Why? Because the gospel of the Circumcision is being mixed with Paul’s gospel, thereby producing a “different” gospel.

Another repercussion resulting from the mixing together of gospels is the argument concerning baptism. While baptism is not technically a requirement found in the Law, the issue is the same ... the adding of a works-requirement to Paul’s gospel of grace. In a sense, baptism has become the modern-day version of circumcision, and where Christ is proclaimed there are those seeking to add the requirement of water baptism. Baptism is an issue unto itself, to be studied apart from this present study of “The Gospel,” but the bottom line is that requiring water baptism is a mixing-in of the Circumcision gospel as proclaimed by Peter ... with Paul’s gospel. A friend recently shared with me that he has been told he was destined for hell because he had not been baptized. Why would someone think this is so? Because the gospel of the Circumcision is being mixed with Paul’s gospel, thereby producing a “different” gospel.

Another result from mixing the Circumcision gospel with Paul's gospel is the proclamation of wrathful messages, based primarily on the writings of the Old Testament Prophets, announcing that God is angry with the world. I read a recent article quoting several church leaders who observed that the recent hurricane disaster in New Orleans was God's judgment upon the area, and upon America, for the sin of abortion ... and for other miscellaneous sins. Like Job's friends, we have those in the Christian community that seem equipped to explain why calamity has taken place in specific instances. But how does this reconcile with Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:18

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, **not reckoning their offenses to them**, and placing in us the word of the conciliation.

Why does there appear to be conflict within the Word of God, between the prophetic warnings of wrath and the message of conciliation from Paul? Because the gospel of the Circumcision is being mixed with Paul's gospel, thereby producing a "different" gospel.

Much confusion is being bred by the many different churches of this present day, due to the mishandling of God's Word and the careless mixing of gospels. I recently received a letter from a long time family friend who had occasion to read my book, "At the End of the Ages," which showed him for the first time that the Scriptures do not speak of an eternal hell. He writes:

Thanks for researching and writing the book. It has really helped to rectify the part of my understanding of God that never seemed to ring true. (Not in His character, in my opinion.)

How many people there must be, filling the pews of so many different churches, that have been fed a confusing, illogical, incorrect, "different" gospel ... and who therefore ponder things about God that just don't seem to make sense. And this confusion about God prevents many Ambassadors from sharing the real good news with others.

But perhaps the worst adverse effect of mixing the gospels together is the horrendous doctrine of hell that permeates the church today. Most of the key passages used in "proving" the doctrine of eternal torment are taken from the words of Jesus when he speaks of "gehenna" ... translated hell in our modern translations. But in fact Gehenna, a physical place outside of Jerusalem, is a part of the Circumcision gospel ... looking toward the restoration of the Jewish kingdom upon the earth. By failing to distinguish between aspects from the "kingdom gospel" and Paul's gospel, a "different" gospel is created ... and it includes the fabricated doctrine of eternal torment.

I recently heard via email from a man who is just coming to understand that God is in the process of ultimately saving all mankind. This man has been evangelizing for a number of years, and had been discouraged that "hell" had been such a huge obstacle for many to overcome, as they consider Christianity. But the doctrine of eternal torment is not a Biblical doctrine at all. It is born from a careless mistranslation of Scripture from the original languages, and a mixing of the gospel of the Circumcision with Paul's gospel, thereby producing a "different" gospel.

So the modern-day result of mixing gospels together, creating a “different” gospel, is the breeding of confusion and misunderstanding about God, to the point where those of the world hearing “The Gospel” proclaimed are turned away because of the horrendous and confusing doctrines and religious requirements that are presented.

THE NEED TO BRING CORRECTION WITHIN THE CHURCH

In Acts 18:24 we read of Apollos, who was able in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, and one who taught accurately concerning Jesus ... but we also read that he was “versed only in the baptism of John.” We then read:

Hearing him, Priscilla and Aquila took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately. (Acts 18:26)

How many churches today are “versed only in the baptism of John”? Incorporating elements from the circumcision gospel into Paul’s gospel which is God’s truth for today, is equivalent to being “versed only in the baptism of John.”

God places those situations in our lives where we become as Priscilla and Aquila. We are God’s instrument to “expound the way of God more accurately.” Those of us who have come to see the errors within popular Bible teaching must now bring correction. There are today many very earnest “Apollos Christians,” teaching very fervently but not very accurately.

We can learn from Priscilla and Aquila in this instance. They were:

- Prepared to expound the way more accurately
- Willing to expound the way more accurately
- Tactful in how they expounded the way more accurately

Most certainly there is great need within the Body of Christ today to bring correction ... sound words and a correct cutting of Scripture ... to ensure that the correct message is being proclaimed on behalf of God.

AMBASSADORS MUST BEAR THE CORRECT MESSAGE

Ambassadors to foreign nations that represent their country are not free to deliver whatever message they want to deliver. They speak on behalf of their country, and must therefore bear the message that has been entrusted to them by their country.

2 Corinthians 5:20

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ’s sake, “Be conciliated to God!”

As Christ’s ambassadors we must deliver the message entrusted to us ... as if God were speaking through us. We are not free to comb through the Bible and select whatever words we wish to use. Some of God’s

Word was directed to a specific person or persons in a specific age ... and does not pertain to the present situation at all. Remember again what Paul has said:

Galatians 1:8

But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you **beside that which we bring to you**, let him be anathema!

Many different churches today are proclaiming many different things, because they have seen fit to emphasize various passages they have found somewhere in Scripture. Some emphasize a word from the Prophets ... others from John the Baptist ... others from Jesus ... and others from Peter and the Twelve. Choose your favorite passages and your favorite doctrines ... ones that you can resonate with ... and that becomes the message proclaimed to the world.

But hear again the words of Paul ... the one commissioned by God to proclaim to the Gentiles:

Galatians 1:8

But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you **beside that which we bring to you**, let him be anathema!

The mixing of gospels, and especially the combining of the Circumcision (Jewish) gospel with the Uncircumcision gospel results in ambassadors touting the agendas of their man-made traditions, instead of accurately and faithfully bearing God's message for this present age.

Let us be faithful ambassadors ... as God speaks through us. Let us have a pattern of sounds words (2 Timothy 1:13). Let us endeavor to present ourselves to God qualified, unashamed workers, correctly cutting the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Let us be sure we are bearing the correct message as Christ's ambassadors.

2 Corinthians 5:18

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation.

Bob Evely

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