

BIG IDEA

There Is No Other Gospel

Title Card

Well, good morning.

Today, we start a new series, **Witness for the Defense: Defending the True Gospel of Faith.**

In this series, we'll be working our way through Paul's letter to the Galatians, and I think you're gonna like this new series.

Galatians has always been one of my favorite books of the Bible. I like the way it reads and I like the way Paul presents the True Gospel of Faith in such a clear, unmistakable manner.

Just short time after bringing the gospel to Galatia, Paul begins to hear some disturbing reports about other "evangelists" who came in after he left and began corrupting the Galatian's understanding of grace and faith in Christ.

These other "teachers" somehow convinced the Galatians that Paul had taught them imperfectly, that his was an inferior understanding of God, theology and salvation, that their understanding of these issues was better compared to Paul's understanding, perfect, even.

They even attacked and sowed doubts among the Galatians as to Paul's apostolic credentials as a way to discredit his theology.

According to these new teachers, salvation by faith alone was insufficient, one must add works to their faith in order to truly be saved. Specifically, they taught that believers must adhere to the Old Testament laws, including such things as dietary restrictions and circumcision.

And for some reason, the Galatian believers were convinced by these new "teachers!" Think about that for a moment. This blows me away. Paul came into Galatia, became friends with the inhabitants, led them to Christ, founded the church there and now, they decide to abandon him and everything he taught them just because a few other guys came in and said, "Paul is wrong."

So Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pens this letter to confront the false teachings that have crept into the Galatian church. He brilliantly defends himself, his authority, his theology and the True Gospel of Faith in Jesus Christ apart from any and all works.

But what I really like about this letter is **how** he presents his arguments.

This letter reads like an attorney presenting their case to a judge and jury in a courtroom.

He's methodical, he make his case point by point, carefully crafting his case, anticipating every objection that might be made.

Paul lays out the charge, he lays out the penalty if found guilty and then he calls his witnesses to the stand. And these witnesses testify to the truth of the grace of Jesus Christ based on faith in Jesus Christ to prove that adding anything else to the true Gospel is a crime and must be rejected, completely, wholly and without any reservation or hesitation.

Here in his letter to the Galatians, Paul makes his clearest, most convincing arguments for faith as opposed to works. There is no way you can read Galatians and not come to the conclusion that our salvation is based solely on our faith in Jesus Christ. After reading Galatians, you walk away with a much fuller understanding and stronger conviction that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Which leads me to our Big Idea for today's sermon, the point Paul is making in today's passage:

BIG IDEA

There Is No Other Gospel

As we'll see in these first few verses, Paul opens with a strong assertion that there is only one Gospel, the Gospel he taught them just a year or so earlier. Contrary to what these new teachers were saying, Paul makes a bold claim right up front, that salvation is based solely on faith in Jesus Christ, There Is No Other Gospel.

I First Point – The True Gospel

In his introduction, which reads like the opening statement of a lawyer presenting his case to the courtroom, Paul reminds his Galatian friends of the True Gospel and his apostolic authority to spread this Gospel.

Galatians 1:1-2 – 1 Paul, an apostle – not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead – 2 and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: ESV

Following first century norms for writing letters, Paul starts off by introducing himself to his readers. Today, we start off letters by addressing the recipient of the letter, you know, "Dear Donn," then we end the letter with our identity, you know, "Sincerely, Jeff."

But 2,000 years ago, letters typically opened with a sentence identifying the writer of the letter, followed by the person or group to whom the letter is addressed.

After introducing himself, Paul immediately establishes his credentials as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. By doing so, he asserts his divinely appointed authority to address the problem with the Galatian church.

Paul takes pains to remind the Galatians of his unique call to be an Apostle, which came to him at the same time as his salvation.

Let's take a moment or two to see what Paul is referring to.

apostolos
Messenger
Ambassador
Delegate

The word Apostle was a very special title. In the New Testament, it's typically reserved for a few, very select number of people.

To qualify for the official title of Apostle, one must have been appointed to this position by Jesus Himself.

In Matthew, we see where Jesus takes 12 of his followers and appoints them as His Apostles:

Matthew 10:1– 1 And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ESV

In verse 1, the twelve are still called Disciples. Disciples are learners, pupils, students.

By the first century, Jewish rabbis would assemble disciples to follow and learn from them. These disciples would imitate both the teaching and life of their master. The disciple's goal was to become a living copy of their master.

The disciples who followed Jesus would live with Him, eat with Him, speak with Him, learn from Him, all with the goal of becoming more and more like Him.

And from His followers, Jesus chose 12 for something more.

Matthew 10:2-7 – 2 The names of the twelve apostles are these:... 5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them... 7 “...And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” ESV

In verse 1, they're called Disciples, in verse 2, they're called Apostles.

What changed? Jesus empowered these 12 and delegated authority to them, commissioning them to take His message to the world. Their duties changed from learning at the foot of their Master to receiving His authority to carry His message to others. Jesus appointed the 12 to be His personal representatives and carry His good news to all the world. In verse 2, He personally commissioned them to be His Apostles.

And this is why Paul is called an Apostle, as Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus some 15 years earlier and personally appointed him as an Apostle, something we'll explore in greater detail in our next message. But for now, just remember that Jesus Himself appointed Paul to be His apostle.

So, Paul made the point that his apostleship did not have a human source or that it had come to him through a human channel.

Paul subtly contrasts his apostolic authority with the false teachers who were leading the Galatians astray. Those false teachers were not commissioned by Jesus, they had never met the risen Savior, Christ had never appointed them to any office.

But Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, believed in Him for eternal life and was appointed to his apostolic office by Jesus Himself.

In verse 3, Paul continues his greeting to the Galatians with:

Galatians 1:3 – Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,
ESV

Grace and peace. We see this greeting in every single, solitary letter written by Paul. The only exceptions are the two letters he wrote to Timothy, where he merely added the word, "mercy" to grace and peace.

Grace and Peace were not a perfunctory salutation from Paul. Grace and Peace were linked to faith in Christ in Paul's mind so much that he used it even with the Galatians, who were running from the faith he labored so hard to bring to them.

As we'll see in just a few moments, the grace and peace from Christ that Paul introduced to the Galatians just a short time ago were being replaced by trouble and strife brought on by the false teachers that were now upsetting and troubling both the Galatians and Paul.

Continuing on in verses 4 and 5, we read:

Galatians 1:4-5 – 4 Who gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to Whom be glory forever and ever, amen.
ESV

After laying the foundation for his apostolic credentials and authority, Paul now turns his attention to Jesus and lays the foundation for the finished work of salvation that Jesus offers to all who will simply believe Him for it.

He tells the Galatians that Jesus, “gave Himself for our sins.” The Greek word for gave is a very expansive word, one with many shades of meanings, all centered on the idea of giving something to someone.

Paul may have had in mind three of those definitions when he wrote this letter. We’ll take a look at each of the three definitions as we go through this passage and see how it fits with Paul’s message to the Galatians.

didomi

To give someone something as an object of their loving care

The first definition of didomi that applies is to give to someone something as an object of their loving care.

Paul is reminding his Galatian friends of the love Jesus displayed for them when He laid down His life to pay the penalty for their sins.

No one forced Jesus to surrender to the Jewish authorities and subject Himself to their anger, mockery and beatings.

No one forced Jesus to allow Himself to be handed over to the Roman authorities for more humiliation and beatings.

No one forced Jesus to allow Himself to be crucified by Pilate, a form of execution so painful that the Romans created a new word to describe the unrelenting pain that would sometimes last for days before the condemned succumbed to death: excruciating.

He suffered all the pain and indignities, humiliations and sufferings associated with His arrest and crucifixion because it was His choice. That is to say, He gave Himself because of His great love for us.

It was His great love for the Galatians that led Jesus to lay down His life, His loving care as the word didomi suggests.

I think Paul was reminding his Galatian friends that Christianity is not about a set of rules, contrary to what the false teachers were espousing. No, Christianity is not about a set of rules, it’s about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Who offers His love without any strings.

In other words, it wasn't rules that saved the Galatians, it was their faith in Jesus and His loving care for them.

In contrast to the false teachers who were adding lists of legalistic rules to the gospel, Paul reminds the Galatians that it is only by faith in what Jesus has done that leads us to salvation.

In his very first sentence, Paul lays the foundation for his letter and our Big Idea:

BIG IDEA
There Is No Other Gospel

II Second Point – The Charge

Next in his opening statement, Paul addresses the Crime or Charge of preaching a false gospel.

In verse 6, we read:

Galatians 1:6 – I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him Who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – ESV

Paul just flat out said he was astonished at what the Galatians were doing. He was shocked at their behavior.

And his shock wasn't a one time thing where he was initially taken aback and then shook his head at the foolishness of the Galatians and then said, "Oh well, what are you gonna do?" and just move on with his life.

The original word in Greek indicates that his shock was ongoing. He felt the shock every time he thought of the Galatians' defection from the True Gospel of Faith. Why would they turn away from the truth of the grace of Jesus Christ and run toward legalism and trying to earn their salvation by works? It made no sense!

And not only were they deserting their savior, they were doing it so quickly after receiving the truth from Paul.

You see, it had only been a year or so since Paul had founded the church in Galatia.

Paul established the Galatian church around the year 47 and he wrote this letter the next year, in 48. As a matter of fact, this is most likely the first letter written by Paul.

The truth delivered by Paul the previous year should be fresh in their minds. Why were they turning away from the True Gospel of Faith so soon? Paul could hardly comprehend what they were doing.

metatithemi

To change sides

To put one thing in place of another

To desert from one person or thing to another

The Greek word for deserting is metatithemi. One of its meanings is to change sides. When you study this word, you get the idea that the word denotes a type of treason, acting like a traitor.

As a matter of fact, one biblical scholar said this word was used to describe a turncoat.

It's a very harsh concept.

And in the Greek, this word also denotes an ongoing activity. They were deserting, present tense, they hadn't deserted, past tense. Their desertion wasn't finished or final, it was ongoing. In other words, they still had time to repent and return to the truth of grace.

They still had time to stop retreating into the law by deserting the grace of Christ. That's why Paul wrote this letter, to turn them away from the false gospel of faith plus works and back to the True Gospel of Faith.

didomi

To give something to someone to follow him as a leader and master

Here's where the second definition of didomi comes into view.

Jesus gave the free gift of salvation to the Galatians. In return, Paul is saying the Galatians should remain loyal to Christ and not become traitors by deserting Him and His True Gospel of Faith for the false teachers and their false gospel of faith plus works.

Galatians 1:6 – I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him Who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a **different gospel – ESV**

And how does Paul describe the false gospel of faith plus works? He informs the Galatians that they are turning to a different gospel.

The word for different, heteros, means altered or strange. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, heteros conveys the idea of a difference in **quality**. One gospel is inferior, the other gospel is superior.

I know you've heard the idea that it doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you believe something. "All roads lead to God or Heaven."

That's not a new concept. This idea has been around for millennia.

Paul is letting his readers know that this is a lie. It's simply not true. What you believe does matter and it has eternal consequences.

If this idea that faith is insufficient, that we have to add works to our faith in order to receive eternal life, then our gospel isn't one of faith or grace, it's one of works.

You cannot mix grace and works because each excludes the other.

Grace is God's unmerited favor, it's not something you can earn. No amount of works will earn you more of God's love or favor. God grants you salvation based on your faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross.

Works is the idea that God owes you for what you do, it's the idea that you earn God's love or favor because of what you do. The more you do, the more God is obligated to love you and if you do enough, then God is obligated to let you into heaven because your works outweigh your sins.

So let me repeat: You cannot mix grace and works because each excludes the other.

And Paul is using some clever wordplay here when he calls their gospel of faith plus works "different" to attack the false teachers and their heresy.

Remember what I said in the introduction:

These other "teachers" somehow convinced the Galatians that Paul had taught them imperfectly, that his was an inferior understanding of God, theology and salvation, that their understanding of these issues were better compared to Paul's understanding, perfect, even.

By using that word "different," he points out that there's a difference in quality between the false gospel from the false teachers and the true gospel Paul delivered to the Galatians just last year.

Just like the false teachers said their false gospel was of better quality than Paul's true gospel.

I love this. Paul turned their own words against them.

But then, Paul really lets those false teachers have it when he says in verse 7:

Galatians 1:7 – Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ESV

Paul says that in reality, the “other” gospel the false teachers are espousing isn’t the gospel at all.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross to forgive us of our sins. All that is required to accept this forgiveness is faith. It is simply by believing in Jesus and His finished work on the Cross that we receive forgiveness of sins and granted entrance into heaven in the next life. That’s it.

Nowhere in the True Gospel of Faith are we commanded to work for or earn our salvation by performing any works. We can’t earn our salvation by doing good works nor by avoiding sin. It is simply grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

This is why we said just a few moments ago that faith and works are incompatible with each other, they exclude each other.

If salvation is obtained by faith alone, then relying on works in addition to our faith renders our faith meaningless. It’s not really our faith that grants salvation, it’s our works. Works cancel out our faith.

On the other hand, if salvation is obtained by works, then faith renders our works meaningless as it’s not really our works that grant salvation, it’s our faith. Faith cancels out our works.

Paul brought to Galatia the True Gospel of Faith, which teaches that it is only God’s grace, through our faith in Jesus Christ, that grants us forgiveness and salvation.

The false teachers brought to Galatia a false gospel that cannot save because it renders Christ’s work on the Cross meaningless and relies on our good works to save us. The false gospel of the false teachers turn us into slaves to our good works.

What do I mean by that? Well, if forgiveness and salvation are obtained because of our good works, then how do you know when you’ve performed enough good works?

I mean, do we have to perform a certain number of good works? Is there a minimum number of good works we have to perform? And if so, what is that number? 10? 1,000? 8,741,307? No one knows. And once we reach that number to ensure heaven, can we stop performing good works? “Hey, I made it, I can relax and sin all I want, now!”

Or is there a certain amount of time we have to perform good works? Is there a minimum amount of time we have to perform good works in order to obtain forgiveness and salvation? And if so, what is that amount of time? A year? A decade? 57 years? And once we reach that time limit to ensure heaven, can we stop performing good works? “Hey, I made it, I can relax and sin all I want, now!”

But since we don’t know if there’s a minimum number of good works or a minimum amount of time, then we have to keep performing good works our entire lives, always fearful that we’re just under the number we need to get to heaven. We have to keep working so we don’t lose out on heaven.

Think of performing works to receive salvation as running on a treadmill. How long do you have to run? How far do you have to run? How fast do you have to run? You don’t know.

So you keep running on the treadmill, hoping that the next 5 minutes or mile or level will be enough, but never knowing if it is, so you can’t stop, you can’t slow down.

Never, in the history of relying on good works for salvation has anyone ever jumped off the treadmill and said, “Whew! I made it! I ran long enough, I ran far enough, I ran fast enough that I have finally earned forgiveness for my sins and entrance into heaven in the next life!”

According to Paul, the “gospel” that the false teachers brought to Galatia is no gospel at all, it’s a yoke of bondage to the Law and the abolition of Grace.

It’s not really “another” gospel. There’s only one gospel and that ain’t it!

Galatians 1:7 – Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ESV

Oh, but Paul isn’t done with these false teachers, not by a long shot.

Paul said that these false teachers brought nothing but trouble to the Galatians.

tarraso

Perplexity, confusion, unrest, great agitation

The word for trouble, tarraso, doesn’t just mean some mild annoyance. It refers to something that perplexed the Galatians, caused confusion amongst them, caused unrest and great agitation. All in contrast to the grace and peace Jesus Christ offered them, as seen in verse 2.

This word is used in several places in the New Testament. Let’s quickly take a look at a few to get an idea of what this word means.

When the Magi explained to Herod that a new King of the Jews had been born and they wished to worship Him, Matthew 2:3 says:

Matthew 2:3 – When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled (tarraso**), and all Jerusalem with him. ESV**

And we know how much this news troubled Herod because he ordered his troops to murder all baby boys under the age of 2 in order to kill this newborn who would replace him.

Remember the story of Jesus walking on the water? It seems we focus on the whole Peter trying to walk on the water part of the story, but before they recognized it was Jesus, they thought He was a ghost. Matthew 14:26 says:

Matthew 14:26 – But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified (tarraso**) and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ESV**

Fear and terror, that’s what tarraso brought to the disciples that day.

And finally, in Acts 17, a group of unbelievers in Thessalonica opposed Paul’s ministry so much, that they formed a mob and nearly caused a riot, which obviously troubled the city leaders:

Acts 17:26 – And the people and the city authorities were disturbed (tarraso**) when they heard these things. ESV**

The city leaders were so troubled by the uproar, afraid that the Romans would send in troops to restore order, that they demanded a ransom from the leaders of the synagogue where Paul was preaching to force him to stop and leave town.

These false teachers were troubling the Galatians, much like Herod, the disciples and the Thessalonians were troubled. Great unrest and agitation.

As I said just a moment ago, this is in stark contrast to the peace offered by Jesus that is inherent in the true gospel message.

Which leads us to the third meaning of didomi:

didomi
To give something to someone to care for their interests

The false teachers cared only for themselves, not the Galatians. They didn’t care they were causing unrest or fear or confusion. They were teaching a false gospel that couldn’t provide any peace.

In contrast, the True Gospel of Faith that Paul brought to them last year brought the peace of Jesus Christ to quiet their hearts. No perplexity, no confusion, no unrest and no great agitation.

Christ loved the Galatians – and us – so much, that He gave us His true gospel because He cares for our interests.

Galatians 1:7 – Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ESV

And Paul **STILL** isn't done raking these false teachers over the coals. He says these false teachers not only trouble the Galatians but they distort the gospel of Christ.

Some versions translate this word as pervert. I like that translation. I think it's much more descriptive.

The word in Greek is *metastrepho*, which means to turn from better to worse or light to darkness.

How has the gospel been distorted, how has the gospel been perverted by the false teachers? They said that grace was insufficient, that works must be added to faith to make it better. That is to say, adding human merit to God's grace, which is God's unmerited favor, so it makes no sense.

This distortion or perversion of the gospel, the idea of adding works to faith, is not a better alternative, no matter what the false teachers say, no matter how slick their presentation or how sensible their appeal sounds. Their gospel is not another gospel, for in reality, there is no other gospel.

That's the point of his opening, that's the point of this passage, that's the point of the entire letter and that's our Big Idea for this morning:

BIG IDEA
There Is No Other Gospel

III Third Point – The Penalty

Paul wraps up his opening statement by explaining the Penalty for the charge of preaching another gospel.

In verse 8, he says:

Galatians 1:8 – But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ESV

This verse is an extremely strong sentiment, it's an extremely strong defense of the true gospel. Paul is telling us that we are to reject any other, "gospel," even if it is delivered by an apostle or an angel. No one, literally no one, has another, "gospel" to preach. Any other gospel is merely a lie.

Paul says even if an angel brings another gospel, we are to reject it. This is not as far-fetched as it sounds.

There are examples throughout history of men and women claiming that an angel visited them and brought a new faith or understanding or gospel directly from God.

Paul tells the Galatians that they are to reject any gospel that is contrary to the one he preached to them a year earlier, that is, they are to reject any gospel other than the one he delivered to them.

Galatians 1:8 – But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be **accursed.** ESV

And what does Paul say about those who deliver a false gospel, something other than the true Gospel of Faith?

He says they are, "accursed."

anathema

Excommunicated

A person or thing doomed to destruction

A very strong word. The word anathema means to excommunicate, doomed to destruction. If this word doesn't tell you how strongly Paul felt about these false teachers and their false gospel, nothing will.

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says that anyone who preaches a different gospel fully deserves eternal destruction. This is how much Paul and God were concerned for the purity of the gospel message.

Anything that diluted the power and message of the work of Christ, the Grace of Christ and our faith in Christ was to be rejected, without any reservation whatsoever.

W.E. Vine puts it this way:

Paul declares in the strongest manner that the Gospel he preached was the one and only way of salvation and to preach another was to nullify the death of Christ.
W.E. Vine

This is why Paul spoke in such strong, clear language. Remember, you cannot mix faith and works, they exclude each other. If you add works to faith, what you really end up with is a gospel of works. And a gospel of works is the opposite of the True Gospel of Faith that Paul preaches.

And how much does Paul hate the idea of a false gospel?

Galatians 1:8 – But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ESV

Paul included himself in the curse. That's how strongly Paul believed in grace. He tells the Galatians that even if he were to come back to them and preach this false gospel of faith plus works, then they are to reject him and his false gospel. That he should be excommunicated from the very church he founded a year earlier, that he and his false gospel are doomed to destruction.

Then in verse 9, Paul says:

Galatians 1:9 – As we have said before, so now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ESV

Paul believes so strongly that we should reject the false teachers and their false gospel of faith plus works, that he repeats himself for emphasis. Paul is deadly serious on this topic.

I think Paul knows that he just made what some will consider an extreme statement, that the false teachers should be excommunicated and their false gospel is doomed to destruction. But I think by doubling down on his statement, by repeating what he said in verse 8, he's showing the Galatians this is not mere excitement or hyperbole or some over the top statement he's making.

He knows the truth and he refuses to believe a lie and – more importantly – he refused to allow the Galatians to believe the lie.

Galatians 1:9 – As we have said before, so now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ESV

You see the phrase, “contrary to the one you received?” Paul is reminding his Galatian friends they accepted and believed the true Gospel of Faith that Paul preached to them just a year earlier.

And if the grace he delivered to them was true then, it's true now. God hasn't changed in the intervening year. Christ's death on the Cross wasn't replaced by human effort in the intervening year.

The True Gospel of Faith is still true, the false gospel of faith plus works is still false.

Because, as we pointed out in the beginning of this morning's message:

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Let's close in prayer.

I'd like to remind you that we have someone at our Connect Desk in the lobby waiting to greet you with a smile and answer any questions you might have.

Also, someone will be waiting in the prayer room next to the Café if you need to pray about anything at all.

Have a great week. Bob will be back next Sunday. See you then.

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