

## **Beware of Gospel Distortions**

Galatians 1:6-9

October 4, 2015

### **Summary**

This passage is part of a letter Paul wrote to the churches in the region of Galatia. He wrote the Galatian churches to strongly counter a form of false teaching the believers in those churches had embraced. This form of false teaching denied the power of the cross of Christ to save and insisted on Gentiles observing the Law in order to be saved. Paul admonished the believers in these churches to affirm that salvation comes only by believing on the finished work of Jesus and on nothing else. Verses 6-9 represent an initial rebuke of the Galatians for dismissing the truth that salvation comes by faith alone.

### **Getting Started**

*Has someone ever called you out for something you did wrong? What led to them correcting you? How did you respond?* It hurts to be corrected because nobody likes to be told they are wrong! And yet, according the Bible, we all need discipline to grow in our faith (Hebrews 12:11). In today's passage, Paul calls out the Galatian believers for embracing a false gospel that led them into bondage to a lifestyle of trying to earn God's grace. We must remember that salvation is a free gift purchased at Christ's expense that can never be earned (Romans 6:23). Trying to earn God's grace puts us on a never-ending treadmill of perfection by human effort, and God wants more for us than that.

### **Understanding the Passage**

Read Galatians 1:6-9 and identify 2-3 key words or phrases in this passage.

*What did Paul say astonished him in verse 6?*

*Who is the 'him' Paul refers to in this same verse?*

*What do you think he meant by labeling the Galatian believers as deserters? What images does the word deserter bring to mind?*

*Who were the trouble makers Paul referred to in verse 7 and what did they do to cause trouble among the churches?*

*What is this 'different gospel' Paul alludes to that is really no gospel at all?*

*How did the Galatian believers turn to this 'different gospel?' Does Paul indicate that this turn happened quickly or gradually?*

*How does Paul seek to correct their distortion of the true Gospel?*

*Do you think Paul is overreacting here or being too harsh? Explain your answer.*

*Paul says that anyone who preaches something other than the true Gospel should be accursed. What did he have in mind here?*

*Where else in the Bible does Paul correct believers? See I Corinthians 5 as an example.*

### **Applying the Passage**

*The Galatian believers turned to good works to make themselves acceptable to God. How easy is it for believers today to make the same mistake? How about you?*

*What's the evidence that we have distorted the Gospel so that their thinking or message denies the power of the cross? How can we correct this erroneous thinking?*

*What is Jesus teaching you personally from this passage?*

### **Share Point**

Read Galatians 1:6-9 and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

### **Consider This!**

God gave the law to convict us of our guilt and our need for a Savior, so that we would turn to Jesus Christ by faith: "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). but once the law has brought us to Christ, it has accomplished its purpose: "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (Galatians 3:23). That's why Paul said in another context, "We know that the law is good *if one uses it properly*" ( I Timothy 1:8). Like a hammer that can be used by a carpenter to build a house or be used by a murderer to crush someone's skull, the law can be used properly or improperly. The law is a blessing from God in its proper use, as a mirror to show us the truth about ourselves so that we will see our desperate need for total dependency upon Jesus Christ. However, the law can also destroy when it is misused, and *it is misused when it used to produced an outward conformity in the absence of faith, hope and love.*

Bob George in Growing in Grace, pages 160-161.

### **Commentary Notes (ESV Study Bible)**

1:6 *so quickly*. It was a remarkably short time between Paul's first proclamation to the Galatians and their present disarray. The phrases *deserting him* and *different gospel* show that these are not issues over which Christians might legitimately disagree. The

Galatians are questioning the very gospel itself, and Paul is a model of forthright frankness when central issues are at stake.

1:7 *there are some who trouble you.* Visiting preachers who have tried to persuade the Galatians that they should require circumcision and obedience to the whole law as a means of justification before God (Gal. 4:17 and 6:12-13).

1:8-9 *a gospel contrary.* The gospel is unchanging. Thus Paul pronounces a curse of final judgment on those who proclaim or receive a different gospel. Even if he himself, or *an angel from heaven*, were to preach such a gospel, the Galatians should reject it.