

No Other Gospel

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, I heard a joke about three men, a scientist, a pastor and a backpacker, who are travelling by plane when there was engine failure.
- The pilot turned to the three men and said, Men, we're going to crash. The good news is we have some parachutes. The bad news is I have one and there's only two left for you three.
- And with that, he jumped out the plane. The scientist then spoke up and said, But I am one of the greatest minds the world has ever seen. I must survive. And so he grabbed one and also jumped out of the plane.
- The pastor was an elderly man and he said to the young backpacker, Son, I've lived a long life and I know where I'm heading. You take the last one. The backpacker replied, No, it's okay.
- That bright spark scientist actually took my backpack instead. The point of the story is when it comes to being saved, it matters that we've got the real deal.
- [0 : 5 8] Doesn't it? And this is especially true when it comes to the real gospel. Because there is no other gospel that saves us apart from the one given to us in the Bible.
- And this is what Paul wants us to know today as we start a new series through his letter to the Galatian churches, which is all about sticking with the real gospel and living in light of it.
- The background of the letter is this. In Acts chapter 13 and 14, Paul had gone through the region of Galatia. It's quite a large region. It included cities like Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Pisidian Antioch.
- He'd been going around preaching the gospel and people had become Christians. Churches had started. But now what was happening, it's about a year later, Paul is no longer in Galatia.
- He's moved back to Syria to a city called Antioch. There's a couple of Antiochs. And it's during this time that some Jewish Christians have gone to the Galatian churches and said, the gospel about Jesus that Paul preached is not enough to save you.
- [2 : 0 7] You also need to have the law of Moses, including and particularly including circumcision. And so we kind of get this sense on the next slide from chapter 6 of Galatians, where it talks about people trying to compel the Galatian churches to be circumcised.
- In fact, it seems that there was a number of these Jewish teachers going around saying the same thing, because after Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian churches, some of these teachers came to Paul in Antioch.
- And on the next slide, in Acts chapter 15, we read, certain people came from Judea to Antioch, where Paul was, and were teaching the believers, unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.
- And so when Paul hears about this happening in the Galatian churches, he writes this letter to Galatia, reminding them that there is no other gospel that saves, apart from the one they first believed.

And so with that background in mind, he begins his letter by reminding them of that gospel, the true one. So point one in your outline, verse one and two in your Bibles. Paul, an apostle sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God, the father, who raised him from the dead and all the brothers and sisters with me to the churches in Galatia.

[3 : 38] And now before he actually gets to the gospel, he reminds them that he is a true apostle, sent not from people, but from Christ. Now we'll see a lot more of that in two weeks time when we come to the next section of the letter.

But he starts here this week so that they might listen to him. And in particular, listen to the true gospel in verses three and four. He says, grace and peace to you from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and father.

Now, I realize that many of you know that the word gospel means good news, but good news about what? Well, it's there in verses three and four.

It's the news that Jesus is the Lord, the Christ who gave himself for our sins at the cross to rescue us from the present evil age.

You see in the Bible, there are two ages or kingdoms. There is the kingdom of this world, which we are all born into. And the king or the prince, as Jesus calls him, is the devil.

[4 : 52] And his right hand man is sin. Sin has the power over people such that they naturally do the wrong thing and naturally do not believe in God. As I've said before, you never have to teach children to do the wrong thing.

It comes naturally, doesn't it? And even as Christians, our old natural instincts often bubble up before we even want them to, or even without wanting them to.

So if someone cuts us off the road or tries to push in in front of us, our natural reaction, isn't it? You first and bless you. That's not our natural reaction. It's how rude. And I'll get you.

Isn't it? Yeah, because we're all born into this present evil age, we naturally sin and don't believe in God. And the problem with this is that it leads to judgment and eternal death.

And then there's the age or the kingdom of God. And the king is Jesus. His right hand man is the spirit who enables us to believe in God and enables us to do good that pleases God.

[5 : 54] So even in chapter five of Galatians, we'll read that the fruit of the spirit is joy, peace, patience, love, self-control, and those things. Things our world needs much more of actually.

And being in this kingdom leads to ongoing forgiveness and eternal life instead of death. Now, both ages or kingdoms are spiritual, but they both come with physical consequences.

We already feel some of the physical consequences of having been in this present evil age, haven't we? I mean, we all suffer disease and disaster and death, but there's actually worse physical consequence to come in hell, actually.

But on the other hand, the kingdom of God will one day come with the physical blessings of a new heavens and earth, of a new perfect body where we get to enjoy life to the full.

But the thing is, the only way to get from the present age into the kingdom of God is to be rescued. We cannot get there on our own.

[7 : 00] We cannot buy our way in or earn our way out. Perhaps the most famous rescue story of last year was the rescue of the Thai boys soccer team. Do you remember that one?

It was June, July last year. It captivated the world. And the boys and their coach went walking to a cave where they were trapped by water. And no matter how hard they tried, they could not get themselves out, could they?

They had to wait for divers with tanks to come in and rescue them. In fact, one of the divers died in the process of saving them. Well, in this present evil age, it's like a cave.

We are trapped not by water, but by sin. And we cannot get ourselves out no matter how hard we try or how good we try to be. We cannot buy or earn our way out.

We needed someone to rescue us, someone to pay for our sin so we could be released from this age. And the gospel or the good news is Jesus has done just that.

[8 : 05] The Lord Jesus gave his life for us to pay for our sins so that we could be released and rescued from this age and brought into God's kingdom with new spiritual life now such that God is our father.

In verses three and four, Paul actually says that twice. He talks about God being our father. He's not a distant God. He's our heavenly father who loves us and cares for us, who will never leave us nor forsake us, but always work for our spiritual good.

And this kingdom of God, as I mentioned, also comes with physical, new physical life in the world to come. But the thing about all this is that all this is done for us even when we didn't deserve it.

The Thai boys soccer team, they didn't deserve to die because of their coach's decision to get into the cave, but we deserve judgment because of our decision to reject God.

And yet God's grace, his undeserved generosity meant he generously gave his son who himself then generously gave his life at the cross for us.

[9 : 17] Even when we didn't deserve it. It's no wonder Paul praises God in verse five saying to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

You see, the good news about Christ is such good news. It's worth praising God for, thinks Paul. And yet the astonishing thing here is the Galatians were instead deserting God and the grace that they experienced.

For now they are turning to a false gospel at point two, verse six. He says, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all.

Evidently, some people, these false teachers are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. Christ. You see, it's only been about a year since the Galatians believe the news about Jesus.

And yet so quickly, says Paul, they've turned to a different gospel. And they like the Israelites in our first reading who had just been rescued from Egypt by God. And then very quickly turned to worshiping God by adding a golden calf to their worship.

[10 : 37] And but notice in verse six, turning to a different gospel by adding to it really means turning away from God. And if that's not bad enough, it also means turning away from the grace of Christ.

I remember these false teachers were saying the Galatians had to believe in Christ plus do good works. Works like circumcision, works of the law.

And so this false gospel was Christ plus works. But as soon as you say your salvation relies on what you do, you know, some good work, then you're saying what Christ has done is not good enough.

Which when you think about it, it's pretty offensive. It's like saying, oh, thanks so much, Jesus, for dying for me. That's nice, but I don't actually think it's good enough. Let me help you out in saving me by doing some good works to add to your death.

How arrogant is that? How offensive to Christ who gave his life? And what's more, you're now depending on your works rather than God's grace.

[11 : 44] As Paul says towards the end of his letter on the next slide in chapter five, he says, you who are trying to be justified, that is made right with God by the law, by doing these works of law, have been alienated from Christ and you have fallen away from grace.

It's pretty serious, isn't it? Their salvation is at stake. You see, adding a few good works as a requirement to be safe might not sound like a big deal, but whenever you add to the gospel, you're then changing it from the true gospel to something that's different.

As verse seven says, it's a perverted gospel, which in the end condemns. I've tried to do this visual aid here, see if we can help you understand this. Here I've got a little, imagine this is one of those lifeboat things on it, you know, the ones that you throw to people who are drowning from boats.

So it's usually red and white, but this is orange anyway. So imagine I'm on the boat and someone out there is drowning and I grab this. Now I could throw it to them and save them.

But I thought, look, you know what? I think this needs, I need to add something to this. So I might just add a weight. I'll just add a big weight to it to try and make it a bit better.

[13 : 10] Here we go. We'll just add this weight to it. Not sticky tape, my sermon notes to it. That would be unhelpful. All right. There we are. Put this weight on.

All right. And then once I've done that, I'll go, okay. All right. Here you go, buddy drowning. Come and get it. What have I done? By changing the thing that saves, by adding to it, I've made it a thing that drowns, that sinks straight down and takes the person with them.

Do you get the analogy? By adding to the gospel, they've actually perverted it and made it from a thing that saves to a thing that drowns and condemns. And not just the hearers, but also the preachers.

Have a look at verse eight. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let them be under God's curse.

As we've already said, so I now say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than the one you accepted, let them be under God's curse.

[14 : 20] Paul says, whoever preaches a different gospel, then let them be under God's curse, by which he means, let them be condemned to hell. That's what he's saying. Now, we might think Paul is overreacting here a bit.

You know, maybe he got up on the wrong side of the bed today. But he's not. Because to lead people to hell is an act of pure evil that deserves judgment. Back in 2012, in Britain, a man called Dale Cregan rang the police, saying that there was a burglary taking place at a home in Manchester.

Two police officers, Nicola Hugh and Fiona Bone, responded to the call. But it was actually a hoax intended to lure the police out, because when they came, Dale shot them, and for good measure, threw a grenade at them.

On the next slide is the headline from the Sydney Mooran Herald that says, Pure evil. Unarmed female police officers lured to their deaths in gun and grenade attack.

On the next slide is a picture of the two officers. Nicola is on the left, and she was actually set to be married soon time after this. Now imagine they were your daughters or sisters.

[15 : 33] How angry would you be? How deserving of judgment would Dale Cregan be? Well, these Galatians had not long become Christians through Paul.

They were like his spiritual sons and daughters. He helped them to faith. And now there are these false teachers preaching a false gospel, luring them, not to physical death, but eternal death in hell.

Paul is not overreacting. It's an act of pure evil. And notice he says, it doesn't matter what credentials the preacher has. It doesn't matter if it's me or Vijay or Paul himself, or even an angel, verse 8.

It doesn't matter who they are. If they preach a different gospel, unless they repent, then they're condemned under God's curse.

And the kicker in all this is that these false teachers were actually preaching this false gospel, not for the good of the Galatians, but for their own good.

[16 : 41] Now on the next slide, let me show you that verse again from chapter 6, the full verse. It says, those who want to impress people by means of the flesh, that is like circumcision, are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. And remember, for the Jews, the law of circumcision was a huge deal.

And so these Jewish Christian false teachers are preaching this false gospel, not for the good of the Galatians, but so they can impress fellow Jews and avoid being persecuted by them.

That's why they're preaching this Christ plus circumcision gospel. It's for their own good. And so in contrast to them, Paul says in verse 10, am I now trying to win the approval of human beings like these false teachers are, or of God?

Or am I trying to please people, you know, impress people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. And the implication being that these false teachers are not servants of Christ.

[17 : 48] And this issue is not just an ancient way back then issue. This is a current today issue. Just last month, the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed a man from Perth, actually, the very Reverend John Shepard.

Sounds very impressive. He appointed him to be the Archbishop's representative in Rome to the Pope. So he would represent the Anglican Church to the Catholic Church, basically.

But this man from Perth, the very Reverend John Shepard, does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. He thinks it's just something that, his words were, we need to let go of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

It's just spiritual. But that's not the gospel. That, that, he was appointed just last January. Or there was a student minister here, this was a few years ago now. He's got, he's at his own church now.

But he was studying at Ridley, and it was around Easter time, just before Easter actually, when a former bishop of our diocese came to the class at Ridley, and said, look, the world doesn't like hearing about sin and judgment.

[18 : 53] So at Easter time, don't talk about that. Just talk about God's love. Well, apart from the fact that it's actually loving to warn people. I mean, if you see a car coming towards someone, do you, oh, look, they don't want to hear about that.

We'll just, I won't say anything. No, it's loving to warn people. Besides that fact, the bishop was advocating Christ minus judgment and sin, which again is no gospel at all.

This is a problem we still have today. And I hope this bishop has repented. Otherwise, despite his credentials, you know, a bishop, what do you think God's word says to him from our passage today?

What does all this mean for us though? Well, for those here today who are not yet Christian, then will you believe the good news about Jesus? Jesus is King and Savior who gave himself to pay for your sins at the cross.

So we have life eternal in God's kingdom. Will you trust in him? Will you believe in him? And for us who do, I've got one don't and two do's of application. First, don't add to the gospel.

[20 : 05] And so desert God, and the grace of Christ. Christ. We have some friends who we went to uni with. They live in Northern Victoria. They're great people.

But they started going to a church that taught them that in order to be saved, they had to believe in Christ, plus be slain in the spirit. Not exactly what they, sure what they meant by that.

They, they seem to indicate you had to have an extra spiritual experience of some sort. And to clarify, I asked them straight out, I said, so if we don't have this experience, are we still Christian?

Are we still saved? No, they replied. Unfortunately, it kind of killed our friendship a bit, but it wasn't until this week preparing this sermon that I realized it could kill their salvation.

I need to pray for them more regularly. We need to try and reconnect with them, actually. You see, we can add things to the gospel. For us, it might be turning things that encourage us into things we think will save us.

[21 : 11] I've had people visit us, and they, they, they walk away from visiting our church angry because we didn't have communion that day. I had to have communion as though communion saves them, but it doesn't.

Now, baptism, communion, reading our Bible, all very good things that encourage us, but they do not save us, which is actually kind of relief because how good is our Bible reading?

Really? No, we are saved through Christ alone by grace alone. And as soon as we add things to the gospel, we fall from that grace.

So don't add to the gospel. And so desert Christ and fall from grace. Second, do know the gospel so we can share the true one and not fall for a false one.

The gospel is the good news. As I've mentioned that Jesus is Lord and savior who by his death and resurrection saves us from sin to life with God. I realized the Bible sometimes speaks just about one aspect of it.

[22 : 15] And sometimes it doesn't use the word gospel. And it uses different words. But we need to know what it is.

And if you want help to know what it is and to try and work out how the Bible describes it, on the welcome table out there, I've got these big yellow sheets, which kind of just talks about the different phrases the Bible uses. And with some verses that you can look up to try and help you get what the gospel is.

It's the good news of Christ as Lord and Savior, who by his death and resurrection saves us from sin to bring us life with God. And we need to know it, especially those who teach it so we can share the true one and not fall for a fake one.

And thirdly and finally, the next do, do praise God for the gospel. When the Thai boys were rescued, there were pictures like on the next slide of people rejoicing and praising the rescuers.

In fact, two of the divers who helped rescue them were Australians, who on the next slide, just last January, received Australian of the Year together, the first time two people had received it together.

[23 : 24] And they were praised on the next slide, even by the prime minister. There he is shaking hands with them. Now, they deserved to be praised. But how much more so does God deserve to be praised?

I mean, he, God gave his son to rescue us, not from death in a cave, but from eternal death in hell, even when we didn't deserve it. And so apart from that church, I wonder when was the last time we praised God for rescuing us?

It's so easy to take our rescue for granted, isn't it? You know, to forget God's grace. But without it, we would have no hope of life after death. We would have no comfort of help in this life.

We have no contentment in hardship, no forgiveness of sin or freedom from guilt. We have no intrinsic worth as God's dearly loved children. And no higher purpose in life.

But because God has rescued us from this present evil age, then we have all of that, even when we deserved none of that. And so with Paul in verse five, let's continue to praise God to whom be glory forever and ever.

[24 : 40] Amen. Let's pray. Our gracious father, we do thank you for the true gospel that saves. And we thank you that it's been reliably handed down to us and recorded for us in your word.

Please help us. We pray not to add nor subtract to it, but to know it so that we can share it and not for, for fake ones. And help us.

We pray not to take it for granted, but to keep praising you for it. For there is no other gospel that saves, no other name that saves, but Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen.