

A GOD-GIVEN WARNING Galatians 1:6-9

When I'm preparing a sermon, there's three main effects I always keep in mind according to 1 Corinthians 14:3. Biblical preaching should exhort, edify and consol. It should correct, teach, and comfort. Well, what we see in book of Galatians is primarily exhortation or correction. Now it does bring comfort to those of us who agree with Paul – nothing brings comfort like hearing the gospel preached – and it does teach doctrine, surely, but to the folks on the other end of this letter who received it in real time and had believed a real lie, it's mainly correction. And Paul uses strong language to let them know that **they have pursued a devastating course by putting themselves back under elements of the Old Testament Law**. He says things like: they were deserting the Father; they had been foolish and bewitched; they were severed from Christ. This letter is a warning to anyone who would believe a different message than Paul preached or who would purposely distort the pure grace message of the gospel that men are saved by grace through faith in Christ. It is a letter to them and if they don't take care of the false doctrine problem in the churches, it will become a letter against them.

Paul is serious about understanding what the gospel is because it's life or death. If you believe the wrong message, you go to hell for eternity! So having the right information is crucial when eternal destinies are at stake. I've mentioned this before but in most of Paul's letters he gives thanks to God for them, but not this one. He gets straight to the point because any sort of warm greeting might look like he's pleasing man and buttering them up. For the sake of pure doctrine, he skips that. I think every Bible teacher wants his messages to be **profound** and **practical** at the same time, but **more importantly, is that it be precise**. Why? Because if you lose track of what the gospel is in a church, you lose everything. You're no longer a God-glorifying church and nothing else matters. You're like a restaurant that doesn't serve food. You claim to be what people need to satisfy them, but ultimately you leave people starved. And that was happening in the Galatian churches. One man said that "had not Paul written Galatians, the Church would have been lost in slavery to Mosaic O.T. Law and would have become nothing more than an offshoot sect of Judaism (Thompson)" "Judaism was the cradle of Christianity, but...it was very nearly its grave as well (Talk Thru The Bible)." And honestly, based upon some forms of Christianity today with their priesthoods, there's hardly any difference. That's how important this book is to the Church. The book of Galatians has kept God's people on track with gospel of Jesus Christ since it was written. Galatians is what spurred the Reformation and it is no less relevant for us today.

I. **PAUL DEFENDS HIS APOSTLESHIP. (vv. 1-2)**

False teachers were attacking Paul's authority, saying he wasn't a real apostle because if they could people to believe that, then they wouldn't need to believe his message. If the messenger isn't credible, neither is his message, so they went after him constantly. But he is authentic and his apostleship came from God and not men.

II. **PAUL SUMMARIZES THE GOSPEL. (vv. 3-5)**

He says if you want grace from God and peace from God, it only comes by Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins. That's the only way to be rescued out of this evil age. That's God will and that's how God is glorified forever. We saw last week that the gospel was simple and clear by looking at 1 Cor. 15 and John 3:16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus, who died for our sins, was buried and raised back to life 3 days later so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. There's only one step to heaven and it's by believing in Christ. In six words we could say we're saved **by grace, through faith, in Christ**.

III. PAUL REBUKES THE GALATIANS (V. 6)

A. They deserted the Father. (v. 6)

Paul was amazed or astonished that they did it so quickly. They showed hardly any resistance to the false teachers. But how did they desert Him?

B. They exchanged the true gospel for a false gospel. (v. 6)

1. They had basically ditched everything Paul and Barnabas taught them or preached to them when some false teachers came in teaching and preaching something else.
2. God calls us by the grace of Christ, not law or legalism. Not manmade rules or Old Testament Laws given to Israel. We are the Church, not Israel. The Law was given to Israel. The Church was given the gospel message of grace in Christ. Grace is the word that encapsulates the age we live in.
3. Just this week I was reading some literature delivered to our doorstep by some modern day Judaizers known as Jehovah's Witnesses (who are not real witnesses of Jehovah, but of Satan, and some guy named Charles Taze Russel who started the cult). But the whole message of their 15-page publication was based upon this idea of the meek inheriting the earth and if I wanted to inherit the future earth, I had to be meek. To explain, they turned to Deuteronomy 30 where Moses is instructing Israel before they cross into the promised land and that's where they got their message of salvation! From the law! Deuteronomy means second-law. So basically, walk with God and love God by keeping the law and try to be a good person or else. That sounds great, to an unsuspecting young Galatian... They're even using the Bible. But we're not Israel. And we don't live according to the law. Their message was all works. It is a performance-based relationship with no guarantee that when I die, I'll have kept the law enough and loved God enough to make the cut. The emphasis is on me and not what Christ has done. In fact, neither Christ nor grace was even mentioned in their publication! There was no cross. That passage was written to Israel at a specific time in their history to call them to renew their walk with the Lord as they entered the Promised Land. It's not for the Church. Not that we can't learn from it, for all Scripture is profitable, but we apply based it based on principle – as a secondary application. The primary application was for a different people, in a different age. To the Church, Paul says put your faith in Christ and be saved by His grace – but they didn't mention that – and I believe if Paul were alive today, you can bet he would rebuke them just like the Judaizers in Galatia.

IV. PAUL REBUKES THE JUDAIZERS (Vv. 7-9)

The first thing he does is that...

A. He draws attention to them. (v. 7)

He points them out. Something you have to do sometimes with grace-denying false teachers.

1. He uses the word "some". "Some are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ".
2. In chapter 2 he refers to the 'some' as '**them**'. "But we did not yield in subjection to **them** for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you."
3. And in chapter 5 he refers to "**them**" as, "**those**". "I wish that **those** who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves."

Do you see what he's doing? These are **not inclusive** words. He's not including them within the congregation as legitimate believers, but as outsiders and illegitimate. The heaviest term he uses is **false brethren**. False brothers who are outsiders who do not really belong to Christ and are not children of God.

B. He points out their error. (v. 7)

They were distorting, overturning, altering and changing, the pure, free grace gospel of Jesus Christ by trying to mix in with it Old Testament Law that was given to Israel.

C. He curses anyone who would teach an erroneous gospel. (v. 8-9)

When apostle Paul spoke this curse by his apostolic authority, he was doing more than just cursing the false teachers in Galatia. He was pronouncing an **everlasting** and **universal** curse upon **ANYONE** who would deliberately mislead people and preach another way to be saved other than through faith in Christ, whether it's a man or an angel. He uses hyperbole to exaggerate and amplify the need to pay attention by referring to apostles and holy angels, not that they would ever preach a false gospel. So I don't think he's referring to fallen angels here like Satan but I'm going to take the opportunity today to expose some gospels that came from fallen angels who pretend to be holy angels. What Paul said seems **prophetic** because there are false gospels that have not only come from men, like Charles Taze Russel with the JW's, but have also come from **angels**. I'll pry step on a few toes to do it like Paul is doing but that's okay. I know today's message is from the Lord and I'm not here to please man. I'm here to teach the Word and commanded as a church leader to expose false doctrine.

V. SOME FALSE GOSPELS OF OUR DAY

A. The Koran.

The book of Islam carries a false gospel, a different way to be saved. It was written by a man named Muhammad who lived in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. A book called the 'Kingdom of the Cults' says, "According to extra-Qur'anic sources, Muhammad's first **mystical experience** was allegedly being attacked by two men who cut his belly open in search of something. His foster mother thought he was demon-possessed after finding him standing and not having appeared to be the victim of any violence. He later claimed his nonexistent attackers to be **angels** who cleansed his heart. In A.D. 610 [at the age of 30] he claimed to have received his first of a series of **revelations** of the Qur'an from God through the **angel** Gabriel [whom is also considered the Holy Spirit of Islam]." These **revelations** took place in a cave near Mecca, an idolatrous place at the time and a city full of false gods and false ideas and false religions. Apparently, he was told by "Gabriel" to write down what the **angel** told him to and the result is the Quran, which makes Jesus out to be just a normal human prophet, one of many, and makes Muhammad a greater prophet than Jesus. Most Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was taken bodily into heaven without having died, so they eliminate the message of the cross entirely. According to the Quran, if you desire to escape judgment by God, you must obey Allah's law by fulfilling the works of the Five Pillars of the Faith which include:

- Recitation of the Shahada (where you pronounce allegiance to Allah)
- Five daily prayers in Arabic
- Almsgiving (tithing)
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan (May 5 – June 4)
- A pilgrimage to Mecca
- Some also believe in a sixth pillar known as Jihad, or holy war. (radicals)

A second false gospel to come from a demonic, fallen angel is the Book of Mormon.

B. The Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon and the Mormon Church also carry another way to be saved other than by grace through faith in Christ. Mormons add 15 books to the Bible and dozens of verses, or altogether thousands of verses. It takes away from the original Bible, distorts it, and adds to it and that which is added is full of **historical error, geographical error, and failed prophecies**. Their prophets are known for false prophecies. According to the original Prophet of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, it all started with a vision he had in the neighborhood woods near his home where Smith had a vision while he was praying. These woods were probably a familiar place for Joseph, because he and his superstitious parents, his father especially, would frequently search for buried treasure through their occult practice of looking glasses or peep-stones. So he was exposed to cultic practices early on. But he said that in the vision, **angelic beings** claiming to be God the Father and God the Son apparently materialized before him and spoke to him about the condition of the Christian Church and its need for restoration and that he would lead the way in this mission of restoration. In 1823, he received further revelation from **another angel** called Moroni and in 1827 Moroni appeared again to have him translate some golden plates, with seer stones behind a curtain and the book of Mormon was the result. The Book of Mormon makes our Lord and God Jesus Christ out to be just one of several gods, it makes God the Father out to be an exalted human who was exalted to that position for his exemplary life and says that if you follow their teaching to the fullest, you too, can be a god. According to the book of Mormon, Jesus is not God, but a god, and His death is not sufficient to pay for your sins, but you must work your way to one of 3 heavenly realms by performing good deeds and religious works like baptism, loyalty, morality, tithing, and missionary duty and the more faithful you are, the better chances you have of reaching the greatest heaven. It's a mess of false teachings. I find it funny that Mormon's call the 15 books of the book of Mormon "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" because that's exactly what it is. It's **another one**, which Paul would say, "...is really not another."

The last example of a demonic teaching is one that a lot of people have not heard the history of and personally I've never heard anyone teach on the history of it but it's...

A. The Rosary and Marian doctrines of Catholicism.

You know that necklace prayer chain thing? Just because it has a cross on it, doesn't mean it's harmless or innocent. And I'm not bashing Catholics; I promise you I'm not. The war is not with people – with flesh and blood, but with the teaching. I'm simply trying to present the doctrines in light of the testimony of Scripture. I was taught to pray with a rosary when I was a kid. I've kneeled before her statue with a rosary in my hands. I've visited the 14 devotional stations of the cross pictures that were hung on the sanctuary walls in a clockwise pattern, praying through them with rosary in my hand. It's like a mini prayer pilgrimage around the sanctuary of the church.

But as far as its history, *catholiccompany.com* says, "Our Lady famously appeared and gave the devotion of the Holy Rosary to assist [missionary St. Dominic (approx.. 1200 AD)] in combating the Albigensian heresy then wreaking havoc in the Church. This [**angelic**] apparition of Mary, which could be described as a ghostlike, disembodied spirit of Mary, occurred in southern France while St. Dominic (1170–1221) was laboring without success to convert souls back to the church. He claimed that while he was praying, Mary gave him the rosary, greeting him with the familiar words of Gabriel from Luke 1:28 where he said, "Greetings favored one! The Lord is with thee." Dominic was told by Mary that if he wanted to have an abundant harvest among the Albigenses then he was to preach this rosary to them and teach it to them and they would be saved. They call it a spiritual weapon for the salvation of souls. With the rosary, it is clear that salvation becomes more than simple faith in Christ and Mary replaces Jesus as the only mediator between God and man, actually praying to Mary 53 times once through the recitation of it.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, article 969 Mary is the Mediatrix (A Co-Mediator between man and God with Christ)(what that makes all of the dead saints that are prayed to for various blessings and prosperities, I don't know, but Mary is venerated above them). According to article 2677 Mary is considered the Mother of Mercy, the All-Holy One whom we are to wholly give ourselves over to, not only now, but also surrender "the hour of our death wholly to her care". It says we are to entrust ourselves to her, especially in our dying moments. That is purely anti-biblical. With the closing prayers of the Rosary you're supposed to ask the gracious advocate Queen Mary to watch over you, guide you, and help you. Mary has given some 15 promises to those who recite the rosary. She has said...

1. Whosoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces. [*A signal grace is a superstitious sign from God in daily life*]
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary. [*she claims divine attributes*]
3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin and defeat heresies.
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish. (In other words, anyone who faithfully prays the Rosary and asks for Mary's intercession will be saved from hell.) – *words from the website itslef*
6. Whosoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its Sacred Mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. [*she promises prosperity*]
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of Glory in Heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by recitation of the Rosary.
12. All those who propagate the Holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors in the entire Celestial Court during their life and at the hour of death.

Those heretical promises and ideas didn't just come from men, but mainly from the appearances of an angelic being claiming to be Mary which are occurring all over the world with millions flocking to these sights.

What do the book of Mormon, the Quran, and the Marian teachings have in common? They teaching they carry that are in direct opposition to the Bible about how to get right with God and they all come from mysterious angelic beings. They all carry different gospels, which aren't really gospels at all. They all lead people astray from the gospel and away from the all-sufficient work, person, and ministry of Jesus Christ! And that's Paul's warning to us. He says, "I don't care if it's me, or another apostle, **or an angel from heaven**... If someone preaches to you a gospel that isn't what I preached to you, he is to be accursed!" Anathema is the word for accursed. It means to be devoted to destruction. Let him be damned to hell. And Paul repeats his warning to get the point across to make it very clear and when you see something repeated in the Word of God, it means God is determined about it and we need to pay attention. "As we have said before, so I say again to you now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" What's that say about everything we do in the church? It's all secondary and pointless if we don't have the right message. Later traditions don't override a previously ratified curse. The curse came first.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 goes right along with our passage today – same context of false teachers – and I invite you to turn there with me. It's only 3 pages back in my Ryrie Study Bible. Let's read it.

When he said they bear it beautifully, he was being sarcastic. They were letting false teachers sneak into the church and walk all over them and the believers were even duped into paying them! Look at verse 13. Paul says these polished, smooth-talkers are, “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” That’s what’s really behind the false gospels. Satan and other fallen angels appearing as angels of light.

VI. LET NOTHING DISTRACT YOU FROM CHRIST

Paul says here to let nothing distract you from the **simplicity** and **purity** of devotion to Christ. These distractions aren’t the run of the mill distractions of life like noise or hurry or crowds or even things like abuse of social media and selfish pursuits taking away from our time with God (though the principle could apply and I’ve heard this passage preached that way by teachers whom I look up to) – but the **precept**, the more definite application of our text is talking about the greater distractions, heretical distractions, that could keep us from a pure faith and practice – a faith and practice that lines up with reality, with God’s objective unchangeable truth. I had a teacher at Frontier School of the Bible who said, “All true doctrine exalts Jesus Christ.” And he’s right. If something or someone takes away from finished **work of Christ**, from the **person of Christ** being fully God, yet fully man, or from **the ministry of Christ** as our only Mediator (go-between), then we don’t need to listen to them. Don’t yield in subjection to them and so desert the Father who called you by His grace. Even if an angel appears to you and tells you another way to be saved, don’t give them the time of day. If a man or an angel tells you to pray to someone other than Christ, don’t give them the time of day. Let them be accursed. If a man stands up in a pulpit and tells you another way to be saved than by faith in Christ, don’t pay him any heed either.

Illustration: Life Experience & Chilean Doll

Part of the reason I’m so adamant about this is because I grew up veiled in a darkness where I didn’t really know Christ was supposed to be sufficient for me. The gospel was always shrouded in works and I was taught to consult priests and pray to dead saints rather than simply praying to God the Father in Jesus’ name. We have TOTAL ACCESS to the throne through Christ. He is our righteousness before the Father. And maybe partly why I’m recently more adamant is because we just spent time in South America where it seems like there’s a statue of Mary on every corner with people bowing before her continually. It’s heart-wrenching. Catholicism is different everywhere. In the West like the States, one catholic website said the rosary is actually quite disregarded compared to the rest of the catholic world. The tallest hill in Santiago, Chile had a giant Marian statue on it. They had candle racks burning thousands of candles to her, with notes on the candles thanking her for some miracle she gave them. **Just because a miracle happens, doesn’t mean it’s from God. The Anti-Christ will do all sorts of miracles with Satan’s power during the tribulation.** In Chile they had a miracle-producing Marian doll which they kept in a shrine in a cathedral downtown. Men and women would crawl on their hands and knees in a great pilgrimage from the city all the way out to the coast (75 miles) as they followed it and prayed to it and claimed it did miracles for them. **A doll... in exchange for Christ?!**

And you know what’s weird is that in these apparitions of Mary that are being seen around the world, in them she claims to be the Queen of Heaven. These feminine apparitions sound and act just like the false idol Queen of Heaven from the Old Testament that the Israelites got

involved with. Jeremiah 44 talks about how Israel exchanged God for this Assyro-Babylonian Queen of Heaven named Ishtar because she would make them prosper more than the God of Israel did. Interestingly enough, that's exactly why we see many flocking to the modern self-proclaimed Queen of Heaven! They just want some sort of miracle or some form prosperity from her! They don't really want God, they just want His blessing, so they turn to deceased personalities who they think have a greater standing with God, to earn His blessing. But in Christ, we all have equal access.

The apparitions also claim to have divine qualities like omnipresence or sinlessness. Mary was not divine. She was a human like you and me, who was blessed in the sense that she was chosen to bear the son of God. She is blessed but she should not be prayed to or venerated or worshipped. In Luke 11:27 some lady hears Jesus' wise teachings and raises her voice, saying, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." But He rebukes her, saying, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Do you get the sense that Jesus said that prophetically, knowing that men would make much more of Mary than he should? I believe that's exactly what He's doing. No apostles or holy angels will even receive such veneration or worship. They would point people to Christ and tell them to pray to God. Jesus says if you want to be blessed you need to pay attention to the Word of God and obey it, rather than untrustworthy "signs", emotions and mystical experiences.

If it adds to faith in Christ or takes away from the Person, Work or Ministry of Christ, it's a different gospel. Run away from it. The Bible says there is only one mediator between God and man – and that is the man, Christ Jesus. You don't need anyone but Christ. Only someone who is truly God and who is truly man can mediate between a perfect God and sinful man and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't go seeking after visions and apparitions. Because of these things Paul said in Colossians that we are to let no one take a stand on the visions he has seen. Remember this...

A. Devotion to Christ is simple.

Christ is the one who paid for our sins. Christ is the one who is to be worshipped because He is God. Christ is the one who is our access and righteousness to be able to approach the throne of God. Not men, not other dead saints, not Mary, not angels. The Koran makes Christ out to be just a prophet. The book of Mormon makes Christ out to be just another god who's work on the cross wasn't sufficient. The rosary and Marian doctrines say we must pray to other dead sinners to have them pray for us. They're complicated. But devotion to Christ is simple. The legalists and Judaizers were taking away from the simplicity of devotion to Christ. Stay simple. But also, stay pure.

B. Devotion to Christ is pure.

There are several figurative ways the Bible describes our relationship to God and Paul mentioned one of them in 2 Corinthians. He says we are like a bride to our husband who is Christ or in an engagement with Him, ready to be married to Him. And for us to be committed to anyone other than Him or trust anything else other than His sacrifice for us, is to cheat on Him – to say He's not enough for us. He desires a pure virgin. When the gospel is diluted or dirtied by ritualism and works, we are no longer solely committed to our husband Christ but have, in Old Testament language, prostituted ourselves to other gods. Devotion to Christ is pure.

C. We are engaged to Christ.

Paul says we have been betrothed to Christ. As long as we live, we're all engaged to be married – even you singles out there. And you know, when a couple is engaged, they obviously love each other and are getting to know each other more and more; they're excited about the big day they get to come together as one; they're anxious for it; and they put a great deal of preparation into that upcoming wedding and they reserve themselves for their partner alone. They keep it pure. Can you say you love Jesus Christ like that? He's your everything and you can't wait to meet Him? Are you getting to know Him more and more until that big day? Are you preparing to meet Him? Or have you lost your first love and need to return to Him?

[Finish by reading Revelation 19:5-10]