

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

Above all, the gospel of Christ is a GOSPEL OF GRACE. In the book of Galatians, Paul stresses this point with great force, starting with the opening verses. This is a hill to die on!

Galatians 1:6–7 (NKJV)

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

In saying, “I marvel,” Paul was saying, “I am shocked” or “I am amazed”. Paul was shocked that so soon after their conversion, they seemed to be turning away from the true gospel of GRACE as found in Christ.

If there is a case for a “backslidden” Christian, this is it. The NASB translates this as “deserting”. It is in the present tense, indicating this was in the process of happening, but was not yet an accomplished fact. Viewed as a whole, Paul’s teaching is that true believers will not completely and finally fall away from the truth of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Col. 1:23).

True believers may be weak and immature (cf. Heb. 5:11-14); they may be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (cf. Eph. 4:14); they may be carnal to some degree (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1); they may be confused and misled to a point (cf. 2 Pet. 3:17); but they will not completely abandon the faith (cf. Heb. 3:14).

Realize the BIG PICTURE of what Paul is dealing with concerning these Galatians. For one thing, he is dealing with a group of people involving various churches in a whole region.

In a context like this, there is going to be a wide assortment in terms of where people are at spiritually. So, Paul is addressing them as a category of people generally. As a group, they had previously “run well” (cf. Gal. 5:7). They had shown fruit. However, some had now reverted back to observing Jewish religious festivals (cf. Gal. 4:10); but they had not yet adopted circumcision (cf. 5:2). Paul is expecting that those who are true believers will respond to biblical correction (cf. Gal. 5:10).

Paul’s analysis is that these people are seriously confused; but down deep, many of them are true believers. They are confused but have not completely apostatized. Sometimes it is hard to know where people are at.

Are they just immature believers in need of guidance, or have they in fact stopped short of true faith?

Galatians 4:20 (ESV)

20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

In effect, Paul is saying that he is at his wits' end and he doesn't know what to think. He doesn't know how to explain this. He addresses them on the basis of their profession, but then takes great pains to reiterate the gospel of grace, as seen throughout this entire letter.

A drift toward legalism is a move away from God. GOD and GRACE go together. To move from GRACE is to move away from GOD! Their calling was a GRACE CALLING. God had called them on the basis of the unmerited favor of Christ. G.R.A.C.E. is ***GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE*** (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).

To be saved by grace is to be saved by Christ and His finished cross-work on our behalf. This phrase **“the grace of Christ,”** is Paul's way of stating the true gospel; because he goes on to contrast it with a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. The grace of Christ is the true gospel. Anything else is a DIFFERENT GOSPEL. To be saved by grace is to be saved by Christ alone! To be saved by grace is to be saved by what Christ did, and not what we do. Grace is all of Christ!

In short, the TRUE GOSPEL is THE GRACE OF CHRIST. The issue therefore is this: What defines the grace of Christ?

“The test of the Gospel is grace.” – **C. I. Scofield**

Grace is Christ, “Who gave Himself for our sins,” as seen in Gal. 1:4. Grace is the reality that Christ died for us, as seen in Gal. 2:21. Grace is 100 percent Christ's doing. The gospel is the grace of Christ. That's it. It is purely the UNMERITED FAVOR of Christ in what He has done to rescue people. We don't contribute to His grace (cross-work), and we don't share in His glory. Grace is all of Christ, and the glory is all His!

Believers have simply responded to this grace call by faith. Faith is non-meritorious (cf. Rom. 4), and is the result of God working in our hearts. God didn't call us on the basis of a legalistic system. He called us in the grace of Christ. He called us on the basis of what Christ has done. He called us on the basis of the unmerited favor of Christ. The TRUE gospel is 100 percent a gospel of GRACE (cf. Acts 20:24).

The problem was some on the scene were troubling them in the form of wanting to distort the gospel of Christ. The word **trouble** means to “agitate”, to “shake up”, or to “stir up” (cf. Acts 15:24).

These false teachers who had come on the scene had the Galatians all shook up and disturbed. They were challenging Paul’s apostolic credentials. They were wanting to add elements of the Mosaic Law to the grace of Christ for salvation and sanctification. The Galatians had not completely sold out to this influence, but they were going along with it to some degree. They were confused by it and being influenced by it.

To **pervert** means to “distort something by changing it”. It is the idea of reversing something or turning it around to where it is the opposite of what it was before (cf. Acts 2:20, James 4:9). It is twisting it to where it changes it. Note that these false teachers did not outrightly DENY the gospel of Christ. They just wanted to tweak it a bit. They wanted to ADD a little something to it which in effect changed it completely.

In adding to Christ, they PERVERTED the gospel of grace – the gospel of Christ. Grace ceases to be grace when anything is added to it. Grace is all God’s doing, or it is nothing (Rom. 11:6).

Grace allows absolutely no contribution on the part of anyone other than God. GRACE IS 100 PERCENT A GOD THING! That is why the glory is all His!

Note that the grace of Christ in verse 6 and the gospel of Christ in verse 7 are interchangeable. The gospel of Christ is the grace of Christ. To pervert GRACE is most serious!

It is so serious that Paul goes on to call for anyone who preaches any other gospel (other than the gospel of GRACE) to be accursed, as seen in verses 8-9. It is so serious that he essentially wrote the entire letter of Galatians to show the gospel of Christ is entirely a GOSPEL OF GRACE! Any other gospel is a false gospel, and those believing it are damned! It doesn’t get more serious than this!