

Galatians 1:6-10
The Problem Explained: Desertion from the Gospel

Introduction: A quick overview of the book: God shows us what He has done in Paul's life (**biography**; chapters 1-2); God teaches us what to believe (**theology**; chapters 3-4); and God teaches us how to live (**ethics**; chapters 5-6). There are competing messages in Galatia coming from competing teachers. Paul wants to convince the Galatians to believe him and embrace the gospel he preaches.

- 1) An emotional rebuke for spiritual unfaithfulness is not wrong—1:6-7 ⁶ *I am astonished/shocked* [pres. act. ind. θαυμάζω] *that you are so quickly* [ταχέως] (after I visited you) *deserting/removing yourselves* [pres. dep. ind. μετατίθημι]...
 - a) People are responsible for the process of desertion, they are removing themselves—1:6-7a (i.e. no one forced them to listen to bad doctrine)
 - Desert—a military term referring to a transference of allegiance
 - Similar to Israel's quick desertion at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:8)
 - i) Desertion away from a person—1:6b *from* [ἀπό] *the One* (God the Father) *who called* [aor. act. ptc. καλέω] *you*^{pl} *in* (the sphere of) *the grace of Christ*
 - (1) This refers to the **effective** call to salvation. Thus NT believers are referred to as “the called” (Romans 8:28; 1st Corinthians 1:24)
 - (2) There is also a **general** call that does not result in salvation (Matthew 20:16; 22:14)
 - ii) Desertion to a doctrinal position—1:6c-7a *to a different* [ἕτερος] (another of a **different** kind) *gospel*,
 - (1) ⁷ *which is not another* [ἄλλος] (another of the **same** kind) (gospel)—1:7a
 - (a) There is no good news in this false teaching, only slavery. This gospel does not glorify God, does not reconcile people to God, and does nothing to remedy the sinfulness of humanity.
 - (b) Paul does not give many specifics at this point.
 - (c) Example: If we call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs does the dog have? It still has only 4 legs, no matter what we call the tail.
 - iii) The desertion was still in process, not in its final stage; perhaps they were sort of flirting with it. Paul views them as genuine believers who are responsible for their struggle with this temptation (3:1-5).
 - b) Except people have help in thinking about deserting—1:7b *but* [εἰ μὴ] *there are* [pres. act. ind. εἰμί] *some* [τις] (more than one) ... (cf. being bewitched in 3:1)
 - i) Emotions and thoughts get agitated—*who are agitating* [pres. act. ptc. ταρασσω] *you*^{pl} ...
 - (1) Perhaps a specific man and his followers are in mind (cf. 5:10)
 - ii) Doctrine gets perverted—*and wanting* [pres. act. ptc. θέλω] *to alter* [aor. act. inf. μεταστρέφω] *the gospel* [εὐαγγέλιον] *of the Christ*.
 - (1) The authorized representative (apostle) who altered the message of the one who sent him would suffer legal penalties.

- (2) The penalty in the OT for altering God’s message or falsely claiming to speak for God was death (Deuteronomy 13:15; 18:20).
- (3) Pastor MacArthur reminds us: The greatest enemies of the church are not those who openly contradict the Bible and denounce Christ but those children of hell who, proposing to speak in His name, subtly undermine and distort His true gospel with the system of works righteousness.
- 2) There is an eternal danger of spiritual infidelity—1:8-9
- a) Exaggerated hypothetical condition—1:8 ⁸ *But even if* [ἐάν, 3rd class condition] *we, or an angel from heaven, should announce a gospel* [pres. mid. subj. εὐαγγελίζω] *to you^{pl} contrary to* [παρά] (at variance with) *the one we announced* [aor. mid. ind. εὐαγγελίζω] *to you^{pl},*
- i) Condemnation—(then) *let him be* [pres. act. impv. εἰμί] *accursed* [ἀνάθεμα] (i.e. devoted to God’s wrath and destruction). Remember Joshua 7:1-26 (esp. 7:1, 11-13 in LXX)
- ii) Mormons claim an angel named Moroni gave revelation to Joseph Smith
- (1) One Mormon leader, James Talmage, wrote: “Man alone cannot save himself; Christ alone cannot save him. The plan of salvation is cooperative.”
- b) Assumed current condition in their congregations—1:9 ⁹ *As we* (editorial “we”) *have said before* [pf. act. ind. προλέγω], *and now are saying* [pres. act. ind. λέγω] *again, if* [εἰ, 1st class condition] *anyone* (not just us or an angel from heaven in 1:8) *announces* [pres. mid. ind. εὐαγγελίζω] *to you^{pl} a gospel contrary to* [παρά] (at variance with) *what you^{pl} received* [aor. act. ind. παραλαμβάνω],
- i) Condemnation—(then) *let him be* [pres. act. impv. εἰμί] *accursed* [ἀνάθεμα] (i.e. devoted to God’s wrath and destruction).
- c) It would **not** mean that men whom God had justified by grace had lost salvation by their later works. It **does** mean this, rather: such a twisted concept of the very way to be saved would reveal preachers who did not know the real gospel and justifying grace. God is morally consistent to bring judgment on those who insist on rejecting him. Those who willfully and in defiance of the truth choose to preach a different gospel should not be spared; they have earned their punishment and deserve accursedness if they will not repent.
- d) Paul recognizes his God-revealed gospel to be the standard against which all others teachings are to be compared. It is not true because Paul preached it; it is true because the risen Christ gave it to Paul to preach. (F. F. Bruce)
- 3) The Godward solution to spiritual infidelity—1:10 ¹⁰ *For* [γάρ]...
- a) First rhetorical question—*am I now persuading/pleasing* [pres. act. ind. πείθω] ...
- i) Paul was being accused of being a people-pleaser—*people* [ἄνθρωπος]

- (1) Accused of changing the Gospel to make the Gentiles happy by dropping any requirement for circumcision.
 - (2) This is what Paul accuses his opponents of in 6:12-13.
 - ii) *or God* [θεός]?
 - (1) Cf. just like Jesus (John 8:29; 2nd Corinthians 5:9)
 - iii) What could possibly move him to be so unyielding with his doctrine? The answer is simply that he is dominated by a desire to please God, no matter what! It is God's exclusive gospel and truth, so he must be faithful in defending it, irrespective of the reaction of people.
 - a) Second rhetorical question—*Or am I seeking* [pres. act. ind. ζητέω] *to please* [pres. act. inf. ἀρέσκω] *people* [ἄνθρωπος]?
 - i) Assumed contrary to the fact in the present—*For* [γάρ] *if* [εἰ, 2nd class condition with impf.] *I was still pleasing* [impf. act. ind. ἀρέσκω] *people* [ἄνθρωπος] (and I am not),
 - This was Paul's habit as a Pharisee before his salvation
 - (1) (then) *I would not be* [impf. mid. ind. εἰμί] *the bondservant* [δοῦλος] *of Christ*.
 - (a) A Christian slave cannot afford to aim at pleasing anyone other than his Master.
 - ii) God established the Galatian congregations in Acts 14:19. Paul was attacked with stones and left for dead. This is how much he wanted to please people!
- 4) **Take-home truth:** the true Gospel must have total truth within it.
- a) By way of illustration, a drug addict, on being charged with stealing for the purpose of feeding his habit, asks the judge for mercy, and as a result is acquitted. The accused assures the judge that from now on he will keep the law. He asks for advice on how to do this and then goes his own way. This may be acquittal by grace, but it is not salvation by grace.
 - b) Another drug addict is similarly charged, but he not only asks for mercy but also deliverance from his bondage, not merely advice. The judge not only pardons him but also provides for his deliverance through legal acquittal, inward cleansing, and adoption into his very own family. This is salvation by grace.
 - c) The **first** offender sees his problem only in terms of his being acquitted from the past, i.e. being discharged from his guilt, along with the present need of encouragement, assistance, whereas the **second** offender sees his problem in terms of needing salvation from the past, present, and future. The **first** offender claims he needs help from Jesus Christ, like the Galatian believers who have been deceived by a non-gospel; the **second** offender, knows he needs salvation in total from Jesus Christ, like the Galatian believers in the true gospel. (Horner, 41)

During the next two Sundays we will look at the way Paul presented the Gospel to both Jewish and Gentile audience as recorded in Acts 13-14.