

True Gospel
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Galatians 1:1-10

What does the word “gospel” mean? (Greek: euaggelion [you-ahn-gellion] Old English: _____ spell.) Quick survey: **How many are watching less news coverage since the 2016 election? The same? More news?**

- The past two years have given rise to the term, “fake news.” Everyone is arguing about what is and is NOT fake news.
- Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia (modern day Turkey) was written to deal with the problem of “fake good news.”
- In just these first ten verses of introduction, Paul addresses the spiritual crisis that was brewing among these new Gentile believers in Christ: False teachers were teaching a false gospel, which was really no gospel at all.
- The Big Idea: The only true gospel is Jesus crucified and resurrected. Anything added or subtracted from that is “fake good news.”
- Let’s begin by reading Galatians 1:1-10 and then we’ll unpack it.

Galatians 1:1–10 (ESV)

Greeting

1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
2 and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, **5** to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

No Other Gospel

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— **7** not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and

want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

- The first five verses of greeting are very similar to Paul's other letters.
- First he introduces himself and his authority as an apostle.
- **Do you know what that title apostle means? Who were the apostles? How did they qualify? How did Paul qualify? Where did Paul's appointment come from? Any apostles today? Why was his status as an apostle important for them to know?**
- Paul continued his greeting mentioning those with him and his audience, he prayed for grace and peace on his audience, and stated the centrality of Jesus Christ and His resurrection by God the Father. A typical greeting.
- The difference is there are no words of affirmation or thanks to God for these new believers. Paul cuts to the chase addressing the problem.
- Verse six: ⁶ *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—* ⁷ *not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*
- So, what is the backstory? Who was spreading this "fake" good news? Why were they distorting the real gospel? These were zealous Jews who were traveling around behind the apostles ironically accusing THEM of teaching the wrong message. Their charge: *"It's not enough to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord; you Gentiles also have to become Jews."*
- Acts 15 tells about this in the events leading up to the Jerusalem Council:

Acts 15:1 (ESV) 15 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." --- ⁵ But some believers who

belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

- The Judaizers insisted Jesus was not enough. They said these Gentiles also had to live by the laws of Moses and regulations of being a Jew.

- Later in Galatians 2:16 (ESV) Paul writes:

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

- These false teachers weren't making up a totally different gospel, Paul says they were perverting or distorting the good news of salvation. The word means, *"turn one thing into another"* **Why was this tactic effective?**
- In verse eight Paul speaks forcefully about just how serious this false teaching was then and is today: If a preacher, and apostle like Paul, or even what seems to be an angel from heaven *"preach to you a gospel contrary"* to the true gospel, let them be *"accursed,"* set aside for destruction by God - eternally condemned. He repeats it in verse nine.
- Distorting the good news of the gospel is serious business.
- Distorting real news is the very idea of fake news. **When you hear something is fake news how do you verify if it is or isn't fake?**
- Remember: The only true gospel is Jesus crucified and resurrected. Anything added or subtracted from that is "fake good news."
- The only way to spot a fake gospel is to compare it to the true gospel.
- This is why Paul's credentials as an apostle were so important. Paul taught them the true gospel, which came to him directly from Jesus.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV) Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (ESV)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

- Today, you and I don't have the apostles but we have the inspired words of those apostles in scripture. That's our source to verify whether someone is preaching another gospel, which is no gospel at all.
- Paul's authority came directly from Jesus. Our authority comes through God's inspired and true word – Holy Scripture.
- The gospel message is simple:

In John 3:16 (ESV) Jesus said:

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Romans 10:9 (ESV) Paul wrote:

9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV) tells us:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- **Why do people sometimes struggle with accepting that salvation is a free gift? How did these Judaizers play into that struggle?**
- **Why might false teachers be attractive to a new “baby” believer?**
- Sometimes young immature followers of Christ are swayed into false teaching because they are people pleasers. Ever know someone who had professed faith in Christ then shifted to a false gospel or cult because they fell in love with someone of that religion? What about peer pressure?
- In verse ten Paul said when it comes to the truth of the gospel: *“If I were trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”*
- **What is the church's responsibility to prevent new believers from being drawn into false teaching?**
- So, how can we spot a perversion of the gospel – fake good news?
- The first question: Where is Christ in their message?

- Remember: The only true gospel is Jesus crucified and resurrected. Anything added or subtracted from that is “fake good news.”
- Someone once said false teachers hang a sign on the cross over Christ that says “not enough.” If their message is Jesus PLUS anything, it’s a false gospel. Christ’s death on the cross was sufficient for our salvation.
- Christ plus anything equals NOTHING – no gospel at all.
- If someone teaches a message that has a verb other than confess/repent, believe, and receive, watch out! We don’t DO anything to earn salvation. Salvation was paid for on the cross it is a free gift to us.
- Examples of false gospels:
 - <http://www.pastorshawn.com/falsegospels/>
 - Good works gospel – Stack up more good deeds than bad.
 - Legalistic gospel – Live by the rules/rituals of religious influencers.
 - Universal gospel – Do your best, be kind, protect the planet, etc.
 - Spirituality gospel – Just believe SOMETHING, any path will do.
 - Fire Escape gospel – As long as you prayed the sinners prayer.
 - Prosperity gospel – Have enough faith and be healthy, wealthy, etc.
 - Social Justice gospel – It’s not about Christ on the cross but about men working to end injustice in society.
 - Self-Help Gospel – Our negativity about ourselves is the problem. Jesus wants us to see how great we really are. He’s our cheerleader. ⁱⁱ
- Notice all these false gospels are about men and not about God.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- The only true gospel is Jesus crucified and resurrected. Anything added or subtracted from that is “fake good news.”
- That summary of this lesson is simple. The application is hard.

- In this era of “tolerance” we followers of Christ face tremendous pressure to bow to pleasing people by staying silent when our friends and family are being deceived by false teaching about how we are saved.
- Paul was able to speak boldly to these churches because he had established a relationship of love and trust with them. We can only speak into the lives of those who are deceived if we have relationship with them.
- Still, how do I bring it up without pushing them away? How do I speak the truth in love without driving such a wedge that they close their ears?

Jude 22–23 (ESV) Describes dealing with three types of deceived people:

²² And have mercy on those who doubt;

- Immature believers “on the fence” – *“They should be dealt with in love and mercy—the same way in which the Lord dealt with them. They needed encouragement, not criticism. They needed to be built up, not torn down.”ⁱⁱⁱ*

²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire;

- Unbelievers – Share the simple gospel message with them in love and help them get into a Bible teaching church.

to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

- Hard-core cult members – You may need reinforcements. Wiersbe: *“Not every Christian is equipped to deal with false teachers or with those they have influenced and captured. It takes a good knowledge of the Word, a faithful walk with God, an understanding of Satan’s devices, and certainly the fullness of the Spirit of God. It also demands spiritual discernment. It is much easier to instruct new Christians and keep them away from the false teachers than it is to snatch them out of the fire.”^{iv}*
- Above all, our approach must be powered by the Holy Spirit, delivered in love, and grounded in the truth of scripture.

ⁱ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems,

ⁱⁱ Shawn Thornton is the Senior Pastor at Calvary Community Church in Westlake Village, California.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pentecost, E. C. (1985). Jude. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 923). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 561–562). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.