

The Path to Cursing

(Galatians 1:6-10)

(preached 7/17/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

At last year's Super Bowl between the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers, a man paid over \$3,500 each for two tickets on the 50 yard line...

He and his wife arrived at their seats just before kickoff.

Beside him was a elderly woman who had come to the game from Charlotte dressed in Panthers clothing from head to toe.

But in between them was an empty.

After introducing himself to the lady, he had to ask about the empty seat.

The woman turned to him and sadly reported that it belonged to her husband who had died...

The man dropped his head and told her he was sorry to hear that, yet after a few minutes of silence, his curiosity got the best of him...

So he said, “I hate to ask this but why didn't you bring one of your children or a close relative to take his seat...”

The widow turned to him and said, “Well, they all insisted on going to the funeral today.”

Needless to say, some people have different priorities in life..

For just a minute, I want you to consider Satan’s priorities in this world...

I know that sounds like a strange request, but it is something that we need to understand....

What does the devil seek to accomplish more than anything in his mission?

And it is simple...

He seeks to lead people to reject Jesus Christ...

That is his priority.

And for that reason, Satan works where you expect him to work...

Most people see Satan in Hollywood or Las Vegas or all these sin filled cities keeping people in sin...

I dont think that is true at all...

People sin because their flesh makes them sin; they dont need the devil to make them do anything...

Their flesh makes them do it...

In fact, we give too much credit when we say he made us do it..

99% of the time, our flesh makes us sin..

And so I don't see Satan hiding out in Hollywood nightclubs and casinos....

He doesn't need to.

There are enough people going there without his help.

The same is true for sin filled places all over the world...

Instead, Satan does most of his work in and around the church...

Though he has no power to take away a person's salvation...

People who go to church are often at the point of salvation, and those are the devil's targets...

The ones who are there with an interest in being saved...

Those are thrones that Satan hopes to destroy....

And even those Christians in the church are the ones the devil hopes to discredit and make fall...

Because if he sway someone away from Christ or he can tempt someone to fall who is saved, he can be effective in his mission to lead people to reject Christ Jesus..

And so Satan is often at work in and around the church...

And his priority in that work is to twist the gospel...

Look, there is satanic influence in disputes among Christians....

But the priority of Satan is to work in and around the church to confuse the gospel...

And why is that?

Because if people don't know the true gospel, they can never be truly saved...

And that is why Satan works in false religions who twist the gospel just enough to lead people to hell by what they teach...

Look, people don't go to places that practice Satan worship unless they are really twisted....

But they will visit the local Mormon church down the street that is filled with nice people...

They will join the nice lady who visited them at home and invited them to the Kingdom Hall on Saturday...

They will head to the beautiful Catholic church for mass on Sunday....

And that is where Satan works...

He doesn't put a sign in the front of the church that says...

This church is full of error.

Please join us on Sunday....

No, instead he weasels his way into people in good churches and works from the inside out to spread his error through a false gospel that looks really close to the true gospel...

And he often does it by leading people already in the church astray...

The greatest danger for being damned to hell is not always in the local nightclub...

But rather in the local church that is led by a false teacher...

Now, that is what was happening in the churches in Galatia....

If you remember from last week, the Galatian churches, - Derbe, Lystra, Iconic, and Antioch were all the recipients of a letter from Paul that we know as the book of Galatians...

And Paul wrote to them to rebuke them...

In the first 5 verses last week, Paul was almost rude in his introduction to this letter to them...

And the reason for his abruptness was this...

The Galatians were in danger from the false teaching that had come to their churches...

And many were departing from the true gospel to follow a gospel of works....

I was reading this week, and I really like this definition of a gospel of works....

A gospel of works says that you must finish what Christ has begun in order to be saved...

A gospel of works says that salvation is work of Jesus in the beginning but a work of what you can do at the end...

A gospel of works says that salvation is first a gift of God's grace but then becomes a collection of your your good works...

The Galatians were falling for that false gospel and Paul was about to sound forth his disappointment in them...

And to begin the letter last week, Paul reminded them that he gave them the true gospel of faith alone in Christ alone because that is the gospel that God send him to announce...

He was an apostle assigned to bring the true gospel to them...

A gospel of grace and peace and centered in the finished work of Jesus dying in the place of guilty sinners to reduce them from God's wrath over their sin.

And now with that reminder of who he was, and what the true gospel was, we get to the problem of why he wrote in verses 6-10 this morning...

Follow with me as I read these verses...

Galatians 1:6-10...

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you [c]by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing 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 [d]contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be [e]accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel [f]contrary to what you received, he is to be [g]accursed! 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

We will look at these 5 verses in three sections...

I. Galatian Deserters Surprise Paul (6)

II. False Teachers Disturb the People (7)

III. Different Gospel Brings Curses (8-10)

I. Galatian Deserters Surprise Paul (6)

If you look at verse 6, Paul expresses his amazement at the Galatians who are deserting the true gospel for a false gospel...

Now, let's answer a couple questions you may have...

First, is it possible for someone to leave the true gospel and go after a different gospel and end up in hell?

Well, let's start with what we know.

First, the Bible never teaches that a true believer can lose his salvation...

Now, preachers preach that and men teach that, but you won't find one verse that teaches that...

The true gospel gives true salvation that lasts forever...

The fancy phrase for this teaching is the perseverance of the saints or the eternal security of the believer....

In other words, God who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...

Jesus said that everyone the Father gave him; he never lost one of them.

True believers won't walk away because they can't walk away..

Now, are there people in the church who depart the faith?

Sure there are, but none were truly saved in the first place.

They may have come into the church and enjoyed the fellowship...

The may have even walked an aisle and shook the preachers hand or prayed a prayer or even got baptized...

But then they disappeared forever...

Were they saved?

No, they were simply attached to the church for a while but never attached to Christ...

And though it bothers us to see them go...

The Bible says that people go out from us because they were never of us...

Now, what is Paul talking about here...

Who was departing?

Well, I think you had some people in the Galatians church who weren't saved and were being led to believe in a works gospel in order to get saved...

In that case, they were truly departing the real gospel and in danger of hell...

But I think Paul was primarily addressing some of the true believers in Galatian churches...

They were not departing in the sense of becoming unsaved, but they were departing from their full reliance upon Christ to be saved...

Let me give you an example...

I know I pick on the Mormons and the Jehovah Witnesses, but many times a false gospel sneaks in a true church...

And here is what it says...

Jesus saves, but you need to keep our rules as well in order to stay saved...

You see that is a subtle false gospel that says salvation is Jesus + church rules...

And people get lured into that...

And it isn't that they reject Jesus completely, they just begin to trust in their obedience to the rules more than they trust in the finished work of Christ to save them...

Though they can never lose their faith, they can misplace it at times in something other than Jesus Christ alone...

And I would suggest that was what was happening in the Galatian churches.....

Jesus was being shoved aside for and made rules...

And Paul is amazed at how quickly that happened in these churches...

He had been there and preached the true gospel that says trust in Christ alone to be saved....

And now people there were trusting in Christ plus their good works...

And let that be a reminder to Pine Grove that it is easy to lose our focus on the finished work of Jesus and start adding in our own goodness to salvation...

And let me tell you, that will ruin a church...

It will lead people to arrogance in the people because people will begin to look down on others who can't keep the rules as good as they can...

But more importantly it can lead someone who comes to church but isn't saved to believe that salvation is Jesus + following the rules...

And that gospel is enough to lead people to hell...

So, Paul is surprised by the Galatian deserters...

But second...

The people are disturbed by the false teachers...

II. False Teachers Disturb the People (7)

Look back at verse 7...

The gospel that the false teachers were bringing was a different gospel....

We have talked about the substance of that false gospel.

The false gospel of the false teachers was a gospel that said salvation came by Jesus + good works...

But notice what a false gospel does to the church...

It disturbs them...

Shakes them up..

Confuses them...

I remember a comment I had once with family members about the Catholic church..

We were sitting around the table and someone was asking about the pope...

And I simply said that he wasn't even a Christian much less someone who could be trusted for Christian counsel...

One of my family members gave this weird look, even agitated with me, and said.....

“The pope is a Christian.”

To which I replied, define what a Christian is...

But I got no response...

And that is the problem...

If you can't tell me what a Christian is according to the Bible, then anyone who claims to be a Christian can be a Christian....

And then you run into all sorts of confusion....

The Galatians had started with a clear view of what it meant to be saved....

Because they had been taught the gospel directly by Paul, who received it directly from God...

But these false teachers had come in and distorted it by adding good works, and now there was mass confusion over what it meant to be saved...

And that is disturbing and unsettling...

If you can't define what a Christian is, then you have lost the ability to say who is and isn't saved...

And when you get to that point, the church is thrown into confusion...

Look, I am not allowed to judge hearts, but I am called to judge fruit...

And when someone says that the way to be saved is through Jesus and your good works, that is the fruit of a false teacher and it must be called out...

We live in a day when the world refuses to speak the truth and that has filtered down into a church that refuses to speak the truth...

When there is no clear voice of truth in the world, which is what the church is called to be, then confusion reigns and people perish because they believe lies...

The most loving thing you can do for someone is tell them the truth...

False teachers disturb....

Truth tellers bring peace...

Amy we speak the truth in love, and may God use our mouths to bring clarity and not confusion into the world...

One final thing to see this morning is this...

III. Different Gospels Bring Curses (8-10)

Listen to Paul's warning once again in verses 8-9....

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel [d]contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be [e]accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel [f]contrary to what you received, he is to be [g]accursed!

Paul is not only surprised in this passage, he is filled with righteous anger and even calls down curses on false teachers who have messed with the gospel of Christ...

He even says it twice and in the second request for God to curse these, he even includes himself and the angels in this group if they distort the gospel....

As a side note, may I remind you of how the Mormon Church of Latter Day Saints began....

Here is how the church began in their own words from their website...

Joseph Smith was chosen by God to restore the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. During the next 10 years, Joseph was visited by other heavenly messengers, translated the Book of Mormon by the power of God, and received divine authority to organize the Church.

The Church was organized in Fayette, New York, on 6 April 1830, under the leadership of Joseph Smith. It has grown to an organization with members and congregations throughout the world.

In other words, the founder of the Mormon church received their gospel from an angel who came to earth to give it to Joseph Smith...

I think that is quite interesting since Paul says here...

Even if an angel from heaven brings a new gospel, he is to be accursed...

Now many are hard on Paul here saying that he was wrong to call down curses on false gospels...

Some say this is just an outburst of Paul in frustration, but I don't see it as that at all...

False gospel should and will be cursed by God...

False teachers will experience a hotter hell than even the normal unbeliever in the world...

To take the true gospel and distort it is the worst of crimes in the world...

To take the truth of God and twist into lies that send people to hell may be the worst sin imaginable...

And Paul is simply asking God to do what God will do with teachers who mess with the true gospel....

I cant imagine being in the shoes of some of the men and women who I see on TV today that call themselves teachers of the word of God but are clearly false teachers....

The planes they own today will fly them straight to the gates of hell...

The fame they have today will end in a moments notice...

The money they have stolen from people will burn with them...

Though I pray that false teachers will come to their senses and believe the true gospel....

Most end up holding to their false gospel and teaching it to others until the day they die...

And I cannot imagine the judgment they then face...

False teachers are cancer on the church, and God will remove them with the most painful surgery possible....

There is one more verse to see and that is verse 10...

Paul writes this...

***10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?
Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to
please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.***

Now why would Paul put this here?

I am glad you asked...

One of the attacks on Paul was that he was a people pleaser in his gospel...

The people teaching a works gospel would say something like this....

“Oh Paul, he doesn’t teach you to follow the law like us because he doesn’t want to upset you.”

“He wants you to like him Galatians so he doesn’t ask you to do a thing to be saved..”

He just teaches you need to trust in Christ alone, so that you will like him...

He’s a nice guy, but nice guys don’t tell you all you need to know...

We are giving you the truth...

You need to believe in Jesus plus following the law...

Paul would never say something so harsh, but we love you so we tell you the truth...

So, Paul finishes up calling down curses on the false teachers and then he says....

How's that for putting things nicely?

How's that for telling the truth?

I just called down God's curses on these false teachers...

Do you Galatians think I am just a nice guy now who is just seeking to please men?

Do you think I am lying to you and telling you to simply trust in Jesus alone to save you because I don't want to upset you?

Well, if I didn't want to upset you and make you think bad of me, do you really think I would call on God to curse these false teachers?

And the answer to that is clearly no...

I face the same challenge as a pastor...

Should I bite my tongue about the Pope or about Mormons or Jehovahs Witnesses or about some of the prosperity pastors on TV in our day?

Should I bite my tongue about false teachers and bad churches on our own state?

Should I bite my tongue about Christian authors who may not even be Christians themselves...

Look, if I came in to this pulpit and never called out unbiblical men and women who pose as Christians, people would be more likely to love me....

Our world craves people who are not confrontational and who speak gently...

I get that...

The church even craves those kind of men...

Fluffy, happy go lucky, positive message preachers build build churches and big houses today...

Don't you think that is tempting to me?

Yet, let me tell you something....

I would rather send with John the Baptist out in wilderness calling people to repentance than any NY Times best selling author who couldn't find the true gospel with both hands and a flashlight...

I would rather stand with the prophet Jeremiah who preached 40 years without a single convert than stand for 5 minutes with a man who is more consumed with growing a church than seeing people actually saved...

I would rather stand with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who reached for 3 years and ended up with a church of 120 people than to stand for 10 seconds beside a man who just bought his 5th airplane because his ministry is so successful...

Even though those who follow him are on the fast track to hell with him...

Even I am called first to be a God pleaser...

Though I like to please men as long as it pleases God, my first responsibility to you and your family is give you the true gospel and then the full truth of the Scriptures...

I stand with Paul and thousands more who have stood on the Word of God....

May God be raising more Pauls in our day as well...

His goal was not to please men....

If he had wanted to do that, he would have never called down curses from God on the false teachers in the Galatian churches...

Yet, that is what he did.

And he may have saved many lives in the process...

Conclusion

Let me give you a few thoughts to end our morning...

First, hold fast to Christ alone.

I know I say this over and over but I only say it over and over because the Bible says it over and over...

But if you are in Christ and you are saved here this morning, refuse the temptation to add anything to Him..

And the greatest temptation to add to Him comes from your good works...

Look, every true believer works for the Lord...

They serve, they obey, they grow...

But they always must remember that nothing they can do add one ounce to what Jesus has already accomplished in his life, death and resurrection.

When you feel that your good works add something to your salvation, repent of that thought and hold only to Jesus Christ.

Second, hold every teacher to the gospel test.

There is a temptation to let a person's appearance or education or ability to speak well blind us to what they actually say....

Let me remind you that just because someone is on TV or has written a book or holds a doctorate from a seminary or dresses up in really fancy robes, it is no guarantee that they preach the true gospel...

Listen to what John Stott says,....

We judge them by the gospel; we do not judge the gospel by them.

Listen to another commentator, "The outward appearance of the messenger does not validate the message, rather, the content of the message validates the messenger."

That is so important to remember in this day when false teachers and false gospels are increasing in number every day...

And they are also increasing in their ability to disguise themselves as true ministers of God.

Finally, hold to the one true gospel.

There is a growing trend in our world to open our minds to new possibilities...

Maybe marriage is more than one man and one woman...

Maybe having a family doesn't require us to actually be married at all...

Maybe I don't have to be the gender that I was born...

Maybe evil isn't evil after all...

Everyone it seems is broadening their view of the world, and often it is broadening out of what the Bible defines things to be...

This spills over into the issue of faith as well...

Maybe there are multiple ways to heaven...

Maybe Islam is the way for some...

Maybe the Roman Catholic is the way for others...

Maybe Buddhism helps people get to heaven...

And the new way of thinking is this...

Who am I to know?

Who am I to say this is the right way?

Isn't that narrow minded and judgmental of me?

Let me ask you something....

Is it possible that $2+2$ isn't 4?

I mean can't $2+2$ equal 6 if I want it to?

Can't it equal 100 if I want it to?

Well, in our culture, the answer to that is yes...

$2+2$ can equal anything you want it to equal...

And though that sounds absurd, that is the new reality...

Yet, we as Christians must not give into that lie...

And we must not give in specifically when it comes the idea that there are multiple ways to heaven...

The Bible is crystal clear on this point....

There is one true gospel.

There is one way to heaven.

There is one Savior.

There is one God-man, and his name is Jesus Christ...

And the true gospel says this...

If a man or woman wants to be saved from eternal punishment in hell, he must call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...

He must repent of his sin, and believe and trust that Jesus died in his or her place to pay the penalty for his or her sin...

There is no back door to heaven...

There is no window to climb through on the side of heaven...

Everyone who has a desire for heaven must go through Jesus Christ to get there.

Today is the day to do that...

And may God give you the faith to call on Christ now...

Let us pray.