

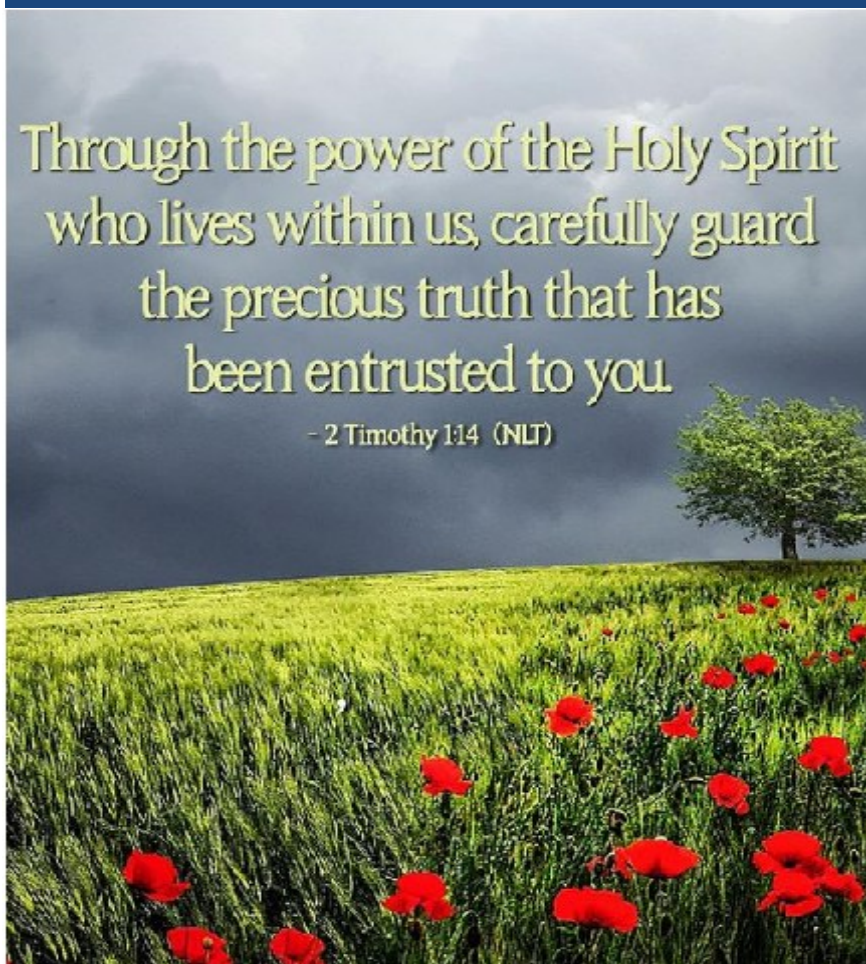
Book 1

The Book of Galatians Guarding the Gospel

**...and Please Don't Exchange It
for Another of a Different Kind**

Through the power of the Holy Spirit
who lives within us, carefully guard
the precious truth that has
been entrusted to you.

- 2 Timothy 1:14 (NLT)



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Guarding the Gospel Part 1 of 2

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

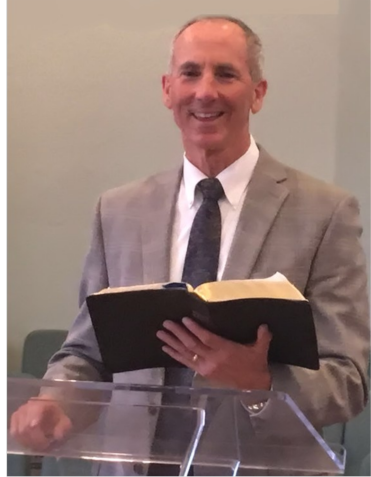
Galatians 1:6-8

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition
February 2019

Foreword

The three messages on *Guarding the Gospel* were preached beginning in October of 2018 to my co-laborers in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the length of the material, we needed to divide the material into two parts. This first part covers the first sermon, Volume 1, and part of the second. The second part, which is being released at the same time, includes the rest of Volume 2 and Volume 3.



I trust He was honored and hearts were stimulated with the wonder and beauty of the so-great salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ. With such a precious and momentous gift, we should, of course, expect it to come under attack—and so it has. Join me in guarding the Gospel that we would preserve that, and that alone, which has the power to save.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Kevin Redig



For I am not ashamed of this Good News
about Christ. It is the power of God at
work, saving everyone who believes—the
Jew first and also the Gentile.

Romans 1:16 NLT

Guarding Volume 1

Introduction

We spend most of our time in the study of God's Word focusing upon how to live the Christian Life. As those who have trusted in Christ unto eternal life, we should be focusing upon growing into what is ours that we might not just be converts but followers of Christ. For we desire to manifest Him to a lost and needy world in this life and afterwards to receive a reward that we can, in turn, lay at His feet in worship.

Nonetheless, from time to time we need to make sure we understand just how it is that one enters the Christian Life, how it is that we can change our destiny from one in the Lake of Fire to one of an eternal home in the Father's house and with our Lord. It is imperative that we understand this and review it regularly so that we can be vigilant to guard what has been entrusted to us. This reflection allows us to be careful to remove any extraneous things that have crept into our Gospel message and to make sure nothing essential has been removed from it.

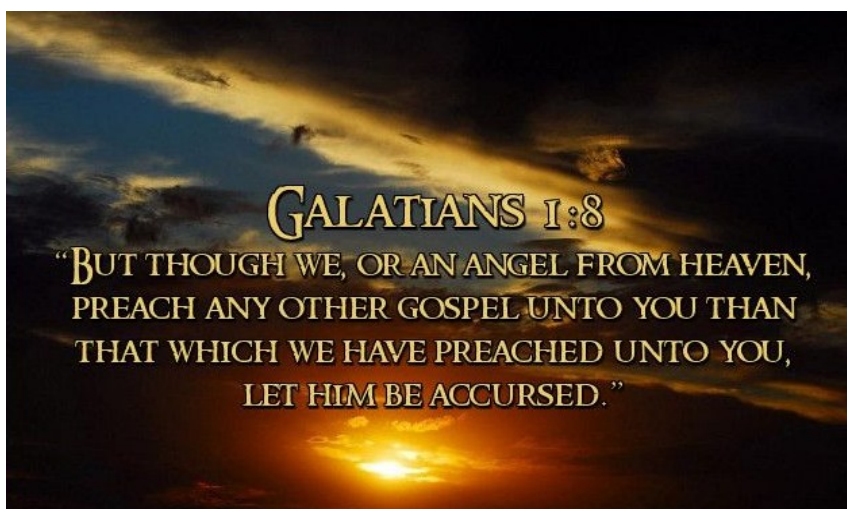
That's the purpose of this study: to understand the threats and renew our commitment to guarding the Gospel. We must guard it because the Gospel, and it alone, has the power to save. Without it, we have nothing of real value to hold out to the lost and desperately needy world around us. So, let's give some thought to guarding the integrity of the message by which we were saved, for that message is the:

... power of God unto salvation for all who believe.

Romans 1:16

We are going to use a short portion of the book of Galatians as a springboard from which to pursue our investigation. For what's on Paul's mind in this text is most certainly guarding the Gospel, and he does so in such a forceful and powerful way that it should most certainly grab our attention. As a start, consider the following:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8



Paul's greeting at the beginning of the book of Galatians is uncharacteristically short and completely lacking in his usual encouragement of the saints. Instead, by the time he reaches Verse 6, he is expressing his shocked dismay, and by Verse 8 pronouncing anathema! What could have prompted such a forceful outburst? And, in case you did not get the message in Verse 8, he repeats it in Verse 9:

As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:9

This kind of repetition is always to emphasize the point. So, just what could have brought on Paul's obvious concern? The following is the backstory.

On what we call Paul's First Missionary Journey, he and Barnabas visited the Roman province of Galatia, stopping in such cities as Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. In each of these cities, Paul preached the Gospel and people responded—both Jew and Gentile. As a result, Churches were planted. But right from the start you also read in Acts Chapters 13 and 14 that there was Jewish opposition. Over and over you read things like:

But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. Acts 14:2

This opposition continued to the point that in Acts 14:19 we read the following:

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

Nonetheless, Paul continued in ministry, revisiting the newly-planted Churches, and appointing leadership within them. By Acts 15, Paul has spent some time recovering in Antioch, and learns the Jewish pressure on the Church has not gone away.

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." Acts 15:1

By Verse 5, things have gotten even worse as now a group from within the Church is teaching that the Gospel includes adherence to the entire Mosaic Law. Paul and Barnabas hustle down to Jerusalem to confront this false



gospel. At the same time, Paul is greatly worried about what is happening in the fledgling churches of Galatia. Thus, he writes this letter to them. And, he wastes no time addressing the matter at hand—a false gospel message followed by an equally false message on the means of living the Christian Life. For the purposes of our investigation, we are going to focus our attention on just a few verses in Galatians Chapter 1, which lay the

foundation for our call to guard the Gospel!

Looking at Our Text

Galatians Chapter 1, Verses 6 and 7 hold the key to why Paul has pronounced anathema twice, first in Verse 8 and again in Verse 9.

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another. . .

Galatians 1:6-7

There are a number of key items in the above verse to which I would like to draw your attention:

1. The word *marvel* is often used in a positive way, but in this case Paul is stating his shock and dismay. The verse could be stated: "*I'm shocked that you are turning away. . .*"
2. To *turn away* carries the idea of exchanging one thing for another. It is also used to describe an individual who has deserted his post.

3. The words *so soon* show that Paul is dismayed at how quickly those in the Galatian churches are deserting the true Gospel after making a good start under his ministry.
4. He comes to the point in the phrase *from Him who called you in the grace of Christ*. . . The Father calls! The gracious work of salvation was accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, they are exchanging the gift of God for something altogether different. They are swapping grace for the bondage of religion. What could they be thinking? How could they possibly improve upon what Christ has done for them through their own meager efforts at law keeping?
5. The key part to understanding these verses is the phrase *to a different gospel, which is not another*. . . The word translated *different*, often carries the idea of *another of a different kind*. The word translated *another* carries the idea of *another of the same kind*. You must grasp what Paul is saying. Those in the Galatian Churches have turned to a Gospel message which is another, but not another of the same kind. The Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism is another way to god, but it is not of the same kind as the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Five Pillars of Islam are another way to god, but not of the same kind as Biblical Christianity. The four sacred texts of Mormonism are another way to god, but not to the one true Creator God of this universe. All of the world's religions are different gospels which are not another of the same kind as the Gospel of Jesus Christ for they do not have the power to save anyone. Only the Gospel centered in Jesus Christ has the power to save. There is one real Gospel, the rest are counterfeit.

Paul goes on to explain how those who are substituting a false gospel are perverting the real thing. For there is one Gospel, one Mediator, one Savior, and one way to Salvation. Paul is really agitated because of what is at stake. Do you want to see how upset he is? This is the sense of what he is writing in Galatians 1:8-9:

- **Verse 8.** Although the verse contains something that is not possible, if it were possible to preach any other gospel, anathema on those involved.
- **Verse 9.** In case you don't fully understand how worked up I am about this—let me say it again—**anathema**. Paul is telling them to turn over to destruction any who preach another gospel of a different kind.

Now, let me be as clear as possible at this point. This is not just an early Church issue. This is not an intellectual exercise. This is happening in our day, and do you think God feels any differently about it now than He did when Paul penned the book of Galatians? Absolutely not!

"Let this be to you the mark of true gospel preaching - where Christ is everything, and the creature is nothing; where it is salvation all of grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit applying to the soul the precious blood of Jesus."
- Charles H. Spurgeon



Unraveling the Interpretation

Paul's concern over the Gospel he preached being exchanged for another gospel of a different kind, begs the question: "What is the Gospel?" The word translated *gospel* is a compound of two words: a prefix meaning *well* or *good* and a root meaning *message*. Quite simply, the word refers to good news of any kind. However, when dealing with fallen mankind, the Gospel is good news from God to fallen mankind whose destiny is otherwise the same as God's chief rebel—and that would be the Lake of Fire. We see that right in the first verses of Galatians:

... our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age ...
Galatians 1:4

Even in this introductory passage, who is front and center? Jesus! Who gave? Jesus! Who delivered? Our Lord and Savior! And, what do you see those who were delivered doing? Nothing, other than responding in faith! We are going to see these same answers repeated over and over again.

Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God ...
John 1:12

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.
John 3:14-15

In the above verses, we see more clearly the response to the saving work of Christ that God expects. The response He is looking for is to believe! Specifically, God wants us to put our faith in who Jesus is, the eternally existent Second Person of the Trinity, and what He did, bore our sins on the cross that the justice of God might be satisfied.

The Gospel is so clearly stated in John 3:36:

**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,
but whoever rejects the Son will not see life,
for God's wrath remains on him.**

As so succinctly declared in the above verse, the most important decision a person will ever make is their response to the person and work of Christ! Belief leads to eternal life and rejection leads to eternal separation from God. Then, just to make the role of works in our salvation very, very clear, consider the following verses:

**"What must we do to do the works God requires?"
Jesus answered, "The work of God is this, to
believe in the One He has sent."** John 6:28-29

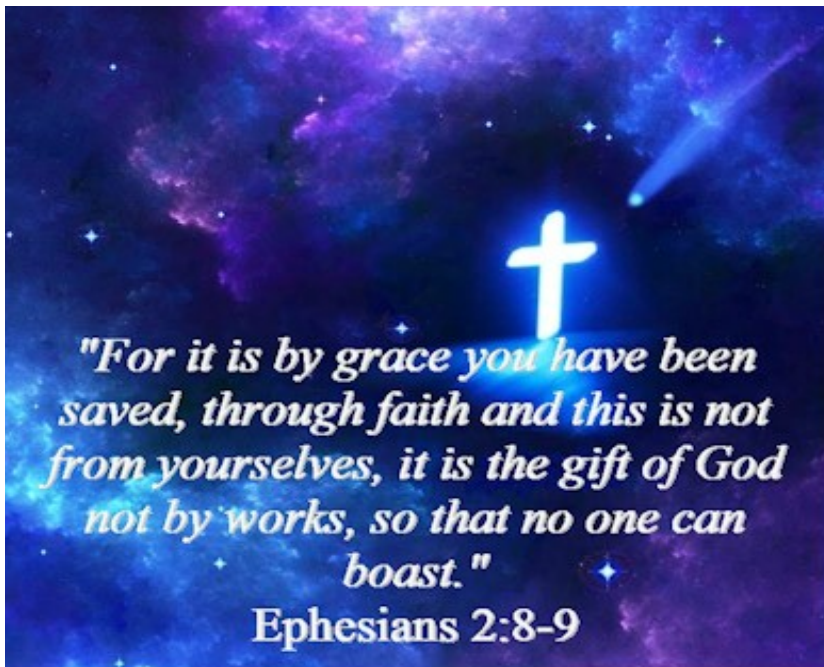
**However, to the man who does not work, but trusts
God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as
righteousness.** Romans 4:5

In John 6, Jesus' Jewish audience asks Him point blank: "What work does God want us to do?" Jesus, in essence responds: "The work of God is not a work at all, it is to believe in Me!" And, in case you're not sure that Jesus is not considering belief a work, look at the contrast in Romans 4. There is the man who works, and the man who trusts. Only the one who trusts is justified. Who, then, can be saved? Anyone can be saved who will place his or her faith in the person and work of Christ. If, in John 6:29, Jesus was speaking to the nation of Israel at His First Advent, what message is the Church to carry forward? See for yourself. After persecution forced many Christians to flee from Jerusalem, some:

**... began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the
good news about Jesus. The Lord's hand was with
them and a great number of people believed and
turned to the Lord.** Acts 11:20

**"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied,
"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be
saved—you and your household." Acts 16:30-31**

It certainly looks as if we are given the same message in both the Book of John and the Book of Acts—faith in the person and work of Christ is what saves. Do you see any works in either of these passages? The only response required is to turn to Christ in faith regarding who He is and what He has done.



And this message is repeated over and over again:

**Now brothers I want to remind you of the Gospel I
preached to you. ... Christ died for our sins accord-
ing to the Scripture, that He was buried, that He was
raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
and that He appeared ...**

I Corinthians 15:1-6

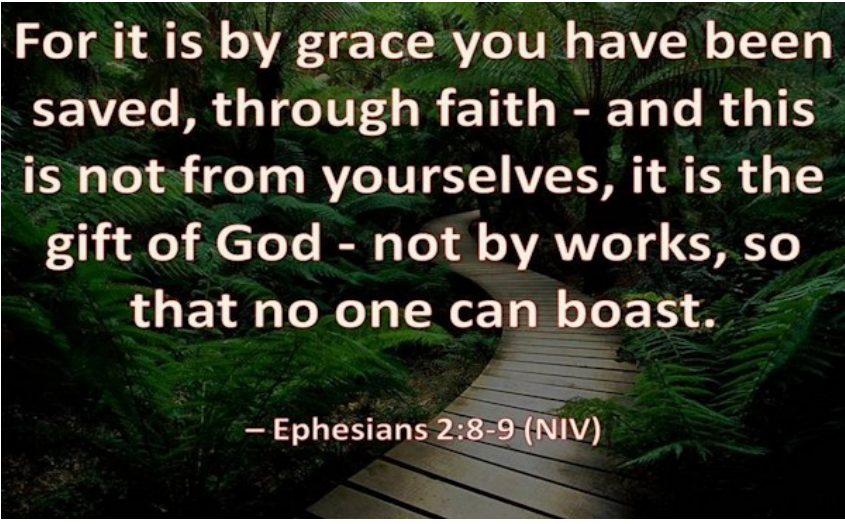
In summary, the Gospel is good news from God to man. It centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What makes it good is that it describes the means by which a human being can change his or her destiny from one of eternal damnation to one of eternal life! What makes it particularly good news is that the work of salvation has been fully accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. Our sole responsibility is to receive, by faith, what God has accomplished on our behalf! That's why the Bible says we are saved by God's grace.

Four Corollaries

Let's explore four issues surrounding the topic of the good news of the Gospel.

1. God Has Done All the Work

The fact that God has done all the work of salvation, and the one response He requires of us is that of faith—that is, trusting in what He has done—is what is meant when



For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

— Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

the Scriptures declare:

For by grace are we saved ...

Ephesians 2:8

Once we have established that salvation is by grace, then it is very clear that works on the part of man are not, in fact cannot be, involved.

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. Romans 11:6

You see, many talk of grace and yet pervert it by adding some kind of work. When they do, they are talking about another gospel of a different kind, which means it is no longer the one that has the power to save!

2. Religion Resists the Gospel

Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, it will be met by resistance! That resistance will typically come from persons involved in organized religion and it is often vigorous in nature. Read through the description of Paul's First Missionary Journey as described in Acts 14, and you find religious individuals responsible for *stirring up the crowd*, *poisoning the mind* of those hearing the truth, and *stoning the messengers*. This kind of angry response on the part of religion is no different in our day.

3. God Asks Nothing but Faith

It is fair to ask this question: "Why has God not required more, much more, from an individual in order to change their eternal destiny from the Lake of Fire to an eternity in heaven?" Salvation is such a priceless commodity, why doesn't God ask us to do something to earn it?

When we finally understand the answer to this question, our skepticism regarding *faith alone in Christ alone* turns to marveling at the grace of God to sinners such as we!

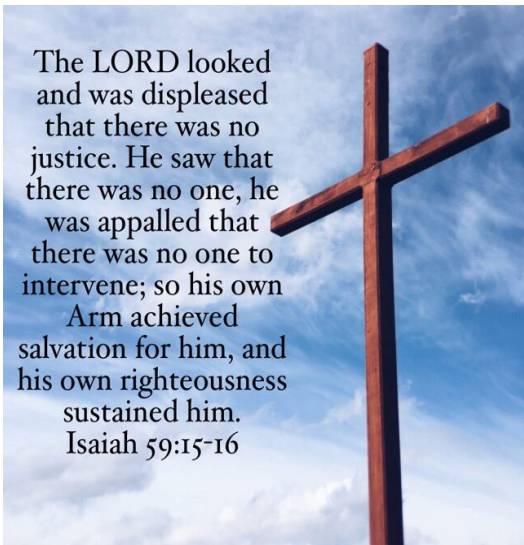
Let's explore the explanation:

- Here is how the second chapter of Ephesians describes every human being prior to coming to Christ:

**As for you, you were dead in trespasses and sins ...
Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.**

Ephesians 2:1-3

Now, I know that we are used to marvelous tales of the servant girl turned princess or great acts by the bold adventurer who rescues the damsel. But we have a name for these kinds of stories—fairy tales. When you and I think that religious works coming from a spiritually dead source are ever going to make us acceptable to God, we are living in a religious fairy tale of our own making.



The LORD looked
and was displeased
that there was no
justice. He saw that
there was no one, he
was appalled that
there was no one to
intervene; so his own
Arm achieved
salvation for him, and
his own righteousness
sustained him.
Isaiah 59:15-16

- You see God is the one who does the work of our salvation—all the work—and that's how it has always been:

**"I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and
with mighty acts of judgment."**

Exodus 6:7

**Then the Lord saw it. . . there was no one, He was
appalled that there was no one to intervene; so His
own arm worked salvation for Him.** Isaiah 59:15-16

- Glory belongs to God, and He says so:

“I will not yield My glory to another.” Isaiah 48:11

When it comes to saving lost mankind, it is never going to be about what we *bring to the table* or what we have accomplished. Rather, it is going to be about what God has done so that He might receive the glory. That is why Paul often says something like the following:

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ... Galatians 6:14

- We were created to live in dependent trust upon our Creator:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. Romans 9:30-32

In the Garden of Eden, God wanted Adam and Eve to put their trust in Him and His Word. When it comes to our salvation and the Christian Life after salvation, it is no different today. Do you see how clear this is in the above passage? The Jews, who had everything going for them as God’s chosen people, did not receive the righteousness associated with salvation! Why not? Because they tried to work for it. On the other hand, Gentile pagans were gaining eternal life. Why? Because they put their faith in God’s provision for salvation—the Lord Jesus Christ! As Paul makes so clear:

... by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Galatians 2:16

And if the Mosaic Law couldn’t do it—that which came

from God Himself, no system established by man has a chance.

Consider how this applies to the original question, "Why doesn't God demand more from us?" I trust you can put the pieces together! There is nothing a spiritually-dead person can do to earn a spiritual salvation. Furthermore, God is the salvation-worker, that He might receive the glory due His Name, and we might come into alignment with the purpose for which we were created—to live in dependent trust upon our Creator!

4. Change Affects the Message

If you change the message of the Gospel, you affect the power of the message to save. This is how Paul explains it in the Book of Romans:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Romans 1:16

It is amazing to me that God has chosen to use imperfect ambassadors to represent Him to a lost and dying world. And, I have heard enough Gospel presentations to know that the Gospel is not always presented as clearly and as accurately as it should be. God is gracious and people still get saved in spite of our fumbling with the message.



"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us."

-2 Corinthians 5:18-20

However, here is the rub, at some point the changed message no longer has the power to save a lost person. Where does that occur? I don't know! But, because we are dealing with a person's eternal salvation, I don't want to find out. It behooves us individually and as a local fellowship of believers to constantly guard the Gospel—to get rid of what has been mistakenly added and make sure nothing essential is ever removed. In this way we can ensure the message we deliver has the power of God to save a lost soul from an eternity without God to one with Him.

Gospel Application

We have looked at what the Gospel is and rounded out our understanding of associated truth. Now let's look at five application topics.

1. Constant Attack on the Gospel

Adding obedience to the Mosaic Law as a condition for salvation was a primary attack on the Gospel in Paul's time and circumstances. But, we must realize that a pure Gospel message will always come under attack in every time and circumstance.

Consider just that portion of the *Three Tenses of Salvation* diagram that deals with how we are saved from an eternal destiny in hell to one in heaven. In our day, the list of additions to the Gospel has grown quite long: baptism, stop sinning, straighten up, commit and surrender, make Jesus Lord, and so on. Sometimes these are added to belief in Christ, and sometimes they push aside faith



altogether! Over the course of time, we have reached the point where it is as if someone has brought a front-loader filled with works-based additions and piled them upon the Biblical Gospel message. All these additions have almost completely obscured that which has the power to save!

2. Not Acceptable to God

It is no more acceptable to God to add our favorite requirement(s) to salvation in our day than it was for the Judaizers to add theirs in Paul's day. So often we think, "But this is so important, I am sure it needs to be added to the Gospel. Why didn't God include it?" Let me remind you of what we already covered: Works acceptable to God can't come from a spiritually-dead source. God is the One who saves so that, in this way, God gets the glory. Further, keeping the Gospel as God designed it keeps us where God wants us—dependent upon Him!

3. The World Pressures

Here is why we are going to be persecuted by the organized religion of our day: To be against good things as a substitute for God's best, or to resist putting things in the wrong sequence, is perceived to be against those things altogether. Do not let the pressure that is sure to come cause you to change the Gospel message. We have received the Gospel straight from God's Word. It is His Word that sets salvation so clearly apart from any works—because only the pure Gospel has the power to save.

Take, for example, commitment and surrender. Are these appropriate for the Christian? Of course they are, but they are not the way a lost person gets saved. One only need examine his or her own struggle, as a Christian trying to live a committed and surrendered life, to realize that it must not be a requirement for those who are

spiritually dead. If it were, no one would get saved. As important as it is for the believer to steadily jettison any worldliness in their thinking, it should be clear that this is part of spiritual growth and not the means of salvation. In fact, lost people will have a great deal of difficulty understanding worldliness in any form. It takes a born-again Christian, sensitive to the Word of God and the Spirit of God, to start becoming sensitive to all the worldliness that needs to go!

In short, the Christian Way of Life is a supernatural life which requires supernatural enablement. It is as simple as this: Only the Christian has any chance of living the Christian Life! To ask an unbeliever to do so will get them headed in the wrong direction from the start and never save anyone.

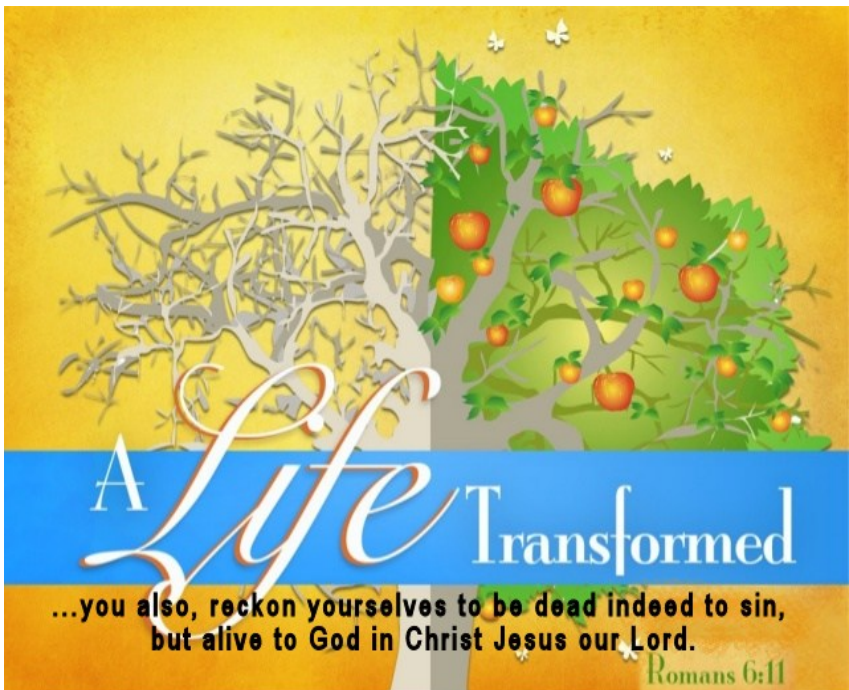


Illustration 1—Experience. Let me illustrate this for you by using one of my own experiences. We had a couple attending the Church who liked certain aspects of the Gospel message, but they did not like hearing about grace. They wanted people to toe the line—their line—more than was happening. They blamed me for teaching error, and, one day while sitting in my office, the husband said:

No one has ever been saved by faith in Christ. . . you're saved because one day you wake up and decide to be totally committed to God."

Let me point out three very problematic aspects of this kind of commitment gospel, which is altogether another Gospel of a completely different kind than we find in the pages of Scripture!

- If this gentleman's claim were true, then who saved him? In whom is he trusting? According to his own testimony, he saved himself. This is certainly a grievous Biblical error, for every human being is born:

... dead in trespasses and sin ... like the rest, an object of wrath. Ephesians 2:1,3

- Who gets the glory in the above false narrative? It is the one who is claiming the total commitment. When it comes to the plan of salvation, let me remind you that God will:

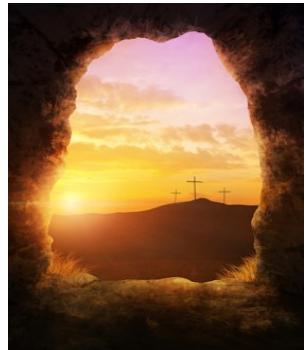
... not share His glory with another! Isaiah 42:8

- Can this man's message save anyone? On the authority of God's Word, and in no uncertain terms, this is a message that has no power and can save no one! For we are saved:

... not because of righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy. Titus 3:5

Illustration 2—Personal Testimony. As a contrast, let me pause for a moment to share my own testimony. Rather than talk about my own commitment, let me boast in my delight in being saved by grace! For the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is compelling, it is winsome, and it is true.

- It is compelling because God the Father drew me, the Son drew me through the mighty work of the cross, and the Holy Spirit convicted me of my hopeless condition before a holy God. The Spirit of God was calling my name and I knew it.
- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is winsome because it completely addressed my sin problem and did away with it. It covered the problem of my lack of righteousness before a holy God. It covered my identity problem—for I was dead in Adam and now am alive in Christ. It covered my life problem—for I now have the very life of Christ which is an eternal life.
- Further, I know what has been promised is true because God the Father gave proof of all of this by raising Jesus from the dead, that I too could have the hope of a future resurrection with a body just like His and suited for all eternity.



All of this is a gift of God, available to me, an unworthy sinner, if I would just reach out and receive it by faith. When I was saved, I saw nothing else could compare—or even come close—so I put my faith in the person of Christ and the finished work of the cross. I did not trust in anything else, only Christ alone.

Now comes the important part. Who worked this salvation? God did! Who gets the glory for saving me? God does! In fact, I take great delight in joining the throng of Revelation Chapter 5:

You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased men for God (this is my story). . .

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them singing: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen" and the elders fell down and worshipped (and this is my response).



Revelation 5:9, 13-14

Who is the sole object of our faith? The Lord Jesus Christ is! No wonder the Bible says:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

Did you hear me talking, anywhere in my testimony, about what I have brought to the table in order to secure my salvation? Understand that for you or me to talk about our level of commitment is to do exactly that! Perish the thought that we would ever think we have anything to add to the so-great salvation accomplished by our Lord and Savior!

4. The Basics

I want to be as clear as possible: I am not against things like transformation, commitment, surrender, and so on. They are an intrinsic result of spiritual growth! What I am against is including them in what is necessary to change one's destiny from hell to heaven, what's necessary to receive eternal life. Furthermore, I am firm on this subject because the Word of God speaks so clearly about it.

Acts 19 tells us that Paul spent close to two years in Ephesus. What a marvel it is to read that:

... all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. Acts 19:10

Now, I want you to look closely at the sequence later in the Book of Acts:

Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. . .in this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. Acts 19:18-20

Notice that *those who believed now came*, where **now** refers to after they had believed. What did they now do? They started purging their lives of the things associated with the *old man*—their sin nature.

Of course, these new Christians were being taught by Paul, so Paul perfectly described what they were doing as something only believers can do:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

Now, there are many, many in our day who would teach that you have to believe and confess your evil deeds along with burning your scrolls in order to be saved. No, this is not the Gospel because it mixes faith and works! You believe, and then, as new creations in Christ who have become sensitive to spiritual issues, you start to purge your life of all that doesn't belong by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian Life is a spiritually-enabled, supernatural life from beginning to end. When you try to force the works of the flesh in at the beginning, you run the risk of compromising all that is meant to follow.

5. Reinforcing the Sequence

In order to reinforce the idea of sequence, consider the following two passages of Scripture:

For He is not willing that any should perish ...

II Peter 3:9

For this is the will of God, your sanctification ...

I Thessalonians 4:3

When you tell lost persons that they need to believe and change their ways, surrender their lives, or any other aspects of the Christian Life, you are saying they need to set their lives apart as unto the Lord. You are telling them they need to be sanctified. You are telling them they

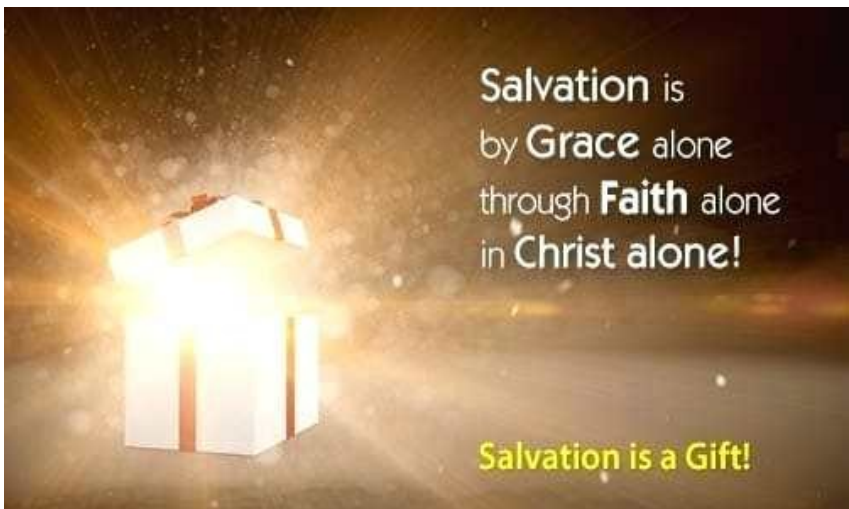
need to walk by the Spirit, which is the means by which we become progressively sanctified. Do you see the problem? Unbelievers do not have the Spirit. You are telling them to do something impossible for them to actually do.

Let me take this discussion one step further. Is your life completely set apart unto God in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity? If the answer is no, why would you ever put what you are still struggling to do in front of a lost person as a condition of getting saved.

The solution is to be straight on God's sequence:

- First, the lost person needs to become a new creature in Christ.
- Then, the saved individual can begin a life of progress by means of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and the guiding light of the Word of God.

I glory in the Gospel! Nothing this world has to offer even remotely competes in time and certainly not for eternity. So let's encourage each other to share it ever more boldly.



Guarding Volume 2

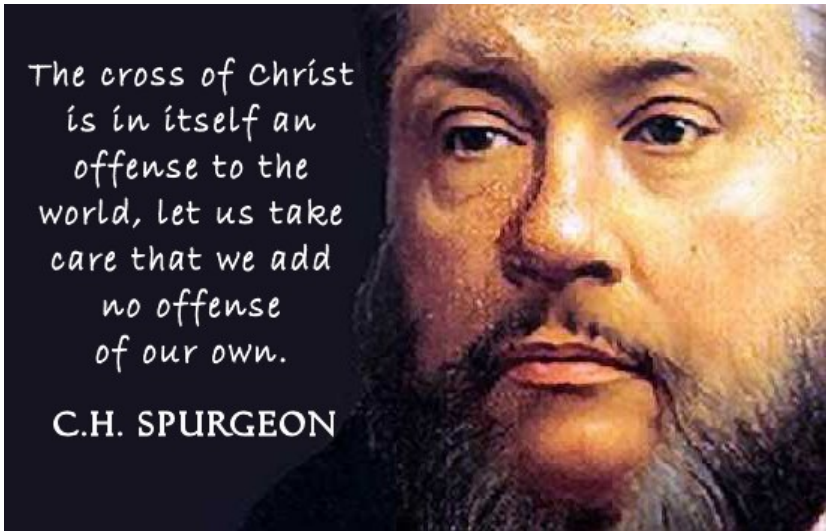
Introduction

As we begin a second look at the topic of *Guarding the Gospel*, let me share something with you:

I sometimes receive letters from persons who say, "We would not wonder if all your congregation were to live in sin, because you are always preaching against man's righteousness, and inviting poor sinners to come to Christ by simple faith, and to be saved by grace alone."

I daresay they would not wonder if such a thing were to happen; but I would wonder if my people, as a whole, lived in sin, and I bless God that I have no cause to wonder about that matter, for a holier people you will not find this side of heaven than those who receive into their hearts the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness. This I will say of them, that grace has worked in them good fruits; that they do walk in the fear of the Lord, in love to one another, and in the practice of uprightness and godliness. But men of the world cannot stand this teaching, because it makes nothing of the merits of which they think so much. Tell men that they are a very good sort of folk; they will like to hear that. Give people a good conceit of themselves, and they will like to listen to you; but that self-conceit is the ruin of tens of thousands. I am sure it is only when we begin to say—I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my All-in-all,"—that we are saved.

Part way through I am sure you realized that this wasn't me writing about the ministry here—although much the same could be said. Instead this was part of a message given by Charles Spurgeon entitled *The Offense of the Cross*. As I mentioned in Volume 1 of our study on *Guarding the Gospel*, a pure Gospel message will always come under attack—even when Spurgeon is preaching it!



We have discussed the threat of a false gospel, one that is of a different kind altogether, one that loses its power to save. We begin the process of falsifying the Gospel when we start to add conditions, which are really just works, to simple faith in Christ as the means by which a lost person is saved. This is to preach a man-centered gospel rather than a Christ-centered one. We must keep reminding ourselves that the Christian Way of Life is a supernatural way of life, one that requires a spiritual birth and then spiritual enablement. Adding the works of man up front risks compromising the whole process, and that's why Paul pronounced anathema on those who do so.

So in pressing on, we are going to focus our attention upon the following topics:

1. Why does Paul think he has a pure Gospel?
2. Why is backloading the Gospel unbiblical?
3. Where do works fit in?
4. Why is changing the Gospel a problem?
5. Why must we guard the Gospel?

1. Why Does Paul's Think He Has a Pure Gospel?

The first answer to this question is that Paul's message lines up with the offer of salvation given by Jesus to the Jews. Compare these statements given to an unbelieving audience by each of them:

Jesus said, **"I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the One I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."** John 8:24

Paul said, **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."** Acts 16:31

Notice that in neither case is any work on the part of man involved. Rather, the emphasis is on belief in the One that God sent to earth.

Then, there is a second answer in this text from Galatians:

I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11-12

The details are very limited on Paul's time with Jesus. But, after Paul's conversion in Acts 9, he starts to preach

vigorously in Damascus and is forced to flee for his life. You might expect him to travel to Jerusalem to:

... see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

Galatians 1:16-17

By comparing the text of Acts and Galatians, we can piece together that Paul spent as much as three years in the Arabian wilderness where he received direct revelation from the Lord. What a time that must have been! This time of revelation also explains I Corinthians 11:26:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed ...



How did Paul know about the Last Supper and the establishment of the ordinance of communion? He was not there. Apparently, he received direct revelation from Christ on the matter.

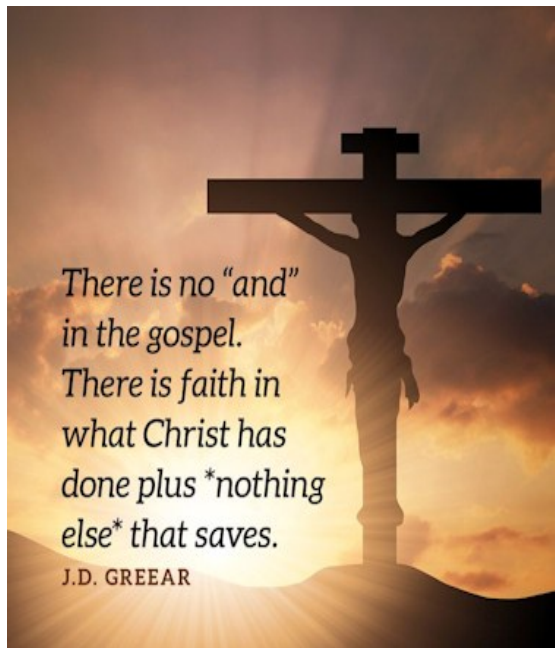
You can see why Paul is such a defender of the message. He received it from the Lord and he is not interested in man making changes—even well-intentioned man.

2. Why Is Backloading the Gospel Unbiblical?

What is meant by the term *backloading* the Gospel? *Frontloading* the Gospel is to teach that salvation is available through faith in Christ plus something else. In the same way, to *backload* the Gospel is to add things after faith in Christ. This most often comes across as follows: You are saved through faith in Christ alone, but it only *takes* if you do certain things following belief. In other words, certain works after salvation are proof of one's salvation. I trust you realize that this is another way of teaching salvation by works, which is another gospel of a different kind altogether!

Backloading Is No Better than Frontloading

I don't want to mince words on this, backloading the Gospel is as problematic as frontloading it. Adding anything either before or after belief is unworkable in practice and thoroughly unbiblical! I know that you might be thinking, "Pastor, how can you be against works following salvation?"



I am not against works, I am all for works! If I didn't think it was violating God's way of doing things, you can bet I would be the biggest cheerleader of works you can imagine. As a pastor, it would make my life a lot easier to preach such a gospel. But I learned a long time ago that it is better to do things God's way and not man's way. And, God's Word firmly tells us that it is *faith alone in Christ alone* that saves—nothing added before or after.

The Problematic Nature of Backloading

Let's discuss just four reasons why *backloading* the Gospel is problematic.

1. The Gospel has been backloaded when you hear teaching that says, "You are not really saved unless you do these good things," or conversely, "You are not really saved if you do these bad things." The immediate questions are what things and for how long? After all, Peter confessed Christ in Matthew 16 and then immediately suggested a demonically-influenced course of action in the same chapter.

Proponents of *backloading* the Gospel will say that he didn't persist in sin. Really? He later denied Christ three times, and, in Galatians 2, we see him leading other believers into hypocrisy. Furthermore, the Prodigal Son lived in a far distant land for a long time, but he was still the Prodigal Son! I ask again, what things and how long? This question is impossible to answer. Contrast this with the clear Biblical grounds on which a person is saved:

He who has the Son has life ... I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life.

I John 5:12-13

2. Another problem with backloading is that you have difficulty explaining what went wrong. The explanation typically involves phrases like: The person didn't believe enough, didn't have *saving* faith, wasn't sincere enough, had a head belief but not a heart belief. The problem with these explanations is that you won't find one single Scripture to support a theology based upon large, saving, sincere, heart faith? Instead you will read unequivocal statements such as:

"Whoever believes in the Son has life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life. . ." John 3:36

You either believe or you do not! That makes it very easy for any of us to decide where we stand on this life/death issue. The backloading alternative results in intense subjectivity, where every time we struggle in the Christian Life we wonder if our faith was really sincere enough, really of a heart kind. The Bible knows nothing of such subjective torture.

3. Backloading the Gospel is adding works to salvation, and, all protesting to the contrary, there is no way around it. And, once you add works, then it is no



longer by grace. (Romans 11:6) Since we are saved by grace alone, the removal of grace from the message is a problem that cannot be overcome.

3. Let me point out that we have trouble enough with the clergy-laity designation, which is certainly not Biblical. But, once you backload the Gospel, you introduce a new category—*fruit inspectors*. They watch over the lives of Christians like hawks to make sure they are living up to some arbitrary and human system of producing fruit. If you don't measure up to their standards, they begin to question your salvation. Does this sound even remotely Biblical? Of course not.

Read Luke 10:38-42. Martha was all about producing fruit, while Mary was just *wasting time* sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to what Jesus had to say. Who did He commend?

"Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:42

I don't know about you, but I am certainly not putting myself in the hands of self-appointed *fruit inspectors*. The works you accomplish in the enablement of the Spirit at any particular level of maturity is a complicated issue, best left to the individual, the Lord, and perhaps close spiritual mentors.

In summary, backloading the Gospel is another gospel. It is most certainly not a message of the same kind, but it is a different gospel altogether!



**The Guarding the Gospel
Sermons Continue in Part 2!**



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