

Only One Gospel

Nov 28, 2010 ~ Galatians 1.6-10

Earlier Introduction (Sep 26th)

- There were two main points to that introduction
- 1. Galatians is different from all of Paul's other letters
 - Greeting is cool and formal
 - He provides extensive defense of his apostleship (v1)
 - He presents the gospel in a nutshell (v4)
- 2. Paul's defense of himself (apostleship) was a defense of the gospel

An Emergency Situation

- Imagine you walked past me in the hall out here and heard me say this:
 - "... so I reached out, grabbed her by her ponytail and yanked her backwards . . ."
 - If you were to hear that you would likely be puzzled – maybe even shocked?
 - But listen to what you may have missed as you got out of earshot . . .
 - "... the car would have hit her had I not done it . . ."
- **Q** – It is said . . . "Desperate times call for desperate measures"
- Paul is addressing an emergency
- People criticize Paul – e.g., he's too rough in his dispute with Barnabus c/Mark
 - But Paul's loyalty is to 1) God, 2) the Gospel and 3) the Church – in that order
 - Paul is willing to risk offense to serve God and save souls . . .

Paul is concerned that the

- ... *flame of the gospel in Galatia might go out* ...
- Paul was surprised and upset by the Galatians ~ this letter clearly reflects it
 - "I marvel that you are turning away . . . to a different gospel"

Why is Paul amazed?

- Paul himself was 'saved' about 13 years earlier ~ He's familiar with the experience
- He's not accusing them of abandoning a belief, but their God and their calling
 - Paul knew what it was like to be personally saved and called by Christ
 - ... to be thoroughly humbled - yet totally cleansed
 - ... to have his life totally turned upside down (for the better)
- Peter described this call beautifully in **1 Peter** . . .
 - **1 Peter 2.9-10** ~ "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."
 - Only those that have experienced it are privileged to proclaim it . . .
- "How can anyone who's experienced this call abandon it?" ~ Paul is amazed

Xition: I want to talk for about the importance of questions . . .

Important Questions

- Life consists of many important questions
 - Students ask: “What should I choose as *my major*?”
 - Couples ask: “Should we take this *new job* and move away from family?”
 - Victims ask: “Why did this happen to me?”
 - Women ask: “Should I *marry* this man?”
- Everyone’s life is a series of actions where each action answers one of 2 questions:
 - “What should I do?” or “What do I want to do?”
 - We do not always do what we should do . . . we often do what we want
 - Some people decide day to day whether to go to work ~ *they lose jobs*
 - Others decide day to day whether to lie, cheat or steal
 - A Christian decides whether to spend time with God
 - !!!: UP wrist bands ~ 1) no negatives, 2) no gossiping, 3) no sarcasm

An important question we all often ask is “Why?”

- Young children (*who barely know how to speak*) often ask profound questions
- Many of their questions are prefaced by the word “why”
 - “Why are we getting into the car?”
 - “Why are we going to the grocery store?”
 - “Why is all the food at the grocery store?”
 - “Why do people need money?”
 - **Q – Advice:** *When your preschooler hits the inquisitive “why” stage, and you hear you hear that word all day long, you may start asking yourself if you really need to answer every single question. As a general rule, answer the child’s initial question and if the follow-up question involves more detail, continue explaining within reason. Don’t allow the child to continually ask empty “why” questions. You might redirect the child by asking other “W” questions -- who, where, when? -- on the same topic.*
- God has blessed us with children asking the W questions...
- Parent often ends Q’s with, “Because God said so!”

Today’s text prompts me to ask a “W” question

- The text we read presumes the answer will come later
 - And we will address the answer as we work through Galatians
 - But it’s important that we introduce the answer today also
- We must ask two “W” questions...
 - “What **is** the gospel?” / “What is the gospel **not**?”
 - Affirmations and denials are a common method of clarifying truth

Xition: “What is the gospel?”

“What is the gospel?”

- **1 Cor 15.1-4** ~ (abridgement) ~ *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...”*
- Note the action of Christ compared to our passivity
 - **Christ:** died for our sins, was buried and rose again . . . (APA)
 - **We:** received the gospel, stand in it, by which we’re saved (PAP)
 - *“Christ overcame death – the curse upon man was broken”*
 - But the benefits of Christ’s death **to** us are conditional ~ **“IF”**
 - This condition is **not a work** ~ it is an **absence of a work**
- **Benefits to us:** Past experience, present reality, results in salvation ~ faith
- The gospel in a Spurgeon sermon
 - *“‘Sir, tell me how can I be saved?’ The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment; God must and will punish sin; Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the place and stead of all that believe on him. Your business, then, this morning is to ask yourself this, Do I want a Savior? Do I want him? And my business, if you answer that question aright is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and you shall be saved.’*

“What is the gospel *not*?”

- The simple answer is that it’s **not** what we just said ~ that is a correct answer...
- Let me answer with snippets of a conversation we all may have had...
- *“Are you saying that all the Hindus in India are going to hell?”*
 - **No, I’m** not saying that. I’m only saying what **Peter** said in **Acts 4.12** ~ *“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved.”*
- *“Are you saying that only the Christian religion can get people into heaven?”*
 - **No, I’m** not saying that. I’m just repeating what **Jesus** said in **John 14.6** ~ *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*
- *“Are you saying God won’t accept me apart from believing in Jesus?”*
 - **No, I’m** not saying that. I’m just telling you what **Paul** said to Timothy in **1 Tim 2.5** ~ *“there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”*
- Do you see why I answer this way – with a no? ~ I was asked, *“Are you saying...”*
 - I responded, *“No, I’m not saying. God’s Word is saying...”*
- If even Jesus rebuffed Satan with the Bible quotes, surely we should too...

Xition: “What is an evangelical?”

Gospel in Greek is “*evangelion*” ~ “*good news*”

- “*What is an evangelical?*” ~ “*one who believes in the good news of the gospel*”
- **Barna Poll:** Main evangelical polling organization in U.S. An “*evangelical*” affirms:
 1. They have been “born again”, having trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
 2. “...their faith is very important in their life today.”
 3. They have a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with non-Christians.
 4. They believe that Satan exists as a living entity.
 5. The Bible is accurate in all it teaches.
 6. Salvation is possible only through grace, not by personal effort or works.
 7. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth.
 8. They believe that God Exists, He created the universe,
 9. is omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, and rules the universe today.
- Barna estimates **5% of the U.S.** and **11% of US Protestants** meet this definition.

Results of Ellison Research

- Paper published September 2008
- Asked the question, “*The phrase ‘evangelical Christian’ is used in the media a lot. In your own words, how would you define exactly what an ‘evangelical Christian’ is?*”
- The answers were wrong, very wrong, somewhat right, mostly right, funny and scary
 - But overall, extremely enlightening...
- So, in answer to the question “*What is an evangelical Christian?*”

Ellison Survey Responses

- “A believer in Jesus Christ that communicates their belief and faith in Jesus with others. They share the good news about Jesus with others who may not know or believe in Jesus.” (36 year-old White woman from Florida, very conservative, attends a Calvary Chapel and calls herself an evangelical)
- “An evangelical Christian proselytizes and has a tendency to see their beliefs as the only valid beliefs, thus disrespecting and imposing on others’ beliefs.” (26 year-old White woman from Pennsylvania, very liberal, does not attend worship but knows an evangelical very well)
- “A person who believes in the entirety of the Bible, and who it says Jesus Christ is, and conducts his life according to the Bible’s precepts.” (37 year-old White man from Oregon, slightly conservative, attends a Calvary Chapel and calls himself an evangelical)
- “One who considers him/herself personally saved by Christ and who believes the Bible is the actual word of God.” (66 year-old White man from California, liberal, does not attend worship but knows an evangelical casually)
- “A psycho who thinks that their way is the only way.” (41 year-old White man from Pennsylvania, slightly liberal, does not attend worship but knows an evangelical very well)

- “Evangelical Christians are **not** mainstream Christians. They do **not** believe that you are saved through your works while on earth, but simply by asking Jesus to be your personal savior.” (36 year-old White woman from Kansas, conservative, attends a Mormon congregation and knows an evangelical casually)
- “One who believes that the Bible is the absolute word of God and who believes that ‘salvation’ is reserved only for those who accept Jesus as their personal savior.” (76 year-old White woman from California, liberal, attends a Unitarian church and does not know any evangelicals)
- People’s definitions are informed by their experiences
- People with evangelical acquaintances seem more accurate in their definitions
- But this doesn’t mean they’re more positive in their statements

The Gospel is Unique

- The Christian Gospel is entirely unique
- **v6-7** ~ Confusing phrase ~ “different gospel” “*which is not another*”
 - different is a word that speaks of a **different kind** of thing altogether
 - another is a word that speaks of another of the **same kind**
 - A “*different*” gospel” is not a gospel
- Evangelicals are supposed to believe this one gospel – this unique thing . . .
- This is why the early Christians were persecuted and killed
 - They were considered atheists by the Greek and Roman people
 - They were too narrow-minded ~ too faithful to their One God
- Unbelievers and more broad-minded liberals hate this about Christianity
 - Christ alone is too restrictive, too judgmental, too sectarian for modernists
 - But **solus Christus** “Christ alone” is **the** Biblical view ~ there is no other
 - And Paul emphasizes this with a curse . . .

Paul anathematizes those who spread false gospels

- **Read v7b-9** ~ “*but there are ... let him be accursed*”
- The word for accursed is “*anathema*”
 - An item or person so cursed is set apart for destruction
 - **Paul is condemning these false teachers to hell**
 - This is not an idle curse, one you might hear on a construction site
 - This is an authoritative curse
 - It comes from one laying the foundation of the Christian Church
 - Paul repeats himself to let them know this was not lightly stated

Xition: “But aren’t we supposed to live at peace with all men?”

It is said, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”

- People want to be nice, nicer even than God
 - When Dr. Paul Brand devised a means for leprosy sufferers to experience pain
 - He thought he could **do better than God**
 - He would have lepers to hear a tone or see a light come on in a glove
 - But the patients ignored the tones or lights when they were focused on a task
 - He had to apply electrical shock ~ He had to cause discomfort and pain
- **We cannot be kinder than God**
 - Our kindness calls us to serenade people while they continue towards hell
- God wants us to risk rejection, to risk being cursed, being assaulted, persecution
 - We excuse ourselves as being tactful
 - But inside we’re fearful of what people might think, of what they might say
 - We want to go along to get along ~ ignore them and hope they’ll ignore us

One last survey response

- “What is an evangelical Christian?”
- “A Christian whose main focus is on spreading the gospel (however, they rarely do this).” (26 year-old White man from Colorado, conservative, attends a non-denominational church and knows an evangelical very well)

Another Important Question ~ “What shall I do with Jesus?”

- Small article in book on New Testament Illustrations from the 19th century
- “Sooner or later, to everyone, comes the question which Pilate asked the Jews, ‘What then shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?’ No one can settle the matter for you; each soul must make its own reply. Careless, indifferent fellow-sinner, do you think to evade replying to this all-important question while you live? If you pass your life thus, you have already answered it, unconsciously to yourself perhaps, but it has had a reply in the rejection of him. But when at the judgment you stand before your despised Savior, you will not then think, ‘What shall I do with Jesus?’ Your one thought will be, ‘O! What will he do with me?’ Then you may be constrained to ask yourself these questions, What can he do with me? Can he receive me into heaven, when I have not received him into my heart? What ought he to do with me? What will he do with me?”
- Some people say, “Give Jesus a chance...”
 - But Jesus is not the one who needs a chance . . .
 - We are, and God has given it...

Let’s Pray