

2. The exclusiveness of the Gospel

October 11, 2012

An American media mogul, Ted Turner who owns CNN and TNT said, "We will let the people know what they need to know." In other words, as a media mogul, he is the one who can choose which news for mere peasants like us in America and around the world need to hear. Obviously he doesn't understand anything about the meaning of true journalism.

Though Turner has a lot of influences in the media industry and intellectual world, he hardly is the one who can decide which one is the real good news, because this has been decided in heaven before he ever came into the picture.

Many Christians know that the definition of "Gospel" is "Good News". But can they describe what the Good News of Jesus Christ stands for it? Probably not. So the Bible tells us in one paragraph:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures

This Good News had changed Paul's life and, through him, lives of others. We, too, are the beneficiaries of this Good News.

A. AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

Galatians 1:1-2 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 brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

As you begin to read Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians, you can tell immediately that something is definitely wrong, because he does not open his letter with his usual praise to God and prayer for the believers of that church.

False teachers are spreading a false 'gospel' which is a mixture of the OT law and grace, and Paul is not about to take this garbage.

Since we already studied about the qualification of the apostleship of Jesus in detail, we are not going to go over it again. By the way, Fred Price who is one of the Word of Faith Movement teachers and also brags about his Rolls Royce and expensive suits he wears, has been calling himself the "apostle of faith" for sometime now.

Paul's miraculous conversion and call to apostleship created some problems among the believers of Christ and unbelievers alike during that time, because they didn't know the Lord's intention. From the very beginning, he was apart from the original apostles. His enemies said that he was not a true apostle for this reason. So Paul is careful to point out that he had been made an apostle by Jesus Christ just as much as had the original Eleven.

His calling to the apostleship originated with God, and came directly from God. His standing as an apostle was not based on opinion polls or any human committee. It is based on a Divine call, made through both God the Father and God the Son.

In case you are thinking that Paul is making too much of his call, please think about the situation. No other apostles were challenged as much as Paul was. So he often has to show his credential from the Lord though he didn't care to do it.

Not only was he an apostle of Christ, but he also found these churches in the region of Galatia. He is not writing to them as a stranger, but as the one who had brought them the message of salvation in the beginning.

B. GREETING OF GRACE AND PEACE

Galatians 1:3-5 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

This is Paul's familiar greeting, drawing from the traditional greetings in both Greek – "Grace" – and Jewish – "Peace" – cultures. Grace of God is always first, peace from Him always second. This is due to the fact that grace is the source of peace. Without grace there is and can be no peace, but when grace is ours, peace naturally follows.

Martin Luther said, "These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity." How true!

Please note how Paul ends his greeting here in v5. He is doing all things for the glory of God. The false teachers were not ministering for the glory of Christ, but for their own glory. Like false teachers today, the Judaizers were not busy winning lost people to Christ. Rather, they were stealing other men's converts and bragging about their statistics. But Paul's motive was pure and godly: he wanted to glorify Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men

C. PERVERTED GOSPEL

Galatians 1:6-7 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

The word 'marvel' does not contain the feeling of 'amazement', rather 'alarm'. Can you tell apostle Paul's anxiety for their spiritual well-being? They are abandoning liberty for legalism. And they are doing it so quickly, without consulting Paul, their "spiritual father," or giving time for the Holy Spirit to teach them.

One of our former congregation asked me several questions, regarding the reason why we have worship service on Sunday; eating the foods that were forbidden by the OT laws. What he really wanted from me was an approval of "Attaboy!" and changing our church direction back to the Pharisaic legalism. That was not gonna happen. Though I explained to him about the grace of God, he wasn't happy about it. Soon after that, his family left the church.

Galatians has been called the "Declaration of Independence of Christian liberty." The Galatian believers were not simply "changing churches" but were actually abandoning the very grace of God.

Why would any God-loving Christian do such a dumb thing? Pride. You see, God's grace and mercy do not have any room for human effort. They are all God's, not

even a tiny portion of human involvement. We, prideful humans often cannot accept the fact that the grace and mercy of God forbid our part.

So, some people try to add their own flavors of effort into God's grace and mercy . By doing so, they automatically reject the true grace and mercy of God.

We must never forget that the Christian life is a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A man does not become a Christian merely by agreeing to a set of doctrines; he becomes a Christian by submitting to Christ and trusting Him. You cannot mix grace and works, because they are mutually exclusive. Salvation is the gift of God's grace, purchased for us by Jesus Christ on the cross. To turn from grace to Law is to desert the God who saved us.

Romans 11:6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is exclusive because Jesus declared that He is THE Way, the Truth, and the Life. If there was any other way, He didn't have to go to the cross to die for our sins. That means that any other gospel is not Jesus' Gospel, but the devil's.

Like the cultists today, the Judaizers would say, "We believe in Jesus Christ, but we have something wonderful to add to what you already believe," as if any man could "add" something better to the grace of God. That is practically the same phrase used by the Mormon missionaries who come to naive Christians' houses. Because those naive Christians don't know the Word of God well, they fall for the sales pitch by Mormon missionaries or Jehovah's Witness people.

The word 'pervert' in Greek is "metastrepho" which means "turn one thing into another". In other words, the original purpose and meaning just went out the window. That was exactly what the Judaizers had done to the Galatian church believers. They threw out the grace of God for their salvation and turned them to the legalism of the OT law.

Keep in mind that God's grace involves something more than man's salvation as I said it before. We not only are saved by grace, but we are to live by grace. Grace gives us the strength we need to be victorious Christian soldiers; grace enables us to endure suffering without complaining, and even to use that suffering for God's glory.

When a Christian turns away from living by God's grace, he must depend on his own power. This leads to failure, disappointment, and misery.

D. LET HIM BE ACCURSED

Galatians 1:8-10 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. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

For example, you take your little children or grandchildren to a park so that they can play. While you are sitting on a park bench and watching your children playing with their friends. Then, there is a man who brings lollipops to the children and says nice things to them and try to take them to his van. What would you do?

Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Ever since the Lord called me to be a pastor and Bible teacher, I started to abhor the false doctrines by those who bring confusion and troubles to the believers of Christ. Apostle Paul waged war against the false teachers because he loved the truth, and because he loved those whom he had led to Christ.

The Greek word for 'accursed' is "anathema". It means "doomed to destruction without hope of being redeemed". Wow, that sounds final, don't you think? That is what apostle Paul is pronouncing to these false teachers and their doctrines. Some may say, "Where is Paul's love for these people?" He didn't love the false teachers who would destroy people's lives for their personal gain.

The test of a man's ministry is not popularity, or miraculous signs and wonders, but his faithfulness to the Word of God.

E. APPLICATION

We shouldn't think that we can add anything or subtract anything from the grace and mercy of God with our human effort.