

"I Marvel ..."

"... that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel: which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6f). Paul comes directly to the point. Some were preaching a different doctrine to the Galatians. Many were accepting it -- to the peril of their souls! They were removing themselves from grace, the grace of God made available to them in Jesus Christ. And those who were teaching that other "*gospel*" were troubling the Galatians, deceiving them and they were perverting (twisting) the gospel of Christ.

"*Gospel*" means "*good news*." The "*gospel of Christ*" is the "*good news about Christ*." Some seek to make distinction between the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of Christ; putting greater importance upon the gospel than the doctrine. Those who so distinguish limit the gospel to three things; the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God's Son. According to this theory, all else taught in the scriptures is doctrine. While it is true Paul does define the gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4); he by no means limits the gospel to consist solely of these facts. One only need turn to two other passages in the Galatian letter to see the utter folly of a forced distinction between "*gospel*" and "*doctrine*." The troubling teachers in taught Galatian Christians they must accept the law and be circumcised; yet they did not deny the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They just added to that their opinions about the keeping of the law and circumcision. Paul said their teaching was "*another gospel*" (not really a gospel, for it would damn the ones who followed it) but what some would identify as "*doctrine*" i.e. keeping the law and circumcision, Paul calls "*gospel*." In the second chapter Paul rebuked the hypocrisy of Peter. He gave the reason for that rebuke: "*When I saw they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel ...*" (Gal. 2:14). Peter did not deny the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus; he believed those things. He taught there was no distinction between Gentile and Jew, and then acted as though there was. His actions Paul styles as something contrary to the "*truth of the gospel*" Doctrine and Gospel cannot be distinguished between. The words are synonyms for each other.

A different doctrine will affect my salvation. What the different doctrine does is to trouble those who accept it. The Galatians were "*quickly removing*" suggests an action in progress, yet not completed. They were removing, but the transaction was not fully done. Later in his letter he

warns, *"Ye are severed from Christ, those of you who would be justified by the law, ye are fallen away from grace"* (Gal. 5:4). The letter is written first to stay, then turn the tide these were riding. The crest of that tide would have led them to seek justification by the works of the law and not of grace.

Those who troubled the Galatians were perverting the gospel of Christ. Men can twist the doctrine, the scriptures, but if they do; they do so to their own peril (2 Pet. 3:16). There is one gospel, one doctrine, one faith. It is necessary that we abide in the things we have learned; not to go beyond things written; not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9).

Paul herein asserts his apostleship. *"But though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema"* (Gal. 1:8f). These words should have caused terror in the hearts of the Galatians. They also should cause terror in our hearts as well. It matters what a man preaches. It matters what a man believes. Jesus said, *"If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit"* (Matt. 15:14). These are not welcome words in our present society. Many become irate if it is even hinted that a man can be lost if he sincerely believes. But both Jesus and Paul teach us that it does matter what a man teaches; that it does matter what a man believes. There is one gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Any other gospel will not lead a man to heaven but it can lead him to hell. Thus we must ever, *"Try the spirits whether they be of God for there are many false prophets gone out into the world"* (1 Jn. 4:1).

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