

GALATIANS: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING LEGALISM
Part I: Identifying And Overcoming A Legalistic Gospel Presentation
(Galatians 1:1-9 with 5:2-3)

I. Introduction

- A. Legalism is a theological and lifestyle error where one attempts to achieve the righteousness of God by either (a) obeying God in his own carnal power (Rom. 7:15-24) or by (b) adhering to man's doctrines as though they were God's (Mtt. 15:7-9).
- B. One of the major problems with Evangelical legalism is its tendency to obstruct the truth of the Gospel itself by supplying works to faith for justification.
- C. Paul addresses this need in Galatians 1:1-9 and 5:2-3, and we apply it to our current situation:

II. Identifying And Overcoming A Legalistic Gospel Presentation, Galatians 1:1-9 with 5:2-3:

- A. In his extensive introduction, Paul summarized his whole preaching message in verses 3-5. He did so to counter an error of the Gospel presentation that mixed faith with circumcision for salvation, cf. Gal. 5:2-3.
- B. He addressed this problem as a distortion of the Gospel itself, Gal. 1:6-7:
 - 1. The Greek word for "another" to mean "another of the same kind" is *allos*, used in Gal. 1:7a. The Greek word for "another of a different kind" is *heteros*, used in Gal. 1:6b.
 - 2. Thus, a better translation of Gal. 1:6-7a reads as follows: "I marvel that you are so quickly removed from Him that called you . . . unto a different kind of gospel: which is not another of the same kind."
- C. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, has identified the following similar errant, legalistic gospels in contemporary evangelism efforts in his book, True Evangelism, p. 3-23:
 - 1. Some ministers make going forward to the altar a prerequisite to being saved, leaving the impression that believing on Christ in the pew is not enough for salvation!
 - 2. Some present the gospel with Matthew 10:32-33 which states: Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father . . . But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father . . ." This passage is used to teach that one cannot be saved unless he walks the aisle in front of everybody! In actuality, this confession is the **result** of conversion, not the **means** as it is often incorrectly presented. Salvation is not by **courage** to walk an aisle **PLUS faith**, but by **faith alone** in the Gospel, Eph. 2:8-9! The courage comes **later**!
 - 3. Some use Romans 10:9-10 to teach that salvation comes by confessing with one's mouth the Lord Jesus. However, again, this confession is an **evidence** of salvation -- not the **means** of it!
 - 4. Some ministers mix issues of lack of church membership and sinful, worldly amusements in with the Gospel to the point that unbelievers think that giving these up are conditions for salvation! That does a lot of damage, for the **ONLY** issue the Holy Spirit has with the unsaved is the **Gospel**, Rom. 1:17!!
 - 5. Sometimes the conditions of salvation presented are "repent and believe," or "feel sorry for your sins and believe" or "confess and turn from your sins and believe," etc. -- all of which err from Ep. 2:8-9!
 - 6. As a result of such errant Gospel presentations, the unsaved are in spiritual confusion! (a) They may assume that salvation is by works of humiliation like walking an aisle in a meeting that they cannot make themselves do, and give up ever seeking salvation. (b) On the other hand, others may think that if they say the right words and walk an aisle, they are saved when they may not be! (c) If they do these suggested works but later fail to live a godly life, they may **wrongly** assume that ((a)) either they lost their salvation, which cannot happen (Jn. 10:28) or ((b)) they were never saved when they may be saved but carnal, 1 Jn. 1:10, or ((c)) that they cannot be sure of ever being saved, or ((d)) that they didn't believe "hard enough" or some other such errant, confusing, damaging conclusion!

Lesson: In all we do, in all we say while witnessing or preaching the Gospel to the unbeliever, we must not leave the impression that works mix with faith as the means of salvation! The unsaved cannot work the works of God outside of merely believing the Gospel, Ep. 2:8-9 with John 6:28-29. Yes, after salvation we had better see works evidences of salvation, that's a given, cf. Ephesians 2:10. But the means of salvation has always been, always is, and always will be by grace ALONE through faith ALONE as a GIFT of God! Anything else is a legalistic, erroneous Gospel!!