

No Other Gospel

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[0 : 00] As we continue our study in Galatians, let's read Galatians chapter 1 verses 6 through 10.

! Paul wrote there, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

When we looked at the first five verses of Galatians last week, we talked about how the letter to the Galatians lacks the commendations found in Paul's other letters.

[1 : 15] Paul even skipped his typical comment about how he prays for the recipients. Instead, Paul almost immediately jumped into a summary of the gospel, and that summary was in verses 3 through 5.

Tonight's passage shows us why Paul took that approach. In Galatia, false teachers were spreading a false gospel. To make matters worse, the Galatians were listening to them. True believers never should take lightly any distortions of the true gospel. And tonight's verses will show us how Paul reacted to such a distortion. In these verses, Paul strongly emphasizes that only the gospel of Christ is true.

Anyone who contradicts the true gospel is a false teacher who should be accursed by God. That's the main idea. Only the gospel of Christ is true.

Anyone who contradicts the true gospel is a false teacher who should be accursed by God. We talked last week about how some people have called Galatians Paul's angry letter.

[2 : 21] We certainly will see some anger in it, but calling it a warning letter is probably more appropriate. Put yourself in Paul's sandals for a minute. You've gone out to start churches through many personal tribulations.

You've traveled over mountains, you've faced danger, and you've been left for dead before you see some people starting to come to Christ, and you start to see some churches forming. But then immediately after that, these churches are established, and you hear that those new believers are turning away from the faith that you taught them because they are being influenced by false teachers.

How do you think you would respond to something like that? Well, let's hope that if we find ourselves in the same position as Paul did, we will want to shout a warning as well.

When a warning is necessary, that warning takes precedence over pleasantries. We all know how nice James Holt is. He rarely uses a harsh tone, except sometimes in text.

But sometimes his biggest fan in recent years was my mother. My mom followed almost every mention of James' name with, He's so nice.

[3 : 36] She kind of ran those words together, I think. She thought that's what the H actually stood for. She thought it was his last name. The one time I remember a situation where I told her that James was grumpy, my mom responded, Well, you must have done something to provoke him.

But suppose that tonight, when I'm walking across the parking lot, James realizes that I'm about to step in front of a moving car.

The appropriate response for James would be to yell at me to get out of the way, and he'd be correct to use a harsh tone there to get my attention. He would be wrong to put pleasantries ahead of my safety.

And here in Galatians, we see a similar situation. The Apostle Paul sees that the Galatians are about to be seriously hurt by people who falsely claim to be messengers from God.

And he's warning them to watch out. We'll break tonight's text into three sections, starting with verses 6 and 7. And in those verses, we see the astonishment.

[4 : 40] So the astonishment is the first blank for you. Listen to verses 6 and 7 again. The original Greek word translated as astonished in verse 6 has been variously translated into English as astonished, marveled, amazed, astounded, and surprised.

So Paul was genuinely shocked at the news that he'd received from Galatia. The shock was further deepened because the slippage of the Galatians had occurred so quickly. And when he says that they had turned so quickly, this phrase could refer either to the short duration of time that had elapsed since Paul first preached the gospel there, or it could have meant that the Galatians immediately lapsed from true faith as soon as they were confronted with the message of the false teachers.

Paul actually may have intended both meanings here. Relatively speaking, little time had passed since Paul had taught the churches, and those churches seemed eager to embrace different teachings.

And Paul says he's astonished that the Galatians are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. The word translated deserting there means to transfer one's allegiance.

It's used of soldiers in the army who revolt or desert and of men who change sides in politics or philosophy. The desertion written about here is a deliberate act.

[6 : 30] Certainly Paul would have been upset if the Galatians simply had drifted away from true teaching, but the Galatians' situation was even worse. They were intentionally turning away from what Paul had taught them and instead beginning to follow the false teachers.

Pay particular attention to how Paul describes the people's desertion. He says, You are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ. Notice he says you are deserting him instead of you are deserting it.

The true gospel is God's gospel, and the gospel is so closely identified with God that when people turn from the true gospel, they are in a sense turning from God himself.

And the true gospel is what Paul summarized in Acts chapter 20, verse 24. Listen to what Paul said in Acts 20, verse 24.

But I do not account my life of any value, nor is precious to itself, if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

[7 : 43] The true gospel is the gospel of the grace of God. The true gospel is good news of a God who is gracious to undeserving sinners.

Think about what the gospel tells us. In grace, God gave his son to die for us. In grace, God calls us to himself. In grace, God justifies us when we believe.

As 2 Corinthians 5:18 says, All is from God, meaning that all is of grace. Nothing is due to our efforts, merits, or works.

Everything in salvation is due to the grace of God. The Galatians were doing something even more disturbing than turning from the true gospel.

The end of verse 6 says that they were turning to a different gospel. The idea of counterfeit is what Paul means by different. The gospel taught by the false teachers was a counterfeit gospel.

[8 : 45] The believers were in the process of removing themselves from the sphere of grace. The false teachers were accountable for their corruption of God's truth, but the Galatian Christians were accountable for being so easily misled to pursue legalism instead of the gospel.

We'll see as we get further into Galatians that the false teachers were Judaizers. In Acts 15:1, John summarized the Judaizers' message.

He said, But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

The Judaizers accepted that you must believe in Jesus for salvation, but they stressed that you must be circumcised and keep the law as well. In other words, they were teaching that you must finish by your obedience to the law what Christ had begun.

You had to add your works to the work of Christ, and so you had to finish Christ's unfinished work. The thought of the Galatians turning to a different teaching may seem surprising to us, but that's

why Paul's letter is as much a warning for us now as it was to the original readers back then.

[10:09] We should never get overconfident that we could be led astray, and so we need to be careful that we are never led astray.

The Galatians had been privileged to be taught by the greatest teacher the church has ever had, except for the Lord Jesus himself. Yet they readily rejected the truths of grace that they had learned from Paul.

There's still a great and urgent need for preaching and teaching that continually repeats the central truths of the gospel. It's even possible for long-time believers to lose a firm grip on those truths and allow themselves to be weakened and perverted by ideas that purportedly improve on the pure and plain teachings of Scripture.

That's why we must study the Bible diligently ourselves and make sure we regularly expose ourselves to sound teaching. We always need to stay on guard, but we should never panic.

We know how to avoid falling victim to false teaching. If Paul had stopped with the end of verse 6, where he talked about the Galatians turning to another gospel, that would have been very confusing.

[11:23] Notice that he quickly clarifies his words by the phrase that starts verse 7. He said at the start of verse 7, not that there is another one.

Paul wants to make sure that the people understand that the Judaizers' gospel is no gospel at all. Any teaching that adds, subtracts, or changes something about the gospel results in something that is no gospel.

The only gospel of God is the gospel of grace, which is the gospel of divine redemption, totally apart from any work or merit of man.

Ephesians 2, verses 8-10 remind us that we are saved by grace and that we are God's workmanship. We read those verses often, but the verses are worth hearing again.

So here are Ephesians 2, verses 8-10. Romans 5-2 reminds us that God gives us the faith we need to stand strong in the gospel.

[12:48] So listen to Romans 5-2. Through him, we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We live in grace from the moment of salvation, and if grace ever stopped, we would lose our undeserved salvation and perish in sin. The grace of Christ is God's free and sovereign act of love and mercy in granting salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus, apart from anything men are or can ever do.

And it's God's sustaining salvation that leads us to glorification. It's absurd to accept a gracious salvation and then endeavor to maintain righteousness through human efforts, ceremonies, and the Jewish people.

And the Judaizers who plagued the early church claimed to be Christians. Much of their doctrine was orthodox. They claimed to believe all the truths that the other Christians believed.

They never purported to overtly deny the gospel. They just claimed to supposedly improve it by adding to the requirements. And they added the requirements, ceremonies, and standards of the Old Covenant.

[14:08] But anything added to grace destroys that grace just as surely as if anything is taken away from the grace. Think about this.

When law, even God's own law, is added to His grace, God's grace ceases to be grace. Our salvation, past, present, and future, is entirely a work of God.

When we keep restating that same message in different ways, any teaching that adds, subtracts, or changes something about the gospel results in something that is no gospel.

And in the Galatians case, the Judaizers were adding the law to the gospel. That may sound relatively harmless, but consider a drop of poison in a large container of water.

A single drop of poison in a large container can make all the water lethal. And a single false idea that in any way undercuts God's grace poisons the whole system of belief.

[15:14] The most destructive dangers to the church have never been atheism, pagan religions, or cults that openly deny scripture, but rather supposedly Christian movements that accept so much biblical truth that their unscriptural doctrines seem relatively insignificant and harmless.

This is where we need to be careful. We know that true believers can never lose their salvation, but true believers can lose the joy of their salvation, and they can do things that disrupt the fellowship

between them and God.

Legalism puts up a barrier that comes between believers' fellowship with God. That's because legalism puts up unnecessary requirements, and legalism also puts up unnecessary requirements on new believers.

The end of verse 7 summarizes the negative impact that legalism can have on even those people who are truly saved. Paul said, But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

False systems labeled as Christianity always distort the nature and work of Jesus Christ. Those who deny Christ altogether are easily seen as the unbelievers that they are, But those who claim to teach and follow Christ while undermining the gospel of his grace are immeasurably more dangerous.

[16:42] They give the appearance of leading people to Christ while they're building barriers to salvation by grace. The true gospel is about Christ.

Christ's gospel is the gospel of atonement. Christ's gospel declares the full remission of sin and divine justification of sinners based upon the atonement.

The counterfeit gospel preached by the Judaizers was based upon the work of Christ plus human endeavor such as circumcision and Jewish ceremonies. We're reminded of the seriousness of gospel defection here.

To add to the gospel whether works, sacraments, baptism, or anything else is to detract from the gospel. And when Paul talks about the believers being troubled, the Greek verb for trouble there means to shake or agitate.

The Galatian congregations had been thrown by the false teachers into a state of turmoil. They had intellectual confusion on one hand and were starting to devolve into warring factions on the other.

[17:50] That word for trouble is used in other places in scripture. That same word was used of Herod when he heard about the birth of Jesus in Matthew 2.3.

It was used of the disciples when they saw Jesus walking on the water. And it was used of Zacharias when he saw the angel of the Lord. And it was also used by Jesus himself in his command, Let not your hearts be troubled, in John 14.1.

The churches of Galatia were being shaken to their very foundations by the false teaching of the unregenerate Judaizers who were acknowledging the basic truths of Jesus Christ but who were spiritually disturbing and subverting the believers by adding works to grace.

Once again, the least bit of law added to the gospel of Christ reverses its character and turns it into that which is contrary to God's grace. And we need to remember that salvation is solely on the merits of his sinless, sin-bearing son.

John MacArthur said, Law does not moderately pollute grace but reverses and destroys it. As a means of salvation, the two are diametrically opposite and cannot coexist.

[19:10] Grace can be destroyed but it cannot be modified. It can be rejected but it cannot be changed. Verses 6 and 7 showed us the two chief characteristics of the false teachers.

That is, they were troubling the church and changing the gospel. Those two almost always go together to tamper with the gospel is always to trouble the church.

Even if you've never read Galatians before you could tell by Paul's words and his tone that he was very upset with the Judaizers. He made his feelings even more plain in verses 8 and 9.

So let's move on to those verses now as we look at the second section of the lesson. In verses 8 and 9 we see the accursed. So the accursed is your second blank.

Listen to verses 8 and 9 again. Paul said, But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

[20:23] As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Now you can easily see why accursed is the heading for this section. Paul uses that term in both verses. The word translated accursed is anathematized from where we get our word anathema. And this term is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for the word ban. Items that were devoted to the ban were to be destroyed. In 1 Corinthians 16.22, Paul uses this term for eternal damnation.

He says there, If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. So Paul was saying, Let everyone who teaches another gospel be eternally damned.

That is how serious the issue is. So Paul establishes the principle that no matter how important the person, if he changes the gospel, he will be accursed.

[21 : 35] With the definition of accursed in mind, let's dig into verses 8 and 9 a little deeper. Listen to verse 8 again. Paul said, But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

The writing in this section is harsh. However, Paul applies the possible curse to himself first before he applies it to anyone else. Paul first pronounces the curse on himself and his colleagues if he or any one of them changes the gospel.

That helps us see how serious the issue is. Paul says that he would rather be eternally damned than mislead people with false teaching.

In verse 8, Paul also applies the curse to an angel from heaven if that angel tried to change the gospel. By introducing angels into the discussion, Paul makes the point that no one in all of creation has the authority to change the gospel.

Some think that Paul had the account of 1 Kings 13 in mind when he wrote about an angel supposedly delivering a new message.

[22 : 54] In 1 Kings 13, God commanded a prophet from Judah to give a message of judgment to King Jeroboam. God also commanded that prophet to avoid eating or drinking on his way home.

On his way home, the prophet from Judah met another prophet who invited him to come eat and drink with him. And we'll pick up the narrative starting with the prophet from Judah's response in 1 Kings 13, verses 16 and 17.

So here are 1 Kings 13, verses 16 through 24. And he said, I may not return with you or go in with you, neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place.

For it was said to me by the word of the Lord, you shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way you came. And this is the other one speaking now.

And he said to him, I also am a prophet as you are. And an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.

[24 : 01] But he lied to him. So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drank water. And as they sat at the table, the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back.

And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, thus says the Lord, because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the command that the Lord your God commanded you, but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to you, eat no bread and drink no water, your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.

And after he had eaten bread and drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. And as he went away, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his body was thrown in the road and the donkey stood beside it and the lion also stood beside the body.

The prophet from Judah, a true prophet, was led astray by someone who falsely claimed to have a message from an angel and that mistake cost the true prophet his physical life.

Paul was even more prophetic with his pronouncement, though, about additional revelation from an angel than he would have realized at the time. Can you think of a religion today that claims to have additional revelation from an angel?

[25 : 26] Well, Mormonism claims that Joseph Smith received revelations through an angel. The Latter-day Saints are just one of the religions that claim a false gospel.

We need to pray that God will enlighten our LDS friends and colleagues with the true gospel before it's too late for them. Setting aside for a moment the LDS church's false beliefs that Christ was a created being, listen to how they distort the gospel by adding works similar to what the false teachers in Galatia were doing.

This verse is actually from the Book of Mormon in its 2 Nephi 25-23. It says, Until you get to the ending, that verse from the Book of Mormon sounds fine.

But grace that saves people only after all that they can do is no grace at all. So you can see that false teaching like what the Galatians faced still is alive today.

Paul makes no moans about his feelings here. He desires that the false teachers should come under the divine ban, curse, or anathema. That is, he expresses the wish that God's judgment will fall upon them.

[26 : 57] That's why believers will surely avoid giving such teachers a welcome or a hearing and refuse to receive them or listen to them because the false teachers are the ones whom God has rejected.

Think about this, though. The devil disturbs the church as much by error as by evil. When he cannot entice Christian people into sin, the devil deceives them with false doctrine.

Some people today dismiss Paul's outburst against the false teachers as an inappropriate temper tantrum. They say that we should be tolerant of different beliefs and Paul was anything but tolerant. We know, though, that those people are wrong to criticize Paul. He was doing exactly what he should have been doing. The curse of the apostle, or actually the curse of God, which Paul desires, is universal.

It rests upon any and every teacher who distorts the essence of the gospel and who propagates that distortion. There's no exception to that. In verse 8, Paul specifically applies the curse to angels as well as men, and he adds himself also.

[28 : 13] The fact that he includes himself clears him of the charge of personal spite or animosity. His curse is uttered deliberately and with conscious responsibility to God.

Look at verse 9 now and we'll see Paul repeat the curse again. He says, As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

John Stott discussed two reasons why Paul so strongly wrote against the false teachers. The first is that the glory of Christ was at stake.

He said, To make men's words necessary for salvation, even as a supplement to the work of Christ, is derogatory to his finished work. It is to imply that Christ's work was in some way unsatisfactory and that men need to add to it and improve upon it.

It is, in effect, to declare the cross redundant. When we get to Galatians 2.21, we'll hear these words from Paul.

[29 : 24] So here is Galatians 2.21. Paul said, I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

The second reason that Stott gives for Paul's opposition to the false teachers is this. He says, The good of men's souls was also at stake. Paul was writing about something that is fundamental to the gospel.

He was writing about those who teach false views and mislead others by that teaching. Paul cared deeply for the souls of men. In Romans 9.3, he declared that he would be willing himself to be accursed if others could be saved instead.

He knew that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. To corrupt that gospel was to destroy the way of salvation and so to send to ruin the souls that might have been saved by it.

Jesus himself taught the same thing as Paul. Listen to what Jesus said in Mark 9.42. In Mark 9.42, Jesus said, Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

[30 : 49] That's just a poetic way to say that anyone who teaches a false gospel will be accursed. So Paul is far from contradicting the spirit of Christ.

He's actually expressing the spirit of Christ. We live in an age when it's considered very narrow-minded and intolerant to have any clear and strong opinions, let alone to disagree sharply with anybody else.

As for desiring false teachers to fall under the curse of God and to be treated as false teachers and cursed by the church, the very idea is to many inconceivable, but that's specifically what the Bible calls us to do.

Getting back to our Galatians text, Paul seems to sense how his readers will react. He seems to sense that people will say, Paul, you're going to make the false teachers angry.

Consider backing off a little bit. After all, we should be tolerant of different opinions. And he answers those anticipated objections in verse 10, the last section of the study tonight.

[31 : 55] So in verse 10, we see the approval. The approval is your last blink. Paul emphatically states whom he's trying to please and why he is trying to please him.

Look at verse 10 again. Paul says, For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. If Paul desired to be a people pleaser, then he would never have turned his life over to Christ.

After all, he was formerly admired for his pharisaical zeal. If his goal were admiration from humans, then he would have remained a Pharisee. Paul knew Jesus' words to the Pharisees in John 5, verses 39-44.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 5, 39-44. He told the Pharisees, You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

[33 : 12] I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me.

If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

So the Pharisees were seeking glory from themselves and from other people rather than seeking glory from God. And Paul knew where that would lead. Proverbs 9-25 warns about that.

And Proverbs 9-25 says, The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

Here's a quote by David Platt and Tony Merida.

They said, The word fear often means to reverence, to stand in awe, or to worship. seeking the approval of people, then, is idolatry.

[34 : 16] In concerning yourself with what everyone else thinks about you, you are worshiping people, not God. They followed that statement with a question and then a comment.

The question is this, Are you a servant of Christ? They say, If so, adore him in your heart.

Recognize the grace that he has given you and the death that he endured for you.

Contend for this message with courage and with the power of the Spirit that is yours in Christ.

Remember the main idea.

Only the gospel of Christ is true. Anyone who contradicts the true gospel is a false teacher who should be accursed by God. Many false teachers and false systems are attractive because they emotionally appeal to love, brotherhood, unity, and harmony.

Many false teachers are popular because they seem to be warm and pleasant and claim to have a great love for God and for others. It's because of distortions of the gospel by such deceptive personalities that people find them so appealing.

[35 : 30] But remember that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. We face several false gospels today that are no gospel at all.

Let's just think about some of the false gospels we have today. We have the gospel of material prosperity that teaches that Jesus is the way to financial gain. We have the gospel of family values. It teaches that Jesus is the way to a happy home. We have the gospel of self which teaches that Jesus is the way to personal fulfillment. We have the gospel of religious tradition that teaches that Jesus is the way to respectability.

And we have the gospel of morality that teaches that Jesus is the way to be a good person however you want to define a good person. What makes these other gospels so dangerous is the things that they offer can be beneficial.

Yet as good as all these things are when they become for us a sort of gospel then we are in danger of turning away from the only gospel that there is. Listen to this quote from Martin Luther.

[36 : 42] He said, There is a clear and present danger that the devil may take away from us the pure doctrine of faith and may substitute for it the doctrine of works and of human traditions.

It is very necessary therefore that this doctrine of faith be continually read and heard in public. If that was true back in Luther's day think how much more true that is today.

The church's greatest danger is the counterfeit gospel inside some churches. After all the Judaizers never wore t-shirts that said hug me I'm a false apostle.

What made them most dangerous was that they knew how to talk the way that Christians talked.

They used all the right terminology. They talked about how people got saved and they told people to trust in Christ yet they added requirements to the gospel.

One of the commentators named Leroy Lawson listed eight characteristics of cults and these also can apply to false teachers. The first is an overpowering charismatic leader.

[37 : 56] Whether he be a Jim Jones a Reverend Moon or a Joseph Smith cults are founded upon a dynamic leader who claims direct access to the mind of God.

The second thing he listed was the absolute authority of this leader. Sometimes the leader is called prophet sometimes he's called the president and often he's called father.

The title is less important than the fact that by word and deed he assumes a power superior to that of Jesus Christ. The third characteristic is the use of Jesus' name but denial of his authority. Many cults ride on the Lord's coattails even claiming to be Christians but then they replace the Bible with their own holy books. They usurp Jesus' sovereignty by so-called later revelations or proclamations that are handed down by the leader.

The fourth characteristic is the presence of secret rites and doctrines. If there are doctrines that are hidden from outsiders or if there are sacred rites in the temple or secret passwords that cannot be observed and learned by everyone then the organization cannot be genuinely Christian.

[39 : 15] After all in Christ there are no secrets. A Christian church has nothing to hide from the world. Its doctrines are found in an open book and those doctrines can be examined by believer and non-believer alike.

A Christian church's meetings are open to the world and its rites are performed in view of anyone who wishes to see and that's because Christ hides nothing. The fifth characteristic is the proliferation of rules.

The sixth characteristic he mentioned is one we've seen tonight and that's salvation by works. The seventh characteristic is a sense of spiritual superiority.

And he said rule book religion specializes in producing Pharisees. These masters of ecclesiastical gamesmanship memorize the regulations and doggedly follow them.

Then he says they also keep score. They can measure their spirituality by the number of points earned and their competitive spirit keeps them far ahead of their contemporaries who are less adept at playing by the rules of their religious games.

[40 : 29] And then the eighth and final characteristic he listed is that the cults and false teachers claim to have all the answers. And he said when you reduce spiritual things to rules regulations and rituals when you have systematized and defined and delimited God into manageable categories then you can bend all questions to fit your preset answers.

Few if any cults admit the existence of any knowledge that their systems haven't fully accounted for and can explain away. So knowing these eight characteristics may be helpful but the best way to spot a false teacher or a counterfeit gospel is to know how to recognize the true gospel.

We recognize a counterfeit gospel in the same way that law enforcement officers recognize counterfeit money. To recognize anything counterfeit including a counterfeit gospel we must thoroughly learn what the genuine article looks like.

Everything we've said about the true gospel tonight can be summarized in two statements. One is that the true gospel magnifies the free grace of God.

The other is that the true gospel is the gospel of the apostles of Jesus Christ. So let's consider what's meant by each of those statements.

[41 : 56] First, the true gospel magnifies the free grace of God. It's the gospel of grace, of God's free and unmerited favor. To turn from him who called you in the grace of Christ is to turn from the true gospel.

Whenever teachers start exalting man, implying that he can contribute anything to his salvation by his own morality, religion, philosophy, or respectability, the gospel of grace is being corrupted.

And then secondly, the true gospel is the gospel of the apostles of Jesus Christ. That's the New Testament gospel. The standard by which all systems and opinions are to be tested is the gospel which the apostles preached and which is now recorded in the New Testament.

Any other system that contradicts that is to be rejected. As Paul said in Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder of the true gospel. Let us always be mindful of what the true gospel is, and help us use that knowledge to become even more grateful to you for sending your son to pay for our sins.

[43 : 30] Help us also use that knowledge to speak to our friends who are misled by teachers of the false and counterfeit gospels. Help us be more bold to speak out like Paul and tell people what the true gospel really is.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.