Sermon Series: Fruit of the Spirit

Sermon Title: The Great Lie and the Great Truth

Scripture: Galatians 1.1-5

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Did you know that lies can change the world? It’s absolutely true! Here are some of those lies:

1. Russian accusation that Ukraine committed genocide against Russians
2. The Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme that defrauded investors of billions of dollars
3. Germany lost WWI because of internal conflict perpetrated by Jews
4. Africans and other people of color are not as human as white people
5. “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.” Buying family out of purgatory by giving money to the church.
6. Christians were responsible for the great fire that destroyed much of Rome during Nero’s reign
7. The serpent telling Eve, “You will not surely die.”

There is no doubt that lies have changed the world. I’ve only mentioned a few of the huge lies throughout history, but there are so many more, big ones, small ones, and in-between ones, and they are all destructive. Every person alive has been affected in some way by a lie or deception, including Christians. In fact, it is a lie concerning the gospel and salvation that prompted the Apostle Paul to write his letter to the Galatian church.

The lie the Galatian Christians believed in the very same lie many professing Christians and churchgoers believe, often without even knowing it! It’s a lie that is so subtle but so destructive. It’s a lie that kills spiritual transformation and halts development of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

**The Great Lie**

Today begins our study of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.22-23. However, there are some necessary steps of preparation we must take before diving into the fruit; there are important truths we must understand and accept so that we all get the most out of this study. We necessarily begin with what prompted the Apostle Paul to write this letter containing the fruit of the Spirit to the Galatian church.

So, what is this great lie? I’ll give it to you in two words and then expound on it so we are all on the same page. The great lie that invaded the Galatian church and spreads like cancer in the Church today is this: “**Jesus and…”**

“And what?” you may be thinking. You fill in the blank with whatever you tend to add to the gospel message of salvation. Jesus and… Money? Cars? Food? Jesus and… Being a good person? Working really hard to do better? Jesus and… Wokeness? Political correctness? Being a Conservative or Liberal?

The Galatian church was deceived by a lie that taught they needed to work for their salvation, that faith in Jesus was not enough; they believed a lie that said they needed to earn their salvation by good works.

Of these Galatians Paul said in **Galatians 1.6-7**, “**6**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— **7**not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” He alludes to this different gospel of works in **chapter 3 verses 1-2**: “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. **2**Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” It is here that we see the problem is **good works vs. faith in Jesus.**

As Paul asked the Galatians, let me ask you:

* Have you ever found yourself trying to become worthy for God?
* Do you feel like you are not good enough and you need to be better?
* Do you find yourself beating yourself up because you keep failing to do what you think you should be doing or because you failed to meet your own expectations of what you should be?
* When you have failed in some way have you said something like, “I just need to do better next time.”?
* Are you paranoid about doing something wrong or making a wrong decision?
* Do you struggle with what some people call “perfectionism.”?
* Do you have a hard time accepting help or charity from someone?

These are all indications that you might be listening to the “Jesus and…” lie and corrupting the gospel of Jesus in your heart. If you do this, know you are not alone. At least know that I struggle with this lie almost every day.

This lie, if left unchallenged, will destroy our testimony for Jesus, it will destroy our faith, it will destroy our church, and it will destroy the Christian faith across the world. I praise God that Paul wrote the book of Galatians because in it he destroys this lie with the truth of the gospel and shows how the true gospel leads to transformation of the Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit. But to get to the transforming power of the Spirit in the believer to produce fruit, we must first start by believing the true gospel.

**The True Gospel**

**The gospel defined**

According to Paul in **Galatians 1.1-4**, this is the gospel: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of God the Father who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

It is this gospel, this good news of salvation, that people are called to believe. Notice that there is nothing in the gospel definition that talks about you or I doing something to earn this deliverance. The gospel is all about what God does for us. Period. End of story. Keep your good works or worthiness out of it because they have nothing to do with God’s choice to love you and deliver you, free of charge, from sin and evil.

**The gospel as divine truth**

This gospel truth is not my creation, it is not the Apostle Paul’s creation, nor is it any man or woman’s creation. **Galatians 1.12** reminds us that the gospel is the divine revelation of Jesus Christ, God Himself in the flesh.

As divinely sourced and revealed truth, no one has any right or authority to change it by adding to it or taking from it. Simply put, no one can make the gospel better than it already is. Any attempts to do so subverts the gospel into the “Jesus and…” lie, the lie that shouts “There must be more!” There is no more. The gospel is as simple as it gets and you believe it in its entirety or your don’t

**The gospel revealed unto salvation**

But don’t be deceived: no one can by their own wisdom and intellect believe the gospel without the gospel first being directly revealed.

In describing his own conversion, Paul said in **Galatians 1.15-16**, “…He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me.” Paul did not say he willingly chose because Jesus seemed make the most sense when compared to all the options. In fact, he attributed no part of his own salvation to himself. Instead, he declared: (1) God chose him for salvation and apostleship before he was born, (2) God called Paul according to God’s grace, that is, God’s favor and blessing given without concern of merit, and (3) God revealed Jesus to Paul. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Do you remember the story of Paul’s conversion? It’s found in **Acts 9** and here’s the gist of the story: Paul (then called Saul) was hellbent on destroying the growing number of so-called Christ followers, these blasphemous Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah. He was on his was to persecute these people when Jesus appeared to him in light so bright it blinded him. Jesus gave instructions to Saul who faithfully followed them and became a passionate born-again Christian.

Here's what’s so important: Saul knew the stories about Jesus but wouldn’t, couldn’t, believe them UNTIL the glory of Jesus was revealed to him by God. Once God reveled Jesus to Saul, that was it: he believed and was changed. The same is true for all people. People can hear the gospel all they want, but unless God reveals the glory of Jesus to their hearts, they will never believe. There are many ways God reveals the gospel truth and glory of Jesus, but it’s always the same Jesus and the same gospel. Interestingly, scripture reveals that it’s the Holy Spirit who does this work of revelation in us.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**The gospel gives all glory to God**

In review, the gospel is the divinely sourced and revealed truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of God the Father who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Furthermore, it takes the supernatural revelation of Jesus to a person’s heart by the Holy Spirit for them to believe by faith.

Do you notice something about the gospel? Everything about the gospel, from where it came from to the truth it proclaims to the way it must be made effective for salvation, everything about the gospel is attributed to God. Not you, not me, not dead saints, or apostles, but God. All glory for the gospel and salvation goes to God because it is His works that save us.

So, you see, there is absolutely no room for us to take any credit for salvation and deliverance from evil. We cannot ever become worthy of the great gift of salvation, nor can anyone ever hope to earn the right to salvation. The only right we have apart from Jesus concerning our eternal destiny is the right to suffer eternally in hell because of our sin against God. We can never be saved because of our good works, nor will our good works ever motivate God to love us any more than He already does. By grace we have been saved through faith. This is not our own doing but rather the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2.8-9).

To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen![[3]](#footnote-3)

**Conclusion**

If anyone is to have any hope of bearing the fruit of the Spirit, we must first believe the true gospel. Salvation is by faith in Jesus, not by works. There’s no “Jesus and…”, only “**Jesus**.”

If you are feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit right now, do no hesitate to cry out to Jesus and confess your sins to Him. If you’ve been believing the “Jesus and…” lie, confess it and run back to Jesus. Don’t promise Him you’ll do better and don’t throw a pity party for all the wrong you’ve done. Instead, throw yourself at the feet of Jesus and cry out to Him as you cry out for Him.

Believing for the first time or returning to the gospel of Jesus is the way to be transformed and made new.

1. See also and compare to Romans 8.30 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1 Corinthians 2.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Galatians 1.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)