

What Happens when We Turn to a Different Gospel?

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all.” (Galatians 1:6-7a)

In Galatians, Paul made the case that when you rely on your good works for salvation, you are turning to a different Gospel, the result of which is condemnation. Paul is not saying that when you do this you will be eternally condemned to Hell. What he is saying is that you are wrong. That is all. You are guilty of *“foolishness”* (see Galatians 3:1). You do not forfeit your salvation. You merely lose the benefit of it.

He used Peter and Barnabas as examples of how foolish it is to hold onto the old idea that works of the Law are necessary for salvation.

“When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.” (Galatians 2:11-13)

Note the use of the word “condemned.” Peter and Barnabas were condemned, but they obviously did not lose their salvation. They only lost the benefit of it, which is the joy of knowing that we are loved and accepted by God just as we are and that we are saved by grace, not works.

Please believe me when I tell you that no one ever went to Hell for trying too hard. When you turn to the false Gospel of salvation by works, all you are doing is making it harder on yourself than necessary. When you fall from grace, God does not love you any less.

Does this mean that good works are not important? Of course not, but the true Gospel of Christ, the Good News that we are saved by grace, does change our motive for doing good. We do it because God has made us good by nature. We do not serve God out of fear and under threat of punishment, but instead out of love and gratitude.