

The Gospel You Cannot Change

THE GOSPEL REVEALED · BIBLE STUDY

Galatians 1:8-9 | Arvin Assembly of God | Pastor Brian Overturf | September 16, 2026

The Big Question (from Sunday's sermon)

The Question: *Who has the right to change the gospel?*

The Answer: Nobody. Not the man who brought it to you. Not an angel from heaven. Not anyone who comes after him. Paul answers the question three times in two verses, and every answer is the same word. Then he turns around and hands the measuring stick to the people in the pew.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this study, you will be able to...

- 1 Explain why Paul puts his own name first on the list, and say what that proves about who owns the gospel.
- 2 Say what the angel is doing in the argument and give both interpretations... that Paul is reaching for the most extreme case he can name, and that the false teachers may have actually claimed one.
- 3 Define "accursed," say whether Paul means church discipline or the judgment of God, and explain what the curse is meant to accomplish in that church.
- 4 Give the two reasons Paul felt this so strongly, including the one most of us overlook.
- 5 Point to the Old Testament story standing behind "accursed," and make the case that Paul had it in mind.

The Text

Galatians 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.* ⁹ *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

1. Not the Man Who Brought It to You**Galatians 1:8 (NKJV)**

⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

Why does Paul start with himself?

He could have opened on the false teachers. He had every reason to. He names them. So why is the first name on the curse list his own?

And if the man who planted the church cannot change the message, what does that tell you about who owns it?

The scholars: why he puts his own name first

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Schreiner <i>ZECNT, on v. 8</i>	“he includes himself and angels, not because either was preaching a false gospel or alleged to do so, but to highlight the unchangeable nature of the gospel.”
Schreiner <i>ZECNT, on v. 8, citing Armitage</i>	“the inclusion of Paul demonstrates that Paul ‘is rebuking the Galatians, not in order to further his own agenda, but for the sake of the gospel, and for their sake.’”

Who is the “we” in verse 8?

Paul does not write if I. He writes if we. Go back to verse 2 to remember who.

Galatians 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ² and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:*

The scholars: who is the “we”?

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Dunn <i>Galatians, on v. 8</i>	“He takes care by using the first person plural to remind his readers that the gospel as they first received it came not through him alone, but through a missionary team; the ‘we’ should not be taken as equivalent to ‘I’.”
Moo <i>BECNT, on v. 8</i>	“Paul may use the first-person plural...because he includes with him ‘the brothers and sisters’ who accompanied Paul (v. 2) and/or missionaries such as Barnabas, who was with Paul when he first preached in Galatia”
MacArthur <i>on v. 8</i>	“Paul says, ‘Though we,’ myself or any of my fellow preachers, ‘though we or an angel from heaven,’ that’s pretty fast company”

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

So which one is carrying the weight, the man or the message?

We decide things by the messenger all the time. The credential, the platform, the following. What happens when you turn that around?

The scholars: the message judges the messenger

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Schreiner <i>ZECNT, on v. 8</i>	"The truth of the message depends on its content (whether it accords with the gospel), not the credentials of the messenger."
Rogers <i>on v. 8</i>	"It is not the messenger that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger."
Longenecker <i>WBC, on v. 8</i>	"It is the message of the gospel that is all important and not Paul's authority or anyone's status, however exalted."
LABC <i>on v. 8</i>	"If the truth is changed, the teacher is false, regardless of his or her qualifications, accomplishments, or experience."

Received first. Delivered second.

Paul says he delivered what he also received. English uses one word for two different things here... being rescued out of something, and handing something on intact.

GALATIANS 1:4 • "DELIVER"	1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 • "DELIVERED"
"who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age..."	"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received..."
The rescue word. To pull somebody out of danger, or out of an enemy's hand.	The handing-on word. To pass a message into the next set of hands, intact.
Where it comes from. Exodus language. The Lord reaching into Egypt after His people. Paul uses it nowhere else in any letter he wrote.	Where it comes from. Paul's standard word for handing down what he was given. It is the other half of "received" in Galatians 1:9.
So this one is about being saved . Jesus is the Rescuer.	And this one is about being told . Paul is the delivery man.

The scholars: received first, delivered second

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Dunn <i>Galatians, on v. 9</i>	"the normal word to denote the reception of a message or tradition"
Dunn <i>Galatians, on v. 9</i>	"Paul appeals not only to what he and his fellow missionaries had first preached to them, with the implication that the message was not theirs alone but already traditional, but also to what they could well recall as having received, with all that their reception had meant for them in lives changed."

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Keener <i>Galatians, on v. 9, n. 79</i>	“Appropriate language for the passing on of tradition, although Paul uses only the term for ‘receive’ (and applies it only to the Galatians) and not ‘pass on’ here. See more explicitly 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3”
deSilva <i>NICNT, on v. 9</i>	“frequently used in connection with the reception and acceptance of traditional instruction”

2. Not an Angel from Heaven

Why not just say “anybody”? What does Paul gain by naming the highest messenger a human being could imagine?

And if an angel out of heaven does not get a vote on this, who does?

The scholars: why Paul reaches for an angel

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Keener <i>on v. 8</i>	“That is, there is no authority that stands above the divine message about the Messiah.”
Schreiner <i>on v. 8</i>	“Paul uses hyperbolic language to exclude any source that might claim divine authority.”
LABC <i>on v. 8</i>	“If an angel came preaching another message, he would not be from heaven, no matter how he looked.”

The scholars: did the false teachers claim an angel? (NO)

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Osborne <i>on v. 8</i>	“Some think this means that these opponents had claimed to receive their message directly from angels, but there is no indication of this in the text.”
Schreiner <i>on v. 8</i>	“There is no suggestion here that the Galatian agitators actually claimed to have received revelation from an angel.”
Keener <i>on v. 8</i>	“Moreover, many Jewish visionaries claimed to receive revelations from angels, and claims of such experiences would not be surprising in the intensely charismatic milieu of early Jewish Christianity.”
Longenecker <i>WBC, on v. 8</i>	“The reference to ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ‘an angel from heaven,’ carries a note of irony. Probably it is in response to the Judaizers’ claim either (1) to have impeccable credentials as members in good standing in the Jerusalem church, or (2) to have the authority of the Jerusalem apostles supporting them”

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

The scholars: a shining messenger is not a safe messenger

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
LABC <i>on v. 8</i>	"In 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, Paul warned that Satan masquerades as an angel of light."
Stott <i>BST, on v. 6</i>	"The devil disturbs the church as much by error as by evil. When he cannot entice Christian people into sin, he deceives them with false doctrine."
Stott <i>BST, on v. 8</i>	"We are not to be dazzled, as many people are, by the person, gifts or office of teachers in the church."

2 Corinthians 11:13-14 (NKJV)
¹³ *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴ *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

3. Not Anyone Who Comes After**Galatians 1:9 (NKJV)**

⁹ *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

Why say it twice?

Paul is not a man who wastes words. He just pronounced this curse one verse ago. So why turn around and say the whole thing again?

The scholars: he says it twice on purpose

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
LABC <i>on v. 9</i>	"The deliberate repetition by Paul indicates that the curse was no angry outburst. His intent was deadly serious."
Moo <i>on v. 9</i>	"Paul repeats his 'anathema,' perhaps to make clear that what he says in verse 8 is not a momentary, irrational outburst but a carefully considered warning that needs to be taken with the greatest seriousness."
Keener <i>on v. 9</i>	"Paul's explicit repetition of the literal point of 1:8 in 1:9 is a way of highlighting the point with greater emphasis."
Stott <i>BST, on v. 9, quoting John Brown</i>	"The apostle repeats it to show the Galatians that this was no excessive, exaggerated statement, into which passion had hurried him, but his calmly formed and unalterable opinion."

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

And what changed the second time?

Look at the two verses side by side. Who gets named. How sure Paul sounds about it. And what he measures them against. Three things move between verse 8 and verse 9, and the third one is big enough that it gets its own point.

The scholars: what changes in verse 9

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
MacArthur <i>on v. 9</i>	“He moves from a hypothetical to an actual, verse 9.”
Moo <i>on v. 9</i>	“The singular form does not mean that Paul has a particular false teacher in mind; it is a rhetorical device intended to force the Galatians to make the identification”
Schreiner <i>on v. 9</i>	“If a curse falls on an apostle like Paul or even an angel if they proclaim a deviant gospel, then surely anyone else who propagates a false gospel will be cursed.”
Moo <i>on v. 9</i>	“The third difference between verse 8 and verse 9 is the addition of the ‘receptive’ side of gospel preaching.”

Now the word itself. Accursed.

Where does that word come from, and what did it do in the Old Testament? Is Paul asking the church to put somebody out of the fellowship, or is he reaching for something heavier?

The scholars: what “accursed” meant

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Rogers <i>on v. 9</i>	“The word accursed literally means, ‘let him abide under the judgment of God.’”
MacArthur <i>on v. 8</i>	“Whenever God sets something apart to be destroyed, it is devoted to destruction. And the word that literally means devoted to destruction is the word ‘anathema.’”
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	“It was used in the Greek Old Testament for the divine ban, the curse of God resting upon anything or anyone devoted by Him to destruction.”
deSilva <i>NICNT, on vv. 8-9</i>	“The object that is declared anathema is a danger to anyone who shelters it”

Is Joshua standing behind this word?

Paul never names Jericho. He doesn’t have to. He uses a word the Old Testament had already used on one city... So is it possible Paul had that story in mind when he wrote verse 8? Read what the commentators found. Then read verse 7 one more time.

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

The scholars: the ban behind the word

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"The story of Achan provides an example of this. God said that the spoil of the Canaanites was under His ban—it was devoted to destruction. But Achan stole and kept for himself what should have been destroyed."
MacArthur <i>on v. 8</i>	"Turn in your Bible to Joshua 6, and here is an incident which will illustrate to us God's cursing."
Longenecker <i>WBC, on vv. 8-9</i>	"‘ban,’ in the LXX (e.g., Lev 27:28-29; Deut 7:26; 13:17; Josh 6:17-18; 7:11-13, 15), where what is under the ban is removed from ordinary circulation and given over to destruction."
deSilva <i>NICNT, on vv. 8-9</i>	"routinely used in the Septuagint, the old Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures, to translate the Hebrew word for the ‘ban’ that pronounced spoils of war, a captured city, or a subjugated people to be ‘devoted’ to God"

And there is a second thread, and it is the bigger one. Achan has a reputation in Israel's history. He is the troubler. Now look at what Paul calls the false teachers one verse before the curse.

Galatians 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ *which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.*

1 Chronicles 2:7 (NKJV)

⁷ *The son of Carmi was Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing.*

One verse in Israel's history carries both words. The troubler. The accursed thing. Paul uses one of them in verse 7 and the other in verses 8 and 9.

The scholars: Achan the troubler

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Schreiner <i>ZECNT, on v. 7, n. 15</i>	"The reference to the opponents as ‘troublers’ may echo Achan's sin in Israel (cf. 1 Chr 2:7; Ps 107:27)."
Keener <i>Galatians, on v. 7, n. 60</i>	"Achan ‘troubled’ Israel with contaminated matter in regard to the accursed thing"

What is the curse actually for?

Notice what God told Israel to do with an accursed thing. To destroy it. Do not shelter it. What does that tell you Paul is trying to accomplish in that church?

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Joshua 7:12 (NKJV)

¹² *Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.*

Deuteronomy 7:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ *Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.*

The scholars: this is not church discipline

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Moo <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"More than removal from the community (e.g., excommunication) is meant... what is involved is nothing less than suffering the judicial wrath of God."
Schreiner <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"Excommunication by the church is not in view here but eschatological punishment meted out by God."
Osborne <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"Paul is saying that these Judaizers and their followers are no longer Christians and will come under eternal punishment at the last judgment."
Moo <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"they are teaching something that will, literally, lead themselves to hell"

So is that unloving?

It sounds narrow and harsh to modern ears. Is it? Or is it the most loving thing in the passage?

The scholars: is that unloving?

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Schreiner <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"Is it the case that Paul's anathemas here seem to be ill-mannered and unloving? Such sentiments reveal how far we have strayed from the biblical witness"
Schreiner <i>on vv. 8-9</i>	"Nothing can be more unloving than granting false assurance to the perishing."
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"Are we to dismiss it as an intemperate outburst?"

Why did Paul feel it this strongly?

There are two reasons, and most of us only ever think of one. One of them is about you. The other one is about Him.

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Stott: why Paul felt it this strongly

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"The first is that the glory of Christ was at stake."
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"To make men's works necessary to 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 on it."
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"The second reason why Paul felt this matter so keenly is that the good of men's souls was also at stake"
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"to corrupt the gospel was to destroy the way of salvation and so to send to ruin souls who might have been saved by it"

4. You Already Have the Real One**Galatians 1:9 (NKJV)**

⁹ *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

What changed at the end of verse 9?

In verse 8 the standard is what we have preached to you. In verse 9 it is what you have received. In verse 8 the measuring stick is in Paul's hand. Who is holding it in verse 9?

The scholars: what "received" means

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
LABC <i>on v. 9</i>	"The tense of the verb 'accepted' (parelabete) signifies once-for-all action."
Longenecker <i>WBC, on v. 9</i>	"The use of 'you accepted,' signals the passing on of an authoritative tradition"
Moo <i>on v. 9</i>	"Implicitly, Paul is suggesting that the Galatians have had a true experience with God's grace (v. 6) and thus should evaluate any 'new' revelation in the light of that experience."
Moo <i>BECNT, on v. 9</i>	"What is interesting in this case is the way that Paul here begins appealing to the Galatians' own experience"

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

So who is the final authority here?

Paul included himself in the curse in verse 8, because he does this, the implication and message is that he is NOT the final authority.

The scholars: the message outranks the messenger

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
deSilva <i>NICNT, on vv. 8-9</i>	"It is of special interest in these curses that Paul does not claim himself to be the final authority"
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"the norm, the criterion, by which all systems and opinions are to be tested, is the primitive gospel, the gospel which the apostles preached and which is now recorded in the New Testament."
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"We judge them by the gospel; we do not judge the gospel by them."
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9, quoting Alan Cole</i>	"The outward person of the messenger does not validate his message; rather, the nature of the message validates the messenger."

But what am I actually checking for?

You say you are not a scholar. You do not read Greek. You have never been to Bible college. Do you still have everything you need to catch a false gospel?

The scholars: two tests for a true gospel

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Stott <i>BST, on vv. 8-9</i>	"Its marks are given us here. They concern its substance (what it is) and its source (where it comes from)."
Stott <i>BST, the first test</i>	"It is the gospel of grace, of God's free and unmerited favour."
Stott <i>BST, the first test</i>	"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."
Stott <i>BST, the second test</i>	"The true gospel is the gospel of the apostles of Jesus Christ, in other words, the New Testament gospel."

And is this really our job?

Paul was the apostle, standing right there preaching. Watch what one church did with him, and watch what Luke calls them for doing it.

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel RevealedArvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Acts 17:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

So what is it you already have?

Paul says you received it. Here it is in one sentence, with nothing left in it for you to add.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Pastoral Takeaways

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | It was never his to edit. Paul received the gospel before he ever delivered it. If the apostle who planted the church has no authority to change it, neither does anyone standing in a pulpit today, including this one. |
| 2 | No credential outranks the message. Not an apostle. Not an angel. Not a platform, a following, or a degree. It is not the messenger that makes the message true. It is the message that judges the messenger. |
| 3 | He said it twice so you would know he meant it. Verse 9 is not Paul losing his temper and doubling down. It is a man saying the same sentence slower, so nobody in the room could file it under a bad mood. |
| 4 | The curse is a fence, not a tantrum. God told Israel not to bring the accursed thing home. When Paul pronounces that curse he is not only sentencing a teacher, he is telling a church to get away from him. |
| 5 | Two things were at stake, not one. Your soul was at stake, and so was the honor and glory of Christ. To add an unless onto the gospel is to stand over the cross and say it was not quite enough. |
| 6 | You already have the real one. In verse 8 the standard is what Paul preached. In verse 9 it is what you received. Two tests will do it. Is it grace, and is it in the bible? |

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Discussion Questions for Home or Group

- 1** Observation: Read verses 8 and 9 side by side and underline every word that is different between them. What did Paul change the second time, and what did he leave exactly the same?
- 2** Observation: Circle the word “we” in verse 8. Who is Paul including, and why does he put that word before he names anybody else?
- 3** Interpretation: Why does Paul reach for an angel instead of simply saying “anyone”? What would be lost from the argument if he left the angel out?
- 4** Interpretation: “Accursed” in the Old Testament described something devoted to destruction. What does Paul mean by it here, and what does he not mean?
- 5** Interpretation: Read Deuteronomy 7:26. God says do not bring the accursed thing into your house. How does that change what you think Paul wanted the Galatians to do about the false teachers?
- 6** Interpretation: Two things were at stake for Paul: the good of their souls and the glory of Christ. Which one do we usually leave out when we talk about false teaching, and why do you think that is?
- 7** Interpretation: In verse 8 the standard is “what we have preached.” In verse 9 it is “what you have received.” What changes for the Galatians when the standard moves?
- 8** Application: Name a voice you trust: a podcast, an author, a preacher, an account you follow. Run the two tests on it. Is it grace, and is it in the book?
- 9** Application: Read Acts 17:11. What would it actually look like this week for you to go home and check what you heard, and what has kept you from doing it before now?

The Gospel You Cannot Change • The Gospel Revealed

Arvin Assembly of God | New King James Version | September 2026

Quick Review

This isn't a test. It's a chance to see how much of Sunday's truth is already yours. The answers are at the bottom. Take it as encouragement.

1	Who is the first name on Paul's curse list in verse 8? (a) the false teachers (b) Paul himself (c) an angel
2	True or False: Paul expected an angel to actually show up preaching a different gospel.
3	In verse 8 the standard is what _____ preached. In verse 9 it is what _____ received.
4	The old word behind "accursed" is: (a) anathema (b) hosanna (c) maranatha
5	True or False: "Accursed" here means being put out of the local church.
6	Paul says the whole thing twice. According to the scholars, why? (a) he lost his temper (b) so nobody would mistake it for an outburst (c) a copyist error
7	In Deuteronomy 7:26, what was Israel told not to do with an accursed thing? (a) burn it (b) bring it into the house (c) sell it
8	The two things at stake for Paul were the good of men's souls and the _____ of Christ.
9	The two tests of a true gospel concern its substance and its _____.
10	True or False: Luke calls the Bereans suspicious for checking Paul against the Scriptures.

Answer Key: 1) b, Paul himself · 2) False. He is using the most extreme case he can name · 3) we / you · 4) a · 5) False. It is the judgment of God, not church discipline · 6) b · 7) b · 8) glory · 9) source · 10) False. He calls them more fair-minded, or noble.

If those came easily, you have hold of the one thing Paul would not let anybody move.