

GALATIANS CHAPTER 1

In all the Bible there may be no more passionate, comprehensive, yet concise statement of the truth of the gospel of Jesus the Christ than *Galatians*. Often times it is called a “min-Romans.” The succinct message of salvation which is salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone is clearly stated in Galatians.

Salvation does not have a human works element in being saved; we work because we are saved. The Good News of salvation which says Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; He was buried, and He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures (*1 Corinthians 15:3-4*) was being attacked by a group that emerged *from within the Jewish church*. Paul wrote this letter to defend the gospel, refute the Judaizer’s false gospel, and encourage the newly founded churches to come back to the real truth of the Gospel. The Judaizers disagreed with Paul’s statement that Gentiles did not have to follow many of the religious laws that Jews had obeyed for centuries. Some of Paul’s accusers had even followed him to the Galatian cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (present day Turkey) and they told the Gentile converts they had to be circumcised and follow all the Jewish laws and customs in order to be saved. As you read Paul’s Holy Spirit inspired letter, you can tell immediately something is radically wrong, because Paul does not open this letter with his usual praise to God and prayer for the saints. He has no time; Paul is about to engage in a battle for the truth of the Gospel and the liberty of the Christian life. False teachers were spreading a false gospel - a mixture of Law and grace, and Paul is not about to stand idly by and do nothing.

Vs. 1-2 – First of, Paul lets the reader know the authority of which he is writing this letter – it is because he is an apostle called by Jesus and he presents his credentials early in this letter because some people in the Galatian region were questioning his authority. In the early days of the first century church, God called special men to do special tasks. Among them were apostles (a God sent one) with a commission. Now because Paul was not one

of the original 12 apostles his detractors said he was not a true apostle (one who had witnessed the Resurrected Jesus and one who had been commissioned by Jesus). But Paul did see the resurrected Jesus on the Damascus Road and he was commissioned by Jesus hence, he is every bit an authentic apostle like Peter, James, and John or any of the other 9 apostles not mentioned. As Paul states in vs. 1 - his apostleship is not from human selection and approval, but by divine appointment. Therefore, he had the authority to deal with the problems facing the churches in Galatia.

Additionally, Paul had another reason to write to the Galatian churches – he was their founding pastor. He was writing to them as a friend who taught them about Jesus and salvation; he was not a stranger to them. Galatia was a region, not one particular city. It was an agricultural center for that part of the world and it had a large human population. One of Paul's goals was to visit regions with large population centers to reach as many people for Christ as possible. In vs. 2 when Paul says to the churches of Galatia – now there was a norther region that included the cities of Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium) and a southern region of Galatia that included the cities of *Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe*). Most scholars believe that it was in the southern region whereby the false doctrine problems started and was exploding there. At least that part of the region seems to best fit the narrative of how the devil

operates because it was at Antioch (southern region of Galatia) that the Jewish followers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Vs. 3-5 – In the phrase “*grace to you and peace from God*” – this was Paul’s familiar greeting, drawing from the traditional greetings in both the Greek culture (grace) and the Jewish culture (peace). Paul used this exact phrase 5 other times in the New Testament. Paul used the word grace more than 100 times in his writings. Among all the other writers of the New Testament, it is only used 55 times. Paul was truly the apostle of grace. *Martin Luther said this, “These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity.”* **Vs. 4** reflects a major attribute of God – He is the God who freely gives us what we don’t even deserve. Jesus gave Himself for our sins (*read and refer to John 3:16 and Romans 5:8*). Although the church should not place greater emphases on sin than grace and mercy; the church must tell everyone it was man’s sins that put us on a road to ruin and destruction. If God did not do something to save us, our sins would destroy us. So out of love, Jesus gave Himself for our sins! The love was always there; but there would never have been the need for Jesus to give Himself if our sins had not placed us in a terrible place (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). Paul wanted to tell the Galatians atonement for sin is not to be sought anywhere but in Christ – they could not sacrifice enough bulls, goats, and sheeps to receive what God desires for people after Jesus was

raised from the dead...*So glorious is this redemption that it should keep us in wonder and produce the most demonstrative praise and heartfelt thanksgiving to our God.* **Vs. 4** also says, “*that He might deliver us from this present evil age*” - this explains why Jesus gave Himself for our sins. In many ways, the Galatians battled with and sometimes lost against this present evil age. They needed to know that Jesus had come to save them from this present evil age. The idea behind the word ***deliver*** is not deliverance from the *presence of something*, but deliverance from the *power of something*. We will not be delivered from the presence of this present evil age until we go to be with Jesus. But we can experience deliverance from the power of this present evil age right now (**sanctification** – being saved from the power of sin. **Justification**; saved from the penalty of sin; and then **glorification**; will be saved from the presence of sin). And then the phrase “***according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever***” - the purpose of this saving work is not primarily to benefit man (though that is part of the purpose). Instead, the primary purpose is to glorify God the Father. False doctrine was a real problem among the Galatian churches, and their false doctrine robbed God of some of the glory due to Him. By emphasizing the rightly recognized glory of God and His plan, Paul hoped to put them on the right path. God is not in the

business of sharing His glory – ***Isaiah 42:8*** says, “*I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory, I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.*”

There is only “One Gospel” (vs. 6-10)

Vs. 6-7 - One of Jesus’ most often quoted phrases was “*be not deceived.*” In the Olivet Discourse (***Matthew 24-25***) while talking about the end times, Jesus said in **Matthew 24:11** - “*Many false prophets will rise and deceive many.*” The apostles John and Paul also provided warnings about not being *deceived* - **1 John 4:1** says – “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” Paul warned that sin will not go unpunished just because the punishment may not be experienced immediately in **Galatians 6:7** - “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap.*” We have seen some extreme examples of people claiming to be operating under a divine mandate from God yet deceiving God’s people: On November 18, 1978, Jim Jones and more than 900 members of his People’s Temple committed mass suicide in the jungle of Guyana, South America. David Koresh (who claimed to be Jesus) and his cult the “Branch Davidians” moved into a compound in Waco, Texas and in a 1993 raid by the ATF & FBI - 76 Branch Davidians died in a fire that was set by the cult itself. And then there are those who may not be extreme in their actions but the end result of twisting the message of the

gospel is perversion and it will lead to eternal separation from God. Millions of Americans over time have turned away from their Christian roots to the Jehovah Witnesses – the Nation of Islam –Scientology, Mormonism, or like Oprah; invent your own religion. All of the aforementioned religions reflect what Paul is saying in our text – they are “a different gospel”...*meaning they are no Gospel at all.*” There is no “good news” awaiting those who abandon the one and only way unto salvation and that is to repent of your sins and believe in the Gospel of Jesus the Christ by confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believing God raised Jesus from the dead. It is amazing that people would turn away from the true Gospel and follow these false teachings, but it happens daily and many of us have family members who have turned away from the Gospel. If we are living in the literal last of the last days this departure from the authentic gospel is going to explode because [2 Tim. 4:3-4](#) says, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.* People are being deceived into thinking they can be an [unrepentant practicing](#) homosexual and be Saved at the same time...But for all of us who still believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and the final authority on all matters of life. The key phrase from [Revelation 9:21](#) that

highlights the prevailing sins in the land that will occur right before Jesus comes back is the phrase – “*they did not repent*” of their *murders, theft, sorcery, and sexual immorality*. Vs. 7 highlights the Galatians were turning away from the true gospel to a “*perverted gospel*.” This means the *Judaizers* didn't start from nothing and then made up a new name for God nor did they pretend to have a new Savior. They used the names, phrases, and ideas familiar to the Galatian Christians, but they slightly twisted the truth to make their message all the more deceptive. The word *gospel* literally means “good news” so Paul meant, “*There is no ‘good news’ in this message. It is only bad news, so it really isn't a ‘different good news.’ It is really bad news. This is not another gospel at all.*” (*Read Acts 4:12*). This is what is happening with the many churches that are embracing same sex marriage as being the same thing as heterosexual marriage - the term same sex marriage is now referenced as marriage equality – a new term that sounds righteous and for someone to be against marriage equality – then they must be an intolerant - but the concept of marriage equality is a perversion of one of God's divine institutions and it may be the very thing that provides the roadmap for the anti-Christ to eventually come on the scene. *Daniel 11:37* says the anti-Christ will not regard the god of his father's meaning he will desire “*a different gospel*” *Daniel 11:37* also says the anti-Christ *will not desire women suggesting he will be a*

homosexual. We are living in perilous times – we cannot turn away from the saving truth of the Gospel to go along with society. In vs. 7 the phrase “there are some who trouble you” is interesting. Those who brought this other gospel to the Galatians brought them trouble. They didn’t advertise their message as trouble, but that is what it was. False gospels don’t just happen. People bring them, and the people who bring them may be sincere and have a lot of charisma. But test the spirit by the spirit (*read and review 1 John 4:1-3*).

Vs. 8-9 – In these two verses Paul is saying it is a serious offense to twist or pervert the Gospel. Preaching *another gospel* includes being silent about sin and unholiness...the false teachers will preach “feel good – itchy ear” messages – that says God wants everybody healthy, wealthy, and prosperous and if you are not, then you are just not exhibiting enough faith - so if you “sow a seed” into their ministry of a \$100 or more - they will pray for you to obtain the faith necessary to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous...the false teachers will not say from the pulpit things like: shacking up is Sin - they will not say homosexuality is Sin - they will be silent about adultery, fornication, pornography, or the need to Repent from the pulpit because often times either they are engaged in those sins themselves or a good “grace giving - tithe paying member” or perceived necessary ministry leader that is engaged in sin and they don’t want to “rock the boat” whereby that member or members

may stop giving to the church or leave the church...the false teachers will not say gossip is sin or sowing seeds of discord among the brethren is an abomination - they will not care if you don't consistently assemble with the family of believers just as long as you send your grace giving or tithes in. In vs. 8-9 Paul says even if an "angel from heaven preach any other gospel but what they have been taught let him be accursed." Paul didn't care who brought the false gospel. Even if it was himself, or arch angels Gabriel or Michael shared another gospel, it is to be rejected. Church don't place great confidence in anyone who is teaching and preaching and not using and/or referring to the Bible when they teach/preach...the authority and truth derives from the Word of God not the oratory skills and melodious voice of the speaker...real ministers who have been called by God will be led by the Holy Spirit and the Scripture text will be their guide when they teach and preach. Paul while ministering in Berea said this about the Bereans in Acts 17:11 – "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." Paul says (twice for emphasis) if any person spreads a false gospel "let him be accursed" indicating how serious this matter is...you see if you are drowning and can't swim and then someone with a lifeguard shirt on and lifeguard whistle in their hand jump in after you but can't swim

either – both of you will drown – now they appeared to be “good news” for you because they had on a lifeguard shirt and carried a lifeguard whistle but they were a perversion of a life guard and therefore, they cannot help save no one.

Vs. 10 - The idea Paul is conveying in **vs. 10** is that God was his primary audience. When Paul taught, his focus was on God and not man. *Paul is suggesting we are to first talk to God about people and then God will give you a message to tell the people from God.* Paul’s first obligation was to please God and not to please men. He refused to shape his message just to please his audience. He was more concerned about pleasing God.

A Call to Apostleship (vs. 11-17)

Vs. 11-12 – Paul clearly articulates why the Galatians should listen to him verses the Judaizers. Paul furnishes his God given credentials whereby his message was received directly from Christ; he had been an exemplary Jew; he had a special conversion experience (*read Acts 26:12-18*). Paul had been confirmed and accepted in his ministry by the other apostles (*1:18-19; 2:1-9*) and he shared these credentials to both the church at Corinth (*2 Corinthians 11-12*) and the church at Philippi (*Philippians 3:4-9*). Paul is pointing out his words are more than his own speculations, opinions, or ideas. Both his

message and his apostolic ministry were divinely given. Therefore, anybody who added anything to Paul's Gospel was in danger of divine judgment, because that Gospel was given by Jesus from heaven to Paul.

Vs. 13-14 – Paul began his testimony by reminding the Galatians that they had heard about his upbringing in traditional Jewish beliefs. Paul emphasized his practice of Judaism (*this means the Jewish way of life and the Torah is the bases of how life is to be lived plus abiding by the 613 additional commandments developed by the rabbis*). Paul points out past conduct as an unconverted Jew, how he persecuted the church, and how he was like a rising star in the Jewish religion. He was originally bent on destroying the church because initially Paul thought Jesus was an imposter and His message of salvation by grace through faith was a lie. Paul was confident God had spoken through Moses but he was not sure God had spoken through Jesus.

Vs. 15-17 – But now here comes the “*turning point*” - Paul had a genuine encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (**Acts 9**). *You cannot have a genuine encounter with Jesus and remain the same...everyone must have a “but now” transition to their life.* There are many who can quote the Bible but yet don't know the God of the Bible. In **vs. 15** when Paul said, “**it pleased God**” he is saying God did it – salvation starts with God, goes through God and ends with God. Paul emphasizes the fact he did not deserve salvation; he could not

work to earn it; God did it. The statement being “*separated from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace*” according to rabbinical Judaism, a Jew is one who has a Jewish mother or one who has formally converted to Judaism. Paul understands salvation was not by physical birth to a certain ethnic group; but salvation is a spiritual rebirth by God’s grace through faith available for all people. Paul was separated from or “*set apart*” in vs. 15 meaning God ordained Him...the language used here is similar to the language God used in calling Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 1:5-6*). Paul’s experience of God’s grace trumped the Jewish religious background that once had been so important to him. In vs. 16-17 – although Paul had much to boast about when he was an unconverted man regarding his Jewish heritage and his religious pursuits but Paul did not have Jesus. In Philippians 3:7 Paul had stated, “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*” We need to quit holding the rich and famous – movies stars and celebrities in such high esteem if they don’t know Jesus...you can have all the riches and the fame in the world...but without Jesus its all vanity and it will lead you to Hell...what can a man give for His soul...nothing but confession of sin and full surrender to Jesus while they are still alive. The revelation God gave Paul on the Damascus Road was so powerful Paul did not go immediately to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles there but instead, he went into Arabia (Paul did not travel to what we

would call Saudi Arabia. The area known in that day as Arabia extended all the way to the city of Damascus). Paul probably lived in some quiet desert place in present day Jordan or Syria When Paul refers to the fact God had called him “*That I might preach Him among the Gentiles*” - this shows that God has a sense of humor. He selected a man before he was born for the job of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. That man grew up hating Gentiles, probably believing as some (not all) other Jewish people did in his day: that the only reason God made Gentiles was so they would fuel the fires of hell.

(Contacts at Jerusalem vs. 18-24)

Vs. 18-24 – This is Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem. Paul proved here that he did not learn the gospel from the apostles, because he had been a Christian for three years before he met the apostles Peter and James. The phrase in **vs. 18** “*to see Peter*” speaks of someone coming as a tourist. Paul was not commanded to come to Jerusalem to give an account to Peter or the other disciples, but he came of his own accord and visited as a tourist. Again, Paul is an apostle because Jesus called him, commissioned him, and trained Him. If Paul did not learn the essential content of the gospel from any man, then it was also true that the early Christians were slow in learning just who Paul was in Jesus as stated in **vs. 22**. All they really knew was that Paul had been dramatically converted – for which they glorified God. After his conversion,

Paul was an anonymous Christian for many years. Now Paul's status as unknown is certainly different from the present day church's habit of puffing up any prominent convert as soon as they come to Jesus. Paul was happy and well served to spend many years in obscurity before God raised him up. In this whole section, Paul showed that there was enough contact between him and the other apostles to show that they were in perfect agreement, but not so much that it showed that Paul got his gospel from them instead of God.