

## Galatians 1

**Intro:** This epistle was written by Paul, to the churches of Galatia, likely after Acts 15 and his second missionary journey. We know that Paul had been in the area twice from Acts 16:6 and about three years later in Acts 18:23.

--The reason Paul wrote was because the churches he started were targets for those Judaizers seeking to mix the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ in salvation and after salvation: circumcision, dietary law, feasts, etc.

--The attack on the gospel was augmented by attacks on Paul's authority, motives, and personal character. We don't know all that was said but it seems there were things such as:

-Paul wasn't a real apostle but an underling of the original apostles

-The 12 didn't know what he was doing in faraway congregations

-Paul was one way with the Gentiles and another in Jerusalem with Jews

-Paul was simply out to please men and tell them what they wanted to hear

--In terms of an outline the letter is easily definable: Chapters 1-2 (Personal); Chapters 3-4 (Doctrinal); Chapters 5-6 (Practical).

\*Baxter (Explore the Book): *"We may well say, especially to young converts: Read Romans to be grounded in Christian doctrine; read Corinthians to be guided in Christian practice; read Galatians to be guarded against deceptive error."*\*

### Verses 1-2:

--We immediately see that Paul wastes no time in getting to the central themes of this letter. He loves these believers, most likely started most of their congregations, and is zealous for the Lord, that is why he is going to correct them and their theology.

--**(1)** Paul begins with a double negation that sets the stage for the issues he is going to address. He traces his apostleship to the source of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

--He wants it to be clear that his apostleship was not from man in source or by man in agency. His apostleship was an act of God—a unique one at that!

--How hard it must have been for him as a zealous religious Jew to come to the realization that God the Father raised up a crucified Messiah from the dead! Only the living Christ could bring that revelation to Paul's soul. \*Paul knew the hardness of religious Jews\*

--**(2)** Paul also notes that there are other brethren that agree with this epistle and he is not alone in what he will declare.

--**To the churches of Galatia:** is pretty clear though there is some historical geography that is debated because the term *Galatians* was used both for a people and for a province.

--Galatians as a people were from Gaul, or modern France. They had largely settled in northern Galatia. Galatians were also from the Roman province named as such which was southern Asia Minor, modern Turkey. This is where we have Paul traveling in Acts so it is the most likely scenario.

### Verses 3-5:

--(3) This is Paul's typical greeting. Paul, as a former zealot he knew they needed it, and still lived in God's grace and peace himself.

--I think they are also two words that can be said to all believers no matter where or who they are! Even if they have their issues as many of the churches he addressed did.

--(4) Paul then reminds them that it is the work of Jesus Christ—not their own works or Moses'—that brings us deliverance from sins and their present evil world.

--How? ***Who gave Himself for our sins. . . who loved me and gave Himself for me (2:20).*** Paul speaks of this giving as public and personal. What greater gift could be given? This alone is the unspeakable gift.

--This would be in direct contrast to the works-based message of the Judaizers.

--This offering of Christ has delivered us from the sin-styled bondage of our present evil age. Salvation is a rescue operation because we are incapable of rescuing ourselves from evil personally or publicly. Only He can deliver us!

--Every unsaved age is evil—but they all have their own evil way. Outside of Christ we would be just like our world—many of us were. \*If we love our age (world-system) then we love evil!\*

--Now we are to be in the world but not of it.

***\*John 17:15-16: I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.\****

--We are rescued from the final victory of sin and the world even when we do not feel like it!

***\*2 Timothy 4:18: And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!\****

--(5) While these false teachers were busy minimizing or marginalizing Christ's work, Paul ends praising and magnifying the only One who deserves all the glory for all time.

### Verse 6:

--Here Paul breaks from his normal writing routine where he would usually speak about the good things happening in the church, the positive witness he hears, and talk about his love and prayers for them. This is noticeably absent. Paul must get right to the heart of the issue because it is a life and death issue.

--Instead, Paul can only express personal shock.

--First, Paul is shocked ***that you are turning away so soon.*** This seems to be most likely a reference to how quickly they gave in to this new doctrine on hearing it (not just in terms of immediacy after their salvation as it wouldn't be as surprising to have "children" in Christ being deceived).

--The Greek word (*metatithemi*) has the idea of transferring allegiance and was used for soldiers deserting or revolting. Paul is shocked they are shifting their allegiance!

--Sadly, it doesn't always take much for bad doctrine to take hold of a person's heart or mind. Especially when people hear things that they want to hear.

--Second, Paul is shocked that they are abandoning God's witness—**from Him who called you**. They are turning their back on God because it was God who called them in the gospel.

--The false teaching was likely that they could be "closer" to God through these Jewish religious practices but in truth they were moving away from God.

--Third, Paul is shocked that the Galatians have so quickly given up the simplicity of life **in the grace of Christ**. The idea of the language is that they had been called to live their lives in the sphere of grace that came to them by Jesus Christ alone—not religious works.

--Paul sums up this false teaching as **a different gospel**. The major point is that it is not the good news whose source was the witness of God the Father about His satisfaction in the work of God the Son.

### Verses 7:

--Paul now begins to focus on this "different gospel". Paul is clear this is not **another** gospel of the same type and character of his own.

--He knows that they are being troubled. The word for **trouble** here is the same word that is used in **Acts 15:24: Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment.** . . . that being this was never the apostolic message!

--Paul says that those that trouble them are doing so because they **want to pervert the gospel of Christ**. The Greek for **pervert** means to *reverse* or *change to opposite*.

--To mix the gospel of God with something else is to change it entirely. There is only one Christ to be proclaimed and therefore there is only one gospel for sinners.

--It has been said: *Christ supplemented is Christ supplanted*.

--How were they doing this? It seems their message related to the giving of the gospel and life after the gospel as Paul intimates in **3:3: Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

--We can get a sense of some of what they were saying in passages like: **4:17-18; 5:7-12; 6:12-13; Phil. 3:2-3**; etc.

--Some today pervert the gospel by focusing on what we must do in salvation \*Bad Catholic and Orthodox church doctrines which mix works-based salvation messages.\*

--Many others get caught up in perverting the gospel of Christ after salvation. \*Protestant problem! Seventh Day Adventists; Hebrew roots; Legalistic forms Pentecostalism and Holiness movements, etc.\*

--There will always be troubling people trying to confuse and pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even people we like and respect—not just weirdo cult leaders. \*Every denomination\*

**\*Acts 20:29-30: For I know this, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.\***

### Verses 8-9:

--***If we . . . or an angel from heaven. . . if anyone. . .*** Here Paul makes it clear that the *content* should define the messenger and not the other way around. The gospel preached is more important than the messenger be it friend, pastor, scholar, pope, so called 'apostles', or even an angel.

--Paul clearly denies all pluralism (other ways to God) and any "changing" of the gospel through the years. The message is what it is. There is definitive unchanging content.

--In fact, there is only one time we find the gospel on angelic lips and which gospel is it?

**\*Revelation 14:6: *Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.*\***

--We have one Savior, one Mediator, one Name to believe in, and one gospel.

--This might seem like an exaggeration but I believe that Paul already knew the truth that Satanic perversion of the gospel would come from both human and supernatural means.

**\*2 Corinthians 11:14: *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*\***

--Supernatural beings have passed on false gospels that still run all around the world!

1) Mormons: Later-Day Saints records list at least 24 angels that visited Joseph Smith. Elder George Q. Cannon saying: *He was visited constantly by angels.*

2) Islam: Muhammad was said to have encountered two angels that opened his chest and cleansed his heart with snow in his early years, then around 40, praying in the desert, he was visited by the angel Gabriel and received the beginning revelations of the Qur'an. Other angelic experiences followed.

3) Emmanuel Swedenborg: Was eating when all went dark and a frightening spiritual figure appeared in the corner of the room which turned out to be Jesus. This Jesus told him that humanity needed a new and definitive explanation of holy Scripture and that he had been selected to give it. To help this Jesus gave him unrestricted access to the spiritual realm.

--This has happened and is still happening! Beware of anyone that says they are receiving messages from angels and especially "new" revelations of Jesus or the gospel or the Scriptures.

--How serious is this to Paul? Serious enough that twice he pronounces those who preached another gospel as ***accursed***—the Greek word being: ***anathema***.

--Paul says this twice so that his readers can know he wasn't just caught up in an emotional outburst that went a little over the top. He was clear-headed and clear-hearted about this stern and sobering curse.

--This word is used very sparingly in the NT, only six times: **(Acts 23:14; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22; and twice here in this passage).**

--You cannot get more serious than Paul's anathema here! The word has a double idea of being set apart to God in order to be kept for His judgment. Something is set aside for the purpose of being under a curse. What is **accursed** or *anathema* is essentially put beyond the judgment of man and committed to the judgment of God.

--I believe it was Luther who points out that the only passage where the anathema is pronounced against specific persons is concerned with heretical teachers—specifically those that pervert the gospel.

\*Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship): *“False doctrine corrupts the life of the Church at its source, and that is why doctrinal sin is more serious than moral. Those who rob the Church of the gospel deserve the ultimate penalty, whereas those who fail in morality have the gospel there to help them.”\**

--God's truth is not an indefinite or changing thing that can be molded by “sincere” persons.

**\*2 John 9-11: *Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone come to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.\****

--Paul, and the rest of the Apostles were given truth from God Himself that was to be passed down as it is—not a word added or diminished. And if a man or an angel tries to do so, Paul makes it very clear how serious that is. He even puts himself under this curse: ***But even if we. . .***

**\*James 3:1: *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.\****

--That was why my prayer to you as I began to teach here was Paul's exhortation to Timothy!

**\*1 Timothy 4:15-16: *Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.\****

--If this seems too serious then maybe we should remember the words of Jesus Christ:

**\*Mark 9:42: *But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.\****

#### **Verse 10:**

--Paul's point is that he cannot aim to be Christ's servant and aim to please men. The two are mutually exclusive. We can only have one true target. Pleasing others can be a byproduct but never a goal! Our true target will only ever be pleasing our Heavenly Father.

--Pleasing God will always come into conflict with pleasing men.

**\*John 12:42-43: *Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.\****

--We still face the same human nature as these early Jewish religious leaders.

*\*Tozer (Man: The Dwelling Place of God): "The desire to please may be commendable enough under certain circumstances, but when pleasing men means displeasing God it is an unqualified evil and should have no place in the Christian's heart. To be right with God has often meant to be in troubled with men. This is such a common truth that one hesitates to mention it, yet it appears to have been overlooked by the majority of Christians today."\**

--We cannot seek to please men and be the servant of Christ.

***\*1 Thessalonians 4:1-2: Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through Jesus Christ.\****

--Paul knew the Galatians were still undecided (5:10) and he hoped that they would end up on the path of pleasing God. May we be found there as well!