

Galatians Chapter 1

Galatians is a letter from Paul to the churches in Galatia. At the time that Paul wrote this letter, Galatia was a Roman province. This area is now known as the southern part of Turkey. This letter was probably written about 54 or 55 A.D.

In this letter, Paul is explaining again the doctrine of justification through faith. Some of the Judaizers were trying to include keeping of the Law of Moses as part of the Christian doctrine. Paul is not saying in this letter, that justification through faith gives the Christian the privilege of sinning without being held responsible for the sin. He is explaining that Christianity is a fellowship with the Father provided through His Son Jesus Christ.

In this, Paul is explaining that he is truly an apostle of the Lord. Many were doubting Paul's right to apostleship, because He was brought into the work after the crucifixion of Jesus.

The churches in Galatia had been founded on the first missionary journey of Paul. Paul was very concerned about these converts and visited them on his second and his third missionary journey, as well. These people were strong-willed people, and Paul felt that he must keep as tight a reign as he possibly could from a distance. It seemed in all of these churches, the minute he left, people with other doctrines tried to come in and change what Paul had established. This was a warning not to do that. Many Jews had received Christ, but were trying to incorporate Christianity and Judaism. You cannot mix other beliefs with Christianity, and have Christianity remain strong. We should remember that today. Christianity must not be diluted to include other beliefs.

Galatians 1:1 "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)"

“Paul”: See introduction to Romans (see note on Acts 9:1).

“Apostle”: In general terms, it means “one who is sent with a commission.” The apostles of Jesus Christ, the 12 and Paul, were special ambassadors or messengers chosen and trained by Christ to lay the foundation of the early church and be the channels of God’s completed revelation (see note on Rom. 1:1; Acts 1:2; 2:42; Eph. 2:20).

“Not of men ... but by Jesus Christ”: To defend his apostleship against the false teachers’ attack, Paul emphasized that Christ Himself appointed him as an apostle before he met the other apostles (verses 17-18; Acts 9:3-9).

“Raised him from the dead” (see notes on Rom. 1:4). Paul included this important fact to show that the risen and ascended Christ Himself appointed him (see notes on Acts 9:1-3, 15). Thus, Paul was a qualified witness of His resurrection (Acts 1:22).

Paul vehemently denies that his apostleship is due to human agency. He was not commissioned an apostle, by any group (“not of men”), nor by any mortal individual (“neither by man”). But “by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.”

Unlike the other apostles, Paul received his call from the resurrected, glorified, and exalted Jesus. This special reference to the Lord’s resurrection implicitly confirms Paul’s appointment as an apostle.

We see a declaration of who Paul is right at the very beginning. We find that Paul reminds them immediately that his call was of the Lord Himself. When we speak of a disciple of that day, we think of the 120, who had disciplined themselves to follow Jesus. We also think of the twelve who Jesus chose out of that larger group to make them apostles.

We then realize that Matthias was also one of them. The Lord Himself had chosen him to replace the traitor, Judas Iscariot. Paul was an apostle also, even though he was not of the original group. Jesus had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, and called him to apostleship.

Paul never forgets to remind them that Jesus rose from the dead. These people all believed in God the Father, and Paul reminds them that it was the Father's will for Jesus to rise from the dead. To call Paul an apostle, verifies the fact that his authority is from God.

Mighty signs and wonders followed these apostles. They were empowered of God to represent him in the earth. They were, also, empowered to lay hands on others that they might receive the Spirit to minister in a certain capacity. These are called, gifts of the Spirit.

One very important thing we must note in Paul's statement is that he was not called of men, or by a man. Jesus was much more than man. That is what Paul is saying here.

Galatians 1:2 "And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:"

“Churches of Galatia”: The churches Paul founded at Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14 - 14:23).

Notice in this, that Paul travelled with many others. There was usually a large group who went with him into each area. Probably some of these very brethren with Paul now, were the same that had been with him establishing the churches of Galatia. Galatia was an area with many small towns, and, perhaps, each had a small group of Christians meeting in a church.

This letter is of a general nature. It is not to a specific church, but to all in this little province. These Galatians were partly European. When Gaul and this group came through this area on their way to Greece, they were stopped and surrounded. They intermarried with the local people. This, then, is speaking to these Europeans mixed with the local people.

In the 18th chapter of Acts, Galatia is spoken of as a region. It seems there was not idolatry in this area as in other areas, but Jewish teachings filtering into the church. The argument was

between law and grace. This could even be thought of as between the flesh and the spirit also. This was not an argument with those who were idolaters, but those with another doctrine.

Verses 3-5: Paul's deep concern over the churches; defection from the gospel is evident from his greeting, which lacks his customary commendations and courtesies, and is instead brief and impersonal.

Galatians 1:3 "Grace [be] to you and peace from God the Father, and [from] our Lord Jesus Christ,"

"Grace be to you and peace" (see note on Rom. 1:1). Even Paul's typical greeting attacked the Judaizers' legalistic system. If salvation is by works as they claimed, it is not of "grace" and cannot result in "peace," since no one can be sure he has enough good works to be eternally secure.

This statement is strictly a statement of Paul. He spoke this often. "Grace", of course, means unmerited favor. All Christians received grace, not because of their actions, but because of God's love toward them.

The only real peace, is the peace of God. Even in the midst of terrible trials and temptations, we can know this peace of God. It surpasses the reason of man. Jesus is the King of Peace.

Peace will reign on this earth the 1000 years that Jesus brings peace to the earth. In the meantime, there will be no peace on the earth, except that inner peace that Christians have when they totally trust the Lord Jesus.

We have mentioned before, the name of Jesus meaning Savior, and the name Christ meaning the anointed one, or Messiah. The Old Testament uses the name Lord for the same person the New Testament calls Jesus Christ. These Jewish people were looking for Messiah. This is Paul's way of telling them that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah.

Galatians 1:4 "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"

"For our sins": No one can avoid sin by human effort or law-keeping (Rom. 3:20). Therefore, it must be forgiven, which Christ accomplished through His atoning death on the cross (3:13; see notes on 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 2:24).

"Present evil world": (or age). The Greek word for "age" does not refer to a period of time, but an order or system. And in particular to the current world system ruled by Satan (see notes on Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-16; 5:19).

“To the will of God”: The sacrifice of Christ for salvation was the will of God designed and fulfilled for His glory (Matt. 26:42; John 6:38-40; Acts 2:22-23; Rom. 8:3, 31-32; Eph. 1:7, 11; Heb. 10:4-10).

“Who gave himself for our sins” (“since He gave Himself for our sins”): This confirms the divine desire expressed (in verse 3). In view of Jesus’ sacrificing Himself for believers, it is certainly His wish that they may receive “grace” and “peace.” “That he might deliver us”, is more accurately rendered “that He alone might deliver us.”

The expression “He alone” means Jesus rather than anyone else. This strikes the epistle’s keynote, for the gospel is an emancipation from a state of spiritual bondage. And the clause also strikes at the Galatians’ theological error of trying to rescue themselves by their own effort through the law.

Jesus willingly gave Himself to save His people. All of creation belonged to Jesus. He was Creator God. In John chapter one, we find that He made all things, and without Him was not anything created. It was right that the Creator would give His flesh for His creation.

Jesus did follow the will of the Father in the crucifixion, but it was Jesus' choice to do, or not to do. He gave His body on the cross to purchase our salvation. We see in the following Scripture, that it was within the will of Jesus to do with His own life as He would.

John 10:18 "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Egypt is a type of this evil world we live in. I have said over and over that we must leave Egypt, before we can go to the Promised Land. The Promised Land for a Christian is heaven. Jesus is the door that we enter in by.

Galatians 1:5 "To whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Paul stops to glorify the Father and the Son here. This glory shall never cease. "Amen" means so be it.

Verse 6-7: “Ye are so soon removed” can be translated, “you are so quickly deserting.” The Galatians are in the initial stages of defecting from God to “another gospel.” The Greek word rendered “another” is heteron which means “another of a different kind.” The Judaizers’ gospel is not the same one Paul preached to the readers.

(In verse 7), the apostle goes on to affirm that their gospel “is not another.” The Greek word here translated “another” is allo which means “another of the same kind.” So the message of salvation proclaimed by the legalists is vastly different from the true one.

Galatians 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:"

“So soon”: This Greek word can mean either “easily” or “quickly” and sometimes both. No doubt both senses characterized the Galatians’ response to the false teachers’ heretical doctrines.

“Removed” or deserting: The Greek word was used of military desertion, which was punishable by death. The form of this Greek word indicates that the Galatian believers were voluntarily deserting grace to pursue the legalism taught by the false teachers (see notes on 5:4).

“Called you”: This could be translated, “who called you once and for all” (2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:15), and refers to God’s effectual call to salvation (see note on Rom. 1:7).

“Grace of Christ”: God’s free and sovereign act of mercy in granting salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ, totally apart from any human work or merit (see note on Rom. 3:24).

“Another gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4). The Judaizers’ perversion of the true gospel. They added the requirements, ceremonies, and standards of the Old covenant as necessary prerequisites to salvation (see notes on 3:3; 4:9; 5:7; Phil. 3:2).

God Himself, had called them into the grace of Christ, through the teaching of Paul. He is amazed that they have already forgotten the teachings he had brought to them, and had gotten into error. It seems that the very minute he left, they started listening to these Judaizers who were trying to put them under Moses' law.

Paul is very disappointed that the gospel that he gave them was not better rooted within them. The thought that they would turn from his teachings so fast, makes Paul believe they are unstable in their belief. They would be like those fallen away from grace. They are saying, that grace is of none effect. All of this is beyond Paul's comprehension.

Galatians 1:7 "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

“Trouble”: The Greek word means “to shake back and forth,” meaning to agitate or stir up. Here, it refers to the deep emotional disturbance the Galatian believers experienced.

“Pervert”: To turn something into its opposite. By adding law to the gospel of Christ, the false teachers were effectively destroying grace, turning the message of God’s undeserved favor toward sinners into a message of earned and merited favor.

“The gospel of Christ”: The good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (see notes on Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Christianity brings hope. To go back to the law would not be good news (gospel), at all. The condemnation of the law brought hopelessness. For any Christian to give up the hope that is in Christ for the hopelessness of the law is not understandable.

"Pervert" in this Scripture, means corrupt. This then, would mean that they had changed it, and corrupted the message of hope that Paul had brought them.

Verses 8-9: Throughout history God has devoted certain objects, individuals, and groups of people to destruction (Joshua 6:17-18; 7:1, 25-26). The New Testament offers many examples of one such group: false teachers (Matt. 24:24; John 8:44; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 1:16). Here the Judaizers are identified as members of this infamous company.

Galatians 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

This verse shows that the message, not the messenger, is of utmost importance. The Galatian controversy is not over teachers or personalities, but over truth and error. Even a heavenly angel, if he preaches error, is to "be accursed," that is, eternally condemned.

We know that Paul was primarily speaking of the message he had brought them, but as we have said before, many ministers traveled with Paul and they all brought this same message of hope. There are two kinds of angels. The angels that stayed in heaven, and did not follow Lucifer, minister good. The angels that followed Lucifer out of heaven are already cursed of God.

They minister lies and deception, because they are working for that old devil Lucifer. Many people call them demons. They would certainly try to bring another message that would put you back under the law. Jesus commissioned Paul to bring the good news of the gospel, not the bad news of the law.

Galatians Chapter 1 Questions

1. Who wrote Galatians?
2. Who was Galatia ruled by at the time this letter was written?
3. What country is this a part of today?
4. Approximately when was this letter written?
5. What doctrine is Paul explaining over again in this letter?
6. Christianity is a _____ with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ.
7. Many were doubting Paul's right to _____.
8. When were the churches in Galatia founded?

9. What happened in these churches the minute Paul left?
10. What two doctrines were they trying to incorporate?
11. What did Paul call himself in verse 1 of Galatians?
12. Who called Paul to minister the gospel?
13. Who do we think of when they mention the disciples?
14. Who were spoken of as apostles?
15. Where did Paul get his authority from?
16. Verse 2 includes whom, in the sending of this message to the Galatians?
17. Was this letter written to an individual? Explain.
18. These Galatians were part _____.
19. Where were these people of Gaul headed when they were stopped here?
20. Was the argument about idolatry?
21. What does grace mean?
22. Who is the King of peace?
23. What does Jesus mean?
24. What does Christ mean?
25. Who was Creator God?
26. What is Egypt a type of?
27. Where is the Promised Land for the Christian?
28. What does "Amen" mean?
29. Who had called them into the grace of Christ?
30. What were the Judaizers trying to do?
31. What about all of this was beyond the comprehension of Paul?
32. Christianity brings _____.
33. The condemnation of the law brought _____.

34. What does pervert in verse 7 mean?
35. What are the two types of angels?
36. What had Jesus commissioned Paul to do?