

# Galatians

## Chapter 1

### **The Salutation - Galatians 1:1-5**

*Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 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: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Galatians starts out as does most of Paul's other letters with Paul's name followed by a general greeting. Interestingly, though, every one of Paul's other letters has some commendation which he gives to the recipient, even the book of 1 Corinthians! However, in Galatians there is no such warm greeting but an immediate launching into of the subject at hand, namely, the perversion of the true gospel and the defection of the Galatians believers.

In verse four Paul masterfully encapsulates the result of the entire gospel into one phrase. God did not save us to merely get us to heaven, or to keep us out of hell, or to make life nice for us. He saved us to redeem us from evil and this present evil world. When a believer lives in sin, they are striking a blow at the very reason God saved them, to purify them unto himself, a people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). This concept is further strengthened by the phrase, "according to the will of God and our Father." It is God's will that we be delivered from evil and the evil age, not merely his wish. Put bluntly, it is God's perfect will that we live in accordance with what we are, namely a people that has been delivered from sin.

### **Condemnation of False Gospelizers - Galatians 1:6-9**

#### **The Defection to the False Gospel - Galatians 1:6**

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

Paul no sooner completes his greeting than he immediately launches into the purpose of this letter, namely, the defection of the Galatian believers. The word he uses for this, "marvel", is *thamazo*, which means "astonishment." It has the idea that the last thing Paul would have thought is that the Galatian believers would fall for a false gospel so quickly after they had been exposed to the true Gospel. The word for "removed," *metatithemi*, was a word used when a soldier would desert his outfit. It was a crime punishable by death. This word is also in the middle voice which means that this is something the Galatians were doing to themselves. Paul is in essence telling the Galatian believers that they have deserted the true Gospel for something else.

The word for "another" is important as it is the word *heteros*. It is a word which means, "another of a similar kind." A Volkswagen is a *heteros* kind of automobile when compared to a Lincoln Continental. It is not exactly the same, but of a similar kind. The Galatian believers have left the true Gospel for something that looked like the true Gospel, but was in fact of a different kind.

**The Nature of the False Gospel - Galatians 1:7**

*Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

What kind of gospel was this that the Galatian believers had defected to? It was a gospel which is not “another.” This word is different than the word used in the previous verse. It is *allos*, which means “another of the exact same kind.” In our example of an automobile, an *allos* automobile to a Volkswagen would be another Volkswagen of the same make, model, year, color, and scratch, dent, or nick. In fact, the *allos* Volkswagen would be indistinguishable from the original.

Paul’s point is that the gospel the Galatian believers had defected to was a gospel that could not save. It had some superficial similarities to the real thing, but in the end it was a false hope. This is borne out in the word for “pervert” which is *metastrepho*. It means “to twist or distort.” In the final analysis, all false gospels are a distortion of the true. Most all of them have elements of truth in them, but when they are examined more closely some crucial doctrine is omitted which makes them a non-saving gospel.

What was this other gospel? It was the gospel of grace plus works. As we study Galatians it becomes very evident that the gospel being preached by the false messengers was a gospel that mixed law and grace. They would say that one is saved by grace and kept by works. They would say that it was necessary not only to believe on Christ, but to keep the Mosaic law as well. By doing this, they destroyed the very nature of the Gospel, which is based on God’s grace alone.

**The Condemnation of the False Gospel - Galatians 1:8-9**

*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. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

Paul now condemns the false teachers of the perverted gospel in no uncertain terms. The word he uses for accursed, *anathema*, means “to devote to destruction.” Something that was *anathema* was fit for nothing more than complete and total destruction. It was beyond the point of salvageability. Those who teach a gospel other than the Gospel of Grace are to be treated as something that was fit only for destruction.

This curse by Paul extends beyond the human realm to the angelic realm. The danger of believing a false gospel is so great that any agent of the false gospel is to be condemned and shunned, even if it is an angel from heaven. Perhaps Joseph Smith would have saved himself a lot of trouble had he read this crucial verse.

**Paul’s Apostolic Credentials - Galatians 1:10-24**

In order for the false gospelizers to succeed in their proclamation of error, they had to destroy the credibility of Paul. Only by doing that would the Galatian believers see these false prophets as the true messengers of God and Paul as a heretic or someone to be avoided. As a result, Paul must defend his apostolic office to the Galatian believers lest they think he is not accurately representing the message of Christ. He does that by listing some general credentials true of the other apostles, then by listing some personal credentials true of himself.

**General Credentials - Galatians 1:10-12**

*Paul Was Not a People-Pleaser - Galatians 1:10*

*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

The word “for” can be translated many ways, but perhaps the best way in this verse is to translate it as “there.” In other words, Paul says, “There! Does that sound like I am a people-pleaser?” His point is that as an Apostle he was more concerned about the truth of what he says than people like the message. The very nature of the true Gospel message was that it was inherently offensive (1 Corinthians 1). Those who strove to please men would most likely avoid the strict requirements and offensiveness of the true Gospel.

*Paul's Message Was From Christ - Galatians 1:11-12*

*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Not only was Paul not a men-pleaser, but his message was received of Christ himself. One of the foundational characteristics of an Apostle was that they had to have been personally commissioned by Christ. The base meaning of the word apostle itself is that of “a sent one or messenger.” The Apostles of Christ were in reality no more than messenger-boys, taking the message Christ gave them to others. They did not determine the content of the message, nor were they to worry about the reception of the message. Their only concern was delivering the message as given to them by Christ without distortion, addition, or deletion.

**Autobiographical Credentials - Galatians 1:13-24**

*Before His Conversion - Galatians 1:13-14*

*For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

Paul now turns to some autobiographical proofs of his apostleship starting with his pre-conversion life. His point is that the message he preached was not something he dreamed up as it went totally against everything he believed before he was saved. In other words, there is a sharp discontinuity between what Paul was prior to salvation and what he was after salvation that had no other explanation than God did something.

What was Paul like prior to salvation? He says himself that he was zealous for the Judaistic religion to the point of fanaticism. He would ruthlessly and viciously strike out at anything he thought posed a threat to Judaism. He was so zealous for his faith that he went so far as to kill and imprison members of the Church at every opportunity. He was so violent that Christ himself had to appear and give him the Gospel, as no living believer could get close enough.

However, once Christ appeared the change in Paul was so dramatic that it could only be attributed to a source outside of himself. He who was once a persecutor of the church now became one of the churches staunchest defenders, and one of the most fearless evangelists that it would ever know.

At His Conversion - Galatians 1:15-16a

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...*

What was the source of Paul's apostleship? It was God himself. Paul did not take an aptitude test, score high on the apostleship questions, and make a career decision based on his abilities. He was on his way to kill Christians when Christ appeared and drafted him into service. The reason for this was Paul was commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3).

After His Conversion - Galatians 1:16b-24

*...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

The last requirement Paul lists as something that established his apostleship was his personal tutelage under Christ. All of the other apostles had walked and talked with the Lord for a period of several years, Paul did not. Paul may have seen Christ, but when he did it was not as a believer but as an unbeliever. In order for Paul to be seen by the early church as one who was not inferior to the other apostles, it was necessary that he be taught personally by Christ. This is what he says here.

The events of these verses correspond to events mentioned in Acts 9. After Paul's conversion he did not immediately go visit the other apostles, but went into Arabia to an unknown location where he was personally taught by Christ. After some undetermined time, he returned to Damascus where he increased in his knowledge of the New Covenant (Acts 9:22) and became so proficient that he was able to prove that Christ was the Messiah. After some time of this, the Jews at Damascus became so riled up that they attempted to kill Paul (Acts 9:23-25), but he escaped over the wall in a basket. Paul then made his way up to Jerusalem where he met with Peter to become acquainted with him. His stay of only fifteen days with Peter was far too short to be seen as a tutoring session, but merely as a time of chatting about the life of Christ.

By the way, many say that Paul spent three years in Arabia, but the text does not say that. Rather it says that between the time of Paul's conversion and his visit to Jerusalem a period of three years elapsed. Most likely, most of this time was spent in Damascus (Acts 9:22).