

A Study of

Galatians 1
no other gospel

The Epistle of Galatians 1 Covers:

An Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Galatians:

1. The writer and the readers (Galatians 1:1-2)
2. An Apostolic Greeting (Galatians 1:3-5)

For more information, see Blue Letter Study Guide

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-1.cfm

The Epistle of Galatians 1 Covers:

The Danger of a different Gospel:

1. Paul's Amazement (Galatians 1:6)
2. Three facts about the "different" Gospel brought to the Galatians (Galatians 1:7)
3. A solemn curse upon those who bring a false Gospel (Galatians 1:8-9)

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The Epistle of Galatians 1 Covers:

The Divine source of the Gospel that Paul preached:

1. Paul's Gospel does not come from a desire to please men (Galatians 1:10)
2. The Divine source of Paul's gospel (Galatians 1:11-12)
3. Paul proves that his message did not come from man (Galatians 1:13-24)

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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;)

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

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

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:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Facts About the Letter to the Galatians

Many scholars believe that Galatians was written in late 40 or early 50 AD. An approximate date of AD 50 is often given. It seems that Paul wrote this letter *before* the Jerusalem Council mentioned in Acts 15, because although he mentions several trips to Jerusalem, he makes no mention of the council. Because the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 dealt with the exact issues Paul writes about, it would seem strange if the Council had already happened, yet he made no mention of it. If it is true that Galatians was written around 50 AD, then Paul would have been a Christian for about 15 years, being converted on the road to Damascus around 35 AD.

Galatians has been called the "Declaration of Independence of Christian liberty." The great reformer Martin Luther especially loved this letter; he called Galatians his "Catherine von Bora" after his wife; because, he said, "I am married to it." Leon Morris wrote, "Galatians is a passionate letter, the outpouring of the soul of a preacher on fire for his Lord and deeply committed to bringing his hearers to an understanding of what saving faith is."

Facts About the Letter to the Galatians

Galatians wasn't written to a *single* church in a *single* city. For example, 1 Thessalonians is addressed to *the church of the Thessalonians* ([1 Thessalonians 1:1](#)). But this was addressed to **the churches of Galatia**, because **Galatia** was a *region*, not a *city* and there were several **churches** among the cities of **Galatia**.

During the third century BC some Celtic peoples (or Gauls) migrated to this area and, after fighting with the people they encountered, they settled into the northern part of Asia Minor. In due course they came into conflict with the Romans, who defeated them, and from this time they remained under the authority of the Romans as a dependent kingdom. The name 'Galatia' covered the territory settled by the Gauls." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Leon Morris)



Facts About the Letter to the Galatians

There were essentially two regions of Galatia, one to the north (including the cities of Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium) and one to the south (including the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe). There has been considerable – though mostly unimportant – debate as to if Galatians was written to the cities of the northern region or the southern region.

"It is clear that Paul intended his words to have a wide circulation in the region of Galatia. The letter would be taken to each center and read there, or several copies would be made and one taken to each church." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Leon Morris)



Challenging a Different Gospel

An Introduction to the Apostle Paul's letter:

Paul, an Apostle: This emphasis on Paul's apostolic credentials is important. Paul had strong words for the Galatians, and they had to understand that he wrote with authority. Paul expected that Christians would respect his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Not from men or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father:

Paul's calling as an apostle was not from man, nor was it through any man. It originated with God and came directly from God. His standing as an apostle was not based on opinion polls and it did not come from any human council. It was based on a Divine call, made through both the Father and the Son.

Grace to you and peace: This was Paul's familiar greeting, drawing from the traditional greetings in both Greek culture (**grace**) and Jewish culture (**peace**). Paul used this exact phrase five other times in the New Testament and 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**.

Challenging a Different Gospel

An Introduction to the Apostle Paul's letter:

Who gave Himself for our sins: Paul wished grace and peace unto his readers from both God the Father and God the Son. Paul briefly expands on the work of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing he wrote about Jesus is that He gave Himself for our sins.

We know from **John 3:16** that God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Yet God the Father was not the only giver; Jesus also gave. Jesus is a loving, giving God and a loving, giving Savior.

Jesus gave Himself for our sins. This is why Jesus had to give Himself. Our sins 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.

"These words, 'who gave himself for our sins', are very important. He wanted to tell the Galatians straight out that atonement for sins and perfect righteousness are not to be sought anywhere but in Christ... So glorious is this redemption that it should ravish us with wonder."

Challenging a Different Gospel

An Introduction to the Apostle Paul's letter:

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.

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 doctrines 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.

Galatians 1

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

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

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.

9 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.

The Danger of a Different Gospel

3 Facts about this Different Gospel:

Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ: Galatians 1:7 tells three things about this different gospel. First, it was an *illegitimate gospel* (which is not another). Second, *it was not good - but trouble* (who trouble you). Third, it was a *distortion of the true gospel* (pervert the gospel of Christ).

Paul recognized that this different gospel was not really another gospel at all. Those who promoted this different gospel perhaps said, "We know our message is different than Paul's message. He has his truth, and we have ours. He has his gospel, and we have ours." Paul rejected the idea that their message was a legitimate alternative gospel in any way.

The Danger of a Different Gospel

3 Facts about this Different Gospel:

There are some who trouble you: Those who brought this other gospel 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.

"Note the resourcefulness of the devil. Heretics do not advertise their errors. Murderers, adulterers, thieves disguise themselves. So the devil masquerades all these devices and activities. He puts on white to make himself look like an angel of light." (Martin Luther)

To pervert the gospel of Christ: The other gospel was really a perversion or a distortion of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It didn't start from nothing and make up a new name for God and pretending to have a new Savior. It used the names and ideas familiar to the Galatian Christians, but it slightly twisted the ideas to make their message all the more deceptive.

The Danger of a Different Gospel

3 Facts about this Different Gospel:

Want to pervert the gospel of Christ: Paul plainly wrote that these people want to distort the good news of Jesus. It is sometimes hard for us to understand why someone would want to pervert the gospel of Christ:

- The gospel offends our **pride**. It tells us we need a savior, and that we cannot save ourselves. It gives no credit to us at all for our salvation; it is all the work of Jesus for us.
- The gospel offends our **wisdom**. It saves us by something many consider foolish – God becoming man and dying a humiliating, disgraceful death on our behalf.
- Third, the gospel offends our **knowledge**. It tells us to believe something which goes against scientific knowledge and personal experience – that a dead man, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead in a glorious new body that would never die again.

The Danger of a Different Gospel

A Curse Upon Those who Bring a False Gospel:

But even if we, or an angel from heaven: Paul didn't care who brought the false gospel. Even if it were himself, or an angel from heaven, it was to be rejected. Any person who spreads a false gospel was worthy only of a particular curse from God (let him be accursed).

Let him be accursed: Paul seemed to have in his mind the solemn curses pronounced by God upon those who break His covenant ([Deuteronomy 27](#)). For Paul, it wasn't enough to say, "Don't listen to these people." Paul soberly thought that they should be *cursed*.

So now I say again: The curse was repeated for extra emphasis; it is really impossible for Paul to express this idea with any more strength than he did here.

Paul proclaimed a "double curse" on people who spread a false gospel. He didn't just ask God to curse the message, but to curse the people who spread the message. Paul's love was for souls that were in danger of hell. If a gospel is false, and not "another good news" at all, then it can not save the lost.

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.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 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:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

The Divine source of the Gospel Paul Preached

Paul's gospel did not come from a desire to please man:

For do I now persuade men, or God?: Paul's idea was not "I want to persuade God to my point of view." The idea is that God was his audience. When Paul spoke, he spoke first to God and not to man.

Or do I seek to please men? 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.

Paul seems to be making a contrast between himself and those who brought the *different gospel*. Apparently in some way that *different gospel* was built around the idea of pleasing man.

"There have always been preachers who have sought popular acclaim above all else, and there are some still. It is part of fallen human nature that even those charged with the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel can fall into the trap of trying to be popular rather than faithful." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Leon Morris)

The Divine source of the Gospel Paul Preached

Paul's gospel did not come from a desire to please man:

For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ: For Paul it was one or the other. He could not direct his ministry towards pleasing men and at the same time direct it towards pleasing Jesus Christ. And if his concern was not first to please Jesus Christ, then he was not a bondservant of Christ.

Servant is perhaps not the best translation here; it may be better translated *slave*. "It is unfortunate that... our English translations should so consistently fail to give this word its true meaning, thereby encouraging the false conception of Christian 'service' (as something essentially voluntary and part-time) so characteristic of modern religious idealism. The 'bond-servant of Christ' is not free to offer or withhold his 'service'; his life is not his own, but belongs entirely to his Lord." (Duncan, cited in Morris)

Is not according to man: In contrast to the different gospel brought by others, Paul's message was a revelation from God. Men may have many marvelous things to teach us, but God's revelation has all things which pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Now more than ever, the world does not need the good advice and wisdom of man, it needs a revelation from God.

Galatians 3

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Galatians 3

Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

The Divine source of the Gospel Paul Preached

Paul's gospel did not come from a desire to please man:

If Paul did not learn the gospel from any man, then it was also true that the early Christians were slow in learning who Paul was in Jesus. All they really knew was that he had been dramatically converted – for which they glorified God. After his conversion, Paul was an anonymous Christian for many years.

In this whole section, Paul shows 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.

Paul's whole point in the second part of this chapter is important. His gospel was true, and his experience was valid, because it really came from God. It is fair for every Christian to ask if their gospel has come from God, or if they have made it up themselves. These questions are important because ONLY what comes from God can really save us and make a lasting difference in our lives.

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