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Galatians 1

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Galatians 1.

Topics.

- Paul, an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father.
- I am astonished that you are turning to a different Gospel.
- Am I seeking the approval of man, or of God?
- The Gospel that was preached by Paul is not man's Gospel.
- God set Paul apart before he was born.
- God was pleased to reveal his Son to Paul.

INTRODUCTION: Paul's letter to the Galatians was addressed to a group of churches in Galatia, a region of modern Turkey. Paul had previously preached the Gospel in these churches prior to this letter. He wrote to counter those who taught that Christians must keep the Old Testament law in order to be accepted by God. Paul began with a defence of his apostolic authority (chapters 1–2), then made it clear that all believers, Jew and Gentile alike enjoy complete salvation in Christ (chapters 3–4) and in (chapters 5–6) he showed how the Gospel of grace leads to true freedom and godly living. Paul wrote this letter sometime between A.D. 48 and 58. The central message of Galatians is the glorious truth, "No one is justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

GALATIANS 1:1-5

Paul, an Apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

- **Galatians 1:1-5:** Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—²and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The words:

- Paul, an apostle—not from men but through Jesus Christ and God" (v1).

Refer to the Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and to Jesus words, "Paul is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:3-16).

Who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age: there is much controversy over who killed Jesus, some say, Judas, others say the Jews while many say it was the Romans, obviously they all had a part in Christ's death, but the following words, "Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age" (v4) show that we were all involved in his death, since not one of us can stand before God without sin and therefore it was for us all that Jesus laid his life down.

Added to this the words, "According to the will of our God and Father" (v4) show that Judas, the Jews and the Romans were the vessels God used to fulfil His foreordained plan of salvation that existed in His eternal mind before time began. The words:

- To deliver us from the present evil age (v4).

Shows that we shouldn't be surprised or shocked at the corruption we see in this world, not only at the level of the common people, but also in top levels of government of all nations, because the entire purpose of Christ's death and resurrection is to deliver us not from a righteous and holy world, but a corrupt and wicked one. For this reason, we should not be shocked or taken by surprise when we see the destructive pain and horrors of sin manifested all around us since that is the nature and character of the world, we live in.

GALATIANS 1:6-10

I am Astonished that you are Turning to a Different Gospel.

- **Galatians 1:6-10:** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Distort: (Pervert in KJV) means to reverse, turn around or to change in this context it carries the idea of perverting, twisting and corrupting the Scriptures and the gospel message.

Accursed: (anathema) refers to a religious ban, it carries the idea of someone being condemned and excommunicated from a religious group.

Anathema: carries the idea of something being extremely disliked or provoking extreme disgust (an abhorrence or abomination).

Abomination: means hatred and wickedness it carries the idea of something being intensely hated, abhorrent and extremely loathing.

Detestation: refers to something repugnant and disliked it carries the idea of being horrifically disgusted with a person or thing.

The different Gospel: Paul is stunned that there are amongst the Galatians "Some who are troubling them" (v6) by enticing them to turn to what Paul calls a different Gospel, obviously there can only be one Christian Gospel thus the reason Paul clarifies his statement with the words, "Not that there is another one" (v7). So, what is this different Gospel they are turning to?

It is most likely this distorted Gospel included:

- The death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Christ was Israel's Messiah the Christ and the Son of God.
- Christ will return.
- The dead in Christ will be raised everlasting life and eternal glory and those that are alive will be caught up with them to be forever with the Lord.

Yet there is something so twisted, distorted and offensive with this Gospel that Paul says, "Let those who teach it be accursed and banned from Christian fellowship," (v8) even though it most likely embodies almost all

of what faithful Christians believe, so how can it be so close to being right and at the same time be so offensive and so wrong? How is this Gospel any different to the one the apostles and Paul taught?

To find the answer all we have to do is skip a couple of chapters until we arrive at chapter three and read the following words of Paul:

- Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3).

Jewish leaders were teaching those who had accepted Christ through grace two distortions of the Gospel that totally robbed God's majestic and graceful plan of salvation from all its glory, wonder, mercy and grace.

These two distortions were the teachings that proclaimed:

1. No one could be saved apart from adhering to God's covenant of circumcision, the ceremonial rites, the Sabbath's and Holy days and keeping Jewish customs and traditions.
2. Even if they did believe in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, they still had to keep God's covenant of circumcision, the ceremonial rites, the Sabbath's and Holy days and Jewish customs, traditions to maintain their salvation otherwise they would be counted unworthy and lose it. This idea is also supported by the fact Paul in his introduction to this chapter said, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ (v6).

This was one of the great difficulties Paul had to contend with Jewish teachers were teaching new converts to Christ that, faith alone is not enough to be saved, they must add to it. Though this teaching totally distorts the Gospel it was nevertheless very deceptive especially to Jewish converts, because Israel had followed the Law of Moses for over four-thousand years therefore it made sense to many of them that faith in Christ alone was enough to save to eternal life. Thousands of Jews accepted Paul's message, but many of them were still zealous for the Law of Moses, Jewish customs and Jewish traditions. It was no-doubt these passionate and zealous Jews who were telling Paul's converts at Galatia that they must add to their faith because the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is not enough on its own to save, which means that they most likely taught the Gospel of Christ plus religious rites, customs and good works to earn righteousness and to be counted worthy of salvation to eternal life. This is what Paul was struggling with and anxious about; he feared his converts were going to be enticed back under the law to be saved.

The practical application of this today: today Christians who faithfully attend church each Sunday, read their Bible every-day and pray, attend all the Bible study meetings or those who sing in a church choir and faithfully go to every practice lesson and even ministers who hold positions of great leadership and authority can all fall into the danger of thinking they are made righteous and saved by their faithful conduct in their service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Though all these things are good in themselves and will bring their own reward now and in eternity, not one of them can save us or even add to our salvation. As good as they might all be, they are not only useless in making us righteous before God, but also rob the Good News of the Gospel from its glory, beauty, wonder and God's infinite love and grace that is without walls and boundaries to save to eternal life.

A personal note: from my many years in Christianity I wonder if the majority of us have fully comprehended the enormity of God's grace in Christ to save from sin and to eternal life. Paul the only apostle who never learned the Good News of the Gospel by study and education, but got it by revelation considers any form of self-effort to earn righteousness to be counted worthy of being saved to eternal life no matter how good to be

an abomination to God, to Christ and to the Gospel. This no-doubt is because Paul understood that not one of us can by self-effort attain to the perfect standard of Holiness God requires and that the instant we think we can attain to God's Holy standard of righteousness by self-effort and good works is the instant we nullify what Christ achieved for us on the bloodstained cross of Calvary.

Am I seeking the approval of man, or of God? Paul's words, "Am I seeking the approval of man, or of God? (v10) is very relevant for today, since there are ministers in some religious circles that preach a prosperity and success Gospel that appeals to self, ego and pride, it is attractive and sounds very much like the true Gospel since it uses the same Bible, the same Scriptures and speaks the same language, but the underlying current of the true and the false is as far apart as the north is from the south.

NOTE: No Christian is going to be deceived by any teaching that denies Christ, his death and resurrection and the excitement of his return or the resurrection to eternal life and everlasting glory, so any form of deception has to be so subtle it is enormously difficult to recognise especially since self, ego, and pride like self-effort since it produce self-righteousness and in this pride can glory in that it exalts itself above others who it considers to be less. This is one of the reasons God hates any form of self-effort to attain to righteousness acceptable for eternal salvation it not only produces self-righteousness, but denies how far we as corrupted human creatures with all our sinful dysfunctions and aberrations have fallen from God's Holy Standard of perfection.

If I am trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ: Paul's words, "If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ" (v10) shows that the instant we seek the approval or favour of men is the instant we have stopped becoming servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean we should not try to win the favour of the lost, but if we have to deny our faith or Christ to win their favour or friendship then we have stopped becoming servants of Christ and become slaves of man's approval and acceptance.

GALATIANS 1:11-16

The Gospel that was Preached by Paul is not Man's Gospel.

- **Galatians 1:11-16:** For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;

Judaism: (the Jews religion in KJV) refers to the Jewish faith and Jewish religion for a person to become a Jud'an they had to live as the Jews and adopt their religious practises, customs and ceremonial laws etc. (Judaize).

Revelation: means to take off the cover and reveal in this context it carries the idea of a dark veil being lifted off the limitations of the mortal mind and it being opened to the heavenly light of God's majestic and eternal plan of salvation, His never ending grace and all the truths of His spoken and written word clearly shining as a brilliant and glorious light in the mind revealing the beauty and wonder of God foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind and His eternal word. After Christ appeared to Paul he did not immediately go to the apostles and have a conference with

them to learn the Gospel or add anything to what Christ had given him by revelation, the full Gospel came to Paul by revelation, not by learning or educations (v17-18) despite the fact he was a brilliantly will educated man and well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Paul ravaged the church: Paul's words, "I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it" (v13) show the destructive power of wrong belief. Luke in Acts eight tells us that:

- Saul ravaged the church and entered house after house dragging men and women out and committing them to prison (Acts 8:3).

Ravaged carries the idea that he not only spoke evil of those who confessed the Lord Jesus Christ but also aggressively set about assaulting and abusing whoever believed in the Lord violently doing whatever he could to destroy and break up the church. Then in the next chapter Luke writes:

- Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2).

Paul wanted the High priest to give him letters that when he presented them to the priests at Damascus they would give him permission to drag men and women confessing Christ out of the their synagogues so that he could take them captive to Jerusalem to be punished and even put to death (Acts 22:5) (Acts 26:10).

Paul's power and authority: since there was no-one in the Jewish priesthood higher in authority than the high priest Paul's authority and power was enormous. To be given letters from the high priest (Acts 9:1-2) that allowed him to destroy whoever was opposed to the Jewish teaching gave him legal authority to use not only Jewish, but also Roman officers and soldiers throughout the land of Israel to do whatever Paul instructed them to do to destroy the opposing faith. This is exactly what Paul was doing until the Lord miraculously turned his life around. We know Paul was causing wide spread chaos and mayhem throughout the region because Luke tells us when Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus:

- The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied (Acts 9:31).

Clearly showing the widespread havoc and destruction Paul was causing to the church prior to his conversion.

Paul's enormous, terror and destructive power: Paul himself states that prior to his conversion he was advancing in Judaism beyond many his own age among the Jews and because he was so extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers he violently persecuted the church of God trying to destroy it (Gal. 1:13-14) and pursued those who confessed Christ to death, binding and imprisoning both men and women (Acts 22:4) being convinced that he should do whatever he could to oppose the name of Jesus. After being given authority by the high priest he not only locked up many of the saints in prison at Jerusalem, but when they were put to death he cast his vote against them and punished them in all the synagogues trying to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them persecuted them even in foreign cities (Acts 26:10-11).

Paul's motivation: it was not that Paul was motivated by jealousy, pride and selfish ambition as many of the Jews were or from an evil heart. Rather Paul's motivation was from his zeal for God and what he believed was the right way to protect the religious laws and faith of the Nation of Israel. Paul had been taught by Gamaliel (a Pharisee and eminent doctor of the law) in the strictest laws of Moses (Acts 22:3) and was therefore so legalistic that he believed those who were confessing Christ were

blasphemers to the laws and customs God had given to Moses and to the Covenant the LORD had establish with Israel thus the power and horror of wrong belief especially when it is infused with a legalistic heart that lacks, mercy, grace and compassion which in Paul's case had been generated by attending a religious school that gave him a wrong understanding of God, His laws and what is important to God's heart.

The worst sinners of all: throughout the years I have heard people state that they are the worst sinner of all and therefore believe God could not save them. All anyone who thinks this way has to do is look at the life of Paul prior to his conversion and ask themselves, "Have I broken up Christian families and put innocent men and women into prison and agreed as Paul did to have them put to death simply because they were devoted to Christ as Paul did? And then look at what God was able to do with Paul's life when he surrendered it to the Lord.

God set Paul apart before he was born: some interpret the words, "God set me apart before I was born" (v15) to mean, "God set me apart from the time of my youth" (v15), but the words, "Before I was born" are supported by biblical instances in which the following Scriptures show that God clearly fixed the destiny of a certain few before their birth, i.e., such as the following men of God:

God says of Jeremiah:

- Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5).

Isaiah writes:

- The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name and formed me from the womb to be his servant (Isa. 49:1, 5).

David says of God:

- You are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts (Psalm 22:9).

Asaph in his song praises God:

- Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb (Psalm 71:6).

Of Samson it is written:

- The child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb (Judges 13:5, 7).

The angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, said of John the Baptist:

- He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, 19).

These verses clearly show that God molds certain people for His purposes from their very birth and uses the circumstances of their lives to shape them for some unique field of service in His Kingdom. Paul's Jewish education and his enormous knowledge of Old Testament writings and Jewish traditions enabled him not only to be able to understand the feelings and emotions of the Jewish people, but also equipped him answer with wisdom the questions and arguments of the Jewish religious leaders.

Paul was called:

- Out of Jewish darkness, blindness and ignorance into the knowledge of Christ.
- Out of the bondage of sin, the law, and traditions of the Jewish nation into the liberty and grace of Christ.

- From conversation with the men of the world into the fellowship of the Father and the Son.
- Out of striving to attain to his own righteousness to resting in the grace of Christ.
- Out of the curse of the Law into all the blessings of grace and to everlasting life and eternal glory.

Paul credits both his salvation and his calling to the sovereignty of God and to grace. Paul not only understood that he was saved to eternal life solely by grace which is the ordinary way in which God saves all sinners, but also knew that even his apostleship and service for Christ was solely by grace since prior to his conversion he was aggressively engaged in bitterly opposing the Lord and horrifically persecuting anyone who confessed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (see the title, Paul Ravages the church) (following v11-16). Paul's first light into the Gospel and his call into the ministry was by grace, he did not thrust or force himself into this work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather God called him by grace.

God's sovereign will and free grace: Paul credits his birth, his life, his conversion and call to the ministry to God's sovereign will and free grace he did not limit his calling into the Kingdom and service of Christ to his experience at Damascus, but believed that the entire chain of circumstances that brought his life to this climatic moment were all divine influences leading to his conversion and his apostleship. The following verses show that Paul's calling was not only by the sovereign will of God but also by God's grace. Jesus said to Ananias that Paul was:

- A chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts 9:3-8, 15).

Ananias told Paul:

- The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth (Acts 22:14).

Paul saw himself as:

- A servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1).

God was pleased to reveal His Son to Paul: Paul's statement, "God was pleased to reveal his Son to me" (v16) show that God in His foresight was able to see that Paul was a man whose integrity was such that it could not be weakened or compromised not matter how much he suffered or prospered, thus the reason God was pleased to not only save him but call him to an extraordinary task as God did with Isaiah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist all men destined to God's calling and their ministry from birth as the following Scriptures show. Isaiah writes:

- The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name and formed me from the womb to be his servant (Isa. 49:1, 5).

God says of Jeremiah:

- Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5).

The angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, said of John the Baptist:

- He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, 19).

All who are converted to the Lord Jesus Christ are called by grace and saved by grace. It is God's pleasure to save and every conversion is brought about by the power of His grace. But there was something unique in the case of Paul, in the suddenness of it, in the greatness of his total

change and reversal of direction and in the fact, it did not involve any mediation of others to bring it about. Paul's life was suddenly impacted by an extraordinary instance of divine power and divine grace his conversion and calling were unlike any other since it was brought about by Christ's personal appearance to him. This heavenly, majestic and glorious moment immediately affected Paul's entire mind and his thinking since it totally changed his goals, motivation and purpose in life. In this manner it pleased God to reveal his Son to Paul to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel by special and immediate revelation.

GALATIANS 1:17-24

God set Paul apart to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

- **Galatians 1:17-24:** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they glorified God because of me.

After Paul had encountered Christ in an extraordinary manner at Damascus (Acts 9:3-16) he left and travelled into Arabia, then later returned to Damascus. After three years of being converted he travelled to Jerusalem where he stayed with Peter for fifteen days and saw only James (the Lord's brother). Paul did not receive any further instructions authority advice or direction from the apostles, neither Paul himself nor any other person could be credited for his knowledge of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ or his authority to preach it; his call to the apostolic office was extraordinary and divine.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
