

Galatians 1

Introduction (1:1-5)

1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

- You can sense Paul's defensive tone having to defend himself against the Judaizers accusations against him.
- Paul has direct revelation from God and was not sent by the 12. He was sent by God Himself.

2 and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

- The churches of Galatia are the four churches he planted: 1) Pisidian-Antioch; 2) Iconium; 3) Lystra; and 4) Derbe.
- See Acts 13-14.

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

4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Perversion of the Gospel (6-10)

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

- By embracing the Judaizers' doctrines, the Galatians were deserting Christ Himself.
- The grace of Christ is justification by faith alone in Christ alone apart from the works of the Law.
- The Judaizers' gospel was a different gospel.

7 which is [really] not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

- There is not another gospel. Only the gospel that Paul and the 12 preached.
- The Judaizers were disturbing the Galatians.
- They were distorting the pure and simple gospel with their mixed gospel of legalism. Faith plus works.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

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- The Judaizers were accursed for preaching a false gospel.
- Those who preach a mixed gospel of any kind, whether mixed with legalism or lawlessness, are cursed.

10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

- Paul was answering the Judaizers' claims that he was a man-pleaser who changed his message for his audience.
- Like Paul, we must be delivered from the fear of man, for the fear of man brings a snare (Prov. 29:25).

Paul Defended His Ministry (1:11-24)

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- The Judaizers accused Paul of receiving his gospel, perhaps, from the 12 apostles but it was not by direct revelation.
- Paul had to defend his ministry against his accusers. The Judaizers attacked the messenger to undermine the message. Paul had to undo this work and build the messenger back up. Paul does this, not because he is puffed up with pride, but so his life-changing gospel message is received.
- Paul received his gospel message by direct revelation. He received it directly from Jesus Himself. It began on the road to Damascus but was greatly developed during his 3-year sabbatical in the Arabian wilderness.
- In Galatians 4:25, Paul basically said that Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai in Arabia. Many thought Mount Sinai was in Egypt, but Paul corrected that thought and said Mount Sinai, where the Law was given, was in Arabia.
- Here's an interesting thought. The Judaizers claimed Paul didn't have legitimate authority to preach his version of the gospel that is free from the works of the Law. But Paul, in essence, made this claim: "Moses received the Law at Mount Sinai in Arabia. In a similar way, I received my gospel of grace in Arabia. Just as Moses had authority, so do I."

13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

- The Judaizers claimed they had the pure gospel because it holds to historic Judaism. Faith in Christ plus the works of the Law.
- Here Paul laid out his resume. Basically, he was saying, "Any claim of the Judaizers to be zealous for the Mosaic Law, I have far more. I persecuted the church of God beyond measure. I even tried to destroy it."

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I was going far beyond my contemporaries in Judaism. I had more zeal and passion for my ancestral traditions.”

- Basically, Paul said, “If the Judaizers think they are zealous for the Law, Judaism, and our ancestral traditions, I am far more. They didn’t persecute the church. I was so zealous, I tried to destroy it.”

15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

- Paul’s calling as an apostle was similar to Jeremiah’s calling as a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5).
- “God was pleased to reveal His Son in me.” We know Paul had an external revelation of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Here Paul was likely describing something different. This was an internal revealing of Jesus Christ in him. Paul likely experienced this during his 3-year hiatus in Arabia.
- This internal revelation of Jesus Christ prepared him as a messenger. It prepared him to preach to the Gentiles.
- In saying he didn’t immediately consult with flesh and blood, he was stressing the fact that his revelation of Jesus Christ and his gospel message was independent of the 12 apostles.

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

- He was once again stressing that his gospel was by direct revelation and not from the influence of the 12. He didn’t go to Jerusalem until much later.
- After about 3 years in Arabia, Paul went to Jerusalem to get know Peter and he stayed with him for 15 days.
- But again, this was after his external revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus and his internal revelation of Christ for 3 years in Arabia.

20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

- Paul felt the need to keep stressing to the Galatians he was telling the truth. He was not lying.
- He was trying to undo the accusations against him so the Galatians would receive his pure gospel message.

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

- After meeting with Peter, Paul went back to Syria and then on to Cilicia, which is modern-day Turkey.

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22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

Application to Us

- Beware that we don't embrace a false gospel, either a gospel tainted with legalism or tarnished by lawlessness. If we embrace or preach another gospel, we are cursed.
- We can never be faithful to Christ if we are still ensnared by the fear of man. We must be delivered from caring what people think if we are to be a faithful witness of Christ.
- God was pleased to reveal His Son internally to Paul. We also should seek an internal revelation of Jesus Christ. The Father takes great pleasure in doing this.
- Like Paul, we should spend a significant amount of time waiting on God. Listening to Him. Then, after many years, we can consult with others of reputation.