

Galatians 1:1-10

Introduction:

No one but the most liberal believe that the author was not Paul.

The dates of the writing span from as early as 48 AD thru 57AD. Some believe that since Paul never mentioned the Jerusalem Council, that dealt with similar issues, and is usually dated to 49AD, that it has the earlier date. This date, if accepted, makes this letter his earliest writing.

Regardless of the date, this book is an intense treatment of a very early issue in the church: Jesus plus Law = salvation. In other words, how are we saved? How are we justified before a Holy God?

The declaration of Paul in this letter is the doctrine of Justification by faith! Grace is the way to life and Grace is the way of life for all who believe".

Martin Luther loved this, his "favorite epistle". He wrote: "The Epistle to the Galatians is **my** epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine." It's influence is felt all through his writings on the Reformation.

What was happening in the churches that Paul planted in Galatia that caused him to write this letter? Note that it has no words of commendation, praise or thanksgiving. In it, Paul did not ask for prayer nor did he even make any reference to their standing in Christ. The lack of these things is evident when his other letters are examined. The lack of these things causes one to think that this letter is unique among his other epistles. The lack of these things lets us know that there is something going on in the churches that he must address with all firmness and urgency.

The issue is described with one word: Judaizing. Judaizers were Christian Jews (and perhaps some Christian Gentiles) who clung to the Old ways of the Mosaic Law. We know from Acts 15 that both Peter and Paul spoke up at the Jerusalem Council after hearing some Pharisee converts insist on circumcision and keeping the Law. Peter said,

Acts 15:8-11 NKJV So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, (9) and made **no distinction** between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (10) Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Paul and Barnabas also spoke about the miracles and wonders that occurred among the Gentile converts. The implication was, 'would God do such things for the Gentiles without them first converting to Judaism which was always required in the past?

Let's look at some of these teachings because, quite frankly, they are still alive today in the church.

1. **Circumcision** - the book of Exodus, in which Moses taught that foreigners who wanted to celebrate Passover -- the Jewish celebration of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt -- needed to become circumcised and follow the same law as other Israelites. In the Law, circumcision was make a requirement but it started

with Abraham as a sign of the covenant God made with him. We will discuss this a lot more later.

2. **Law of Moses** including dietary requirements, clothing, hair styles. This occurs today in both Messianic Jewish synagogues as well in churches that try to adhere to the Law of Moses.
3. **Separatism** – at first, Jewish converts to Christianity, for the most part, kept the Law and worshipped with other Jews. Gentiles were excluded from these practices. Evidently, this came to a head when Christian **Jews** separated themselves from their Christian **Gentile** brothers and sisters when it came to “breaking bread”, that is, sharing a meal which is a very significant thing in the Middle East, even today. I haven’t read that this ever extended to Communion. This is seen today in some churches that exhibit a sense of spiritual pride which takes the form of keeping “undesirables” out of their church.
4. **Sacred Days** - Insistence on keeping the feasts and the Sabbath (on the 7th day). Today, the 7th Day Adventists insist on the Saturday sabbath and, it is a salvation issue.
5. **Legalism** – this is tightly connected to the justification issue; it focuses on the believer’s way of maintaining his salvation by conforming to a set of rules (like the 10 commandments or the Mosaic Laws of separation and others). The issue is not obedience but the source of it: the letter of the Law or the Spirit of the Law.

At the Council of Jerusalem, the apostles and disciples seemed to agree on and settle the issue in terms of salvation. But there were cultural issues and the restrictions imposed upon the Gentiles were aimed at the way people would conduct themselves **after salvation**, that is, living in such a way that would not be offensive to Jewish believers. Not everyone who reads this passage agrees with the Council’s decision, but it did help to join two groups of peoples who had been separated for centuries and James does say that these things are from the Holy Spirit. (((not eating foods sacrificed to idols, not eating blood or meat of strangled animals and abstaining from sexual immorality))).

Under the backdrop of these issues, Paul enters the mess that the Christian Jews created. It is beyond ironic that the Pharisee of Pharisees, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; consumed with religious zeal he persecuted the church and tried to destroy it. He writes this letter to the churches he planted and without any politeness, he comes against the Judaizers and those in the churches that fell head-long into their traps.

We will read in Chapter 1, an introduction, a stern warning against any false gospel, and a defense of his apostleship.

Let read the first part contained in the first 5 verses:

[Galatians 1:1-5 NKJV](#) Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), (2) and all the brethren who are

with me, To the churches of Galatia: (3) Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (5) to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

Paul immediately declares himself to be an apostle. Many of the Judaizers tried to convince the church that Paul was not a true apostle because he did not follow Jesus from the beginning and was a witness to his resurrection and ascension to the Father.

These conditions were laid out in Acts 1:21-22;

not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ

Paul states that he was not sent by anyone of dubious authority such as one sent out by the Sanhedrin. These were also called apostles. Nor did he just come on the scene and declare himself an apostle and thereby try to thrust himself into a position of authority.

Through man => Paul was not sent thru a mere man, but by One who was more than a man; nor by a mortal man, but by the Christ, raised from the dead by God the Father, with an eternal glory sitting at God's right hand.

“The word *apostle* as Paul uses it here does not merely refer to one who has a message to announce, but to an appointed representative with an official status who is provided with the credentials of his office.” (Wuest)

(Galatians 1:2 NKJV) and all the brethren who are with me, To the **churches** of Galatia:

None of which are named...perhaps shielding them from this difficult letter. Paul takes full responsibility for what he says in this letter!

(Galatians 1:3 NKJV) Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

All of Paul's 13 letters have this greeting. Many have remarked that true grace always precedes true peace.

(Galatians 1:4 NKJV) who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, **according to the will of our God and Father,**

Perhaps the essence of the Gospel! NOTE WELL: He was not killed **but gave Himself** for our sins.

If Paul referred to his day as “this present evil age”, how much more our day?

All this wonderful “good news” was according to the will of our God and Father to whom Jesus yielded His will in perfect obedience.

(Galatians 1:5 NKJV) to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

The next section is about as straight-forward as Paul writes. It is written with an intensity that he might have had when presenting the Gospel on his missionary journeys.

Galatians 1:6-10 NKJV I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, (7) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (10) For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

(Galatians 1:6 NKJV) I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Marvel: the word means admire, or to wonder; in all cases where it is used, it means just that – sometime to marvel at like one of His miracles or great teachings. It seems to me that Paul is being very sarcastic here. More like “I truly cannot believe...”.

Turning away: it means change sides. Going from Jesus to something else – ‘different gospel’;

(Galatians 1:7 NKJV) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

These unnamed men came and agitated and stirred up the church. They did it by perverting the gospel of Christ. They wanted to take the free gift of salvation given by the grace of God, and turn them to rites, ceremonies and other requirements contained in the Law of Mosaic! From the words Paul is using, he is certainly implying that this false, perverted gospel of men was intended to destroy the churches planted by God through the Paul and his companions.

Many of these men came out from Jerusalem and claimed to be under the authority of the “mother” church in Jerusalem. James clarifies in his letter to the gentile churches:

Acts 15:24-25 NKJV Since we have heard that some who **went out from us have troubled you with words**, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must* be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no *such* commandment— (25) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, **to send chosen men to you** with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

(Galatians 1:8 NKJV) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:9 NKJV) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Cursed: anathema in the Greek. Very strong condemnation of these who presented a false gospel. So strong, that Paul repeats it! Cursed and removed from Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:22 NKJV (22) If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!

In the above verse, Paul wrote “Anathema Maranatha”

(Galatians 1:10 NKJV) For do I now persuade [please] men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Paul knows he is being heavy-handed but he says that he is not writing to please men but rather, to please God! For how could he please men and still be a bondservant (Greek: Slave) of Christ? He could not!

Galatians 1:10 NLT Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.