

AN INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS

When: This is considered to be one of the earliest epistles written by Paul which would place it around 48-49 AD but no later than 53-55 AD. This letter was written after Paul's first missionary journey.

Theme: This letter was written to address the controversy within the Galatian churches regarding the requirement of Jewish law for Gentile converts. It is also seen as a defense of Paul's apostolic authority and a teaching on justification by faith alone, not by works of the law. The Galatians had been visited by false teachers after Paul's departure who were probably the "Judaizers" mentioned in Acts who were telling Gentile Christians **Acts 15:1** And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* They taught them that the only way to obtain true salvation was by being circumcised, keeping the sabbath, and observing the traditions of the elders.

Paul's answer: He hammers away at returning to the truth of the gospel which is salvation by grace and justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Adding anything to justification by faith alone in Christ alone, is a perversion of the true gospel and is in fact another gospel. This is serious, so serious that Paul writes that anyone who preaches another gospel, even if it is an angel, let them be cursed! Anything that you must do to be justified in the sight of God other than faith in Christ, diminishes what Jesus did on the cross. Paul asserts his apostolic authority, explains the gospel of grace, and exhorts true Christian living to these churches.

Galatians 1:1-2 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: *Paul addresses these churches with his credentials. He is an apostle ordained of God and called by Jesus Christ. He was not chosen by men or approved by a counsel – his calling was higher than that. He doesn't need commendations from anyone for this message to be taken seriously.*

Galatians 1:3-5 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. *Paul gets right to the crux of the gospel which is grace and peace. We're saved by grace, we grow in grace, we're kept by grace and because of that we have peace with God. Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is His inexhaustible goodness that we do not deserve and we cannot earn. Grace is always free and apart from works! We have access to this grace because Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins on the cross. This was the will of God and the purpose was not only to save us from hell, but to deliver us now from this present evil world. G.R.A.C.E. Is sometimes used as a acronym for God's Riches At Christ's Expense.*

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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 is amazed at how quickly these churches derailed from the gospel of grace to something else which is totally inferior. Adding anything to grace cancels it out because it no longer is free if something is required to be done by you. This false gospel was taught to them by false teachers who despised Paul and didn't grasp the true gospel. Paul said if anyone preaches another gospel whether they be man or angel, let them be accursed!*

Law and Grace are separate and cannot be mixed or you ruin both. Jesus illustrated this in these parables - Mark 2:21-22 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Galatians 1:10-12 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. 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. *Paul is saying that his preaching of the gospel of grace doesn't please men, but it does please God. The preaching of the cross of Christ condemns sinners because he died under their penalty. The preaching of the resurrection of Christ makes grace possible and calls the sinner to repentance and faith BUT it excludes all works...which offends people who want to be justified by their works. The gospel of the grace of God was not thought up by men. Paul was not taught it by men, but he received it by revelation straight from Jesus Christ himself.*

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 reminds them that he was once a zealous Pharisee that persecuted the church and surpassed many of his own peers. He was exceedingly religious and and focused on keeping the traditions of his ancestors. The point he is making here is "I've already been down this road and it doesn't take you where you want to go."*

Galatians 1:15-17 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; 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. *Paul says that he was set apart by God for this purpose and called by grace to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ and what he has done. When he knew that his assignment was to preach Christ to the Gentiles, he went to it immediately without asking for anyone's permission or commendation. He didn't even seek out the original apostles in Jerusalem but went into*

Arabia for what appears in the next verse for 3 years then returned to Damascus.

Galatians 1:18-20 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. *Many people believe that it was in the 3 years that Paul spent in Arabia separated that he received the revelation of the grace of God in Christ. That the church would be a joint body of Jews and Gentiles with no difference between them, and that the church was a mystery hid in God from before the foundation of the world. It was years before he even met Peter, he spent two weeks with him and saw James but none of the other apostles.*

Galatians 1:21-24 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 point that Paul is laboring to make is that he wasn't chosen or ordained by the other apostles. He didn't even meet most of them and was known only by reputation to the church in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. They wouldn't know him if they saw him. He got his instructions direct from Jesus Christ. He received his message direct from Jesus Christ so listen up to what I have to say to you. The only thing the Judaeen churches knew was that he was now preaching the faith that he once tried to stamp out and they gave God glory for it.*