

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians
The Apostle Paul and His Gospel of Grace versus "Another Gospel"- Part 1
"Paul's Life and Conversion"
Rev. Charles R. Biggs

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:1** 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 brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Lesson:
Acts 9; Acts 13-14

Acts 13:26-14:7: "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "' You are my Son, today I have begotten you.' ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "' I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' ³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm, "' You will not let your Holy One see corruption.' ³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything ³⁹ from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ⁴¹ "'Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.'" ⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of

God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

^{ESV} **Acts 14:1** Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them,⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country,⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.

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I. The Life and Conversion of the Apostle Paul

- a. Gloriously Saved- Acts 9
- b. Glorious Called and Ordained- Acts 9; Gal. 2
- c. A Persecutor-Destroyer of Christ and His Church ("Why do you persecute me?" –Acts 9).
- d. The "Chief" or "Foremost" of Sinners
- e. The Theologian *par excellence*:

i. Paul the Pharisee Apostle

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:13-14:** For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And 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....

- a. Apostle: One who is sent in general, but a special foundational office of the Church called specifically by Christ (Eph. 2:20; 4:11-16).

ii. Paul the Christian Apostle

... ^{ESV} **Galatians 1:15-17:** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; ¹⁷ 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....

.... ^{ESV} **Galatians 1:23-24:** They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.

II. The Judaizers: Background and Date of Galatians

a. Paul's Church Planting at Galatia

- i. **Date of Letter:** One of the first letters-epistles the Apostle Paul wrote (ca. AD 50-58; Council of Jerusalem was in AD 48 or 49).
- ii. Northern Galatia or Southern Galatia?
 1. North Galatia was in the north central part of Asia Minor- Galatians is Greek for "Celts".
 2. South Galatia is a Roman Province that includes the cities of:
 3. Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium (cf. Acts 13-14; 16).
- iii. Paul had planted these congregations on his first and second missionary journeys.
- iv. "...to the churches of Galatia"
 - a. Regional churches
 - b. Real visible manifestations of the universal church.

2. Galatians 1:8, 9; 4:19

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:8** But 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. ⁹ **As 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.

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:19** my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

3. Paul was a like a parent to his children and desired to see Christ formed in them through the gospel.
- b. Judaizers were calling into question Paul's authority to teach the Galatian Christians, and since Paul had planted the congregations and preached there, these men had crept in to question his credentials.
- c. The Judaizers were undermining his authority as one merely sent "from men and through a man"- not from the other Apostles and therefore God and Christ.

1. **Judaizers (Those who preached the “full gospel”- *gospel plus something else..*):** Since Paul had planted the Church Judaizers had come in to add to Paul’s gospel, teaching those saved who were Gentile that before they could be Christian, they first had to be Jewish (observe Old Covenant rituals and sacraments, particularly circumcision).

a. **Judaizer “Trouble-Makers” and “Agitators”:** Paul calls them (Gal. 1:7; 5:10, 12). “Those who make trouble” in Greek or what we would translate “trouble-makers”.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:10-12:** I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and ***the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty***, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² ***I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!***

b. **Compromise between Judaism and Christianity essentially-** Gentiles must adopt the Old Covenant informed Jewish manner of life.

c. **Theologically- Disregarded the Redemptive-** Historical shift in practice since the coming of Christ in the fullness of the times (Gal. 4:4):

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:3-6:** ***But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.*** ⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in- who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery- ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)- those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:14** But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the

gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "***If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?***"

Calvin wrote: 'Paul had faithfully instructed [the Galatians] in the pure gospel, but false apostles had entered in his absence and corrupted the true seed by false and corrupt dogmas. For they taught that the observance of ceremonies was still necessary. This might seem trivial, but Paul fights for it as a fundamental article of the Christian faith. And rightly so, for it is no light evil to quench the brightness of the gospel, lay a snare for consciences and remove the distinction between the old and new covenants. He saw that these errors were also related to an ungodly and destructive opinion on the deserving of righteousness....

- d. **"Proto-Semi-Pelagianism or Proto-Arminianism"**: God's grace *plus something else, namely obedience to God's will for a person to be saved*. In other words, they believed we were saved by God's grace, but *plus man's obedience to the Law*.
- e. **Not "Grace Alone" or "Sola Gratia"** as was rediscovered in the Reformation and has been lost in Bible-believing churches again today!

2. **Another Gospel?** Notice in Galatians 1:6-9 that something "added" to the complete and gracious Gospel of Christ is not the one and only Gospel- -but "another gospel that is no gospel at all!"

- a. **A "Nullification of the Gospel"?**

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Application: It seemed the Judaizers believed in the "essentials" such as Christ's deity (Paul doesn't have to argue for it up front in the letter), the supreme authority of Scripture (particularly the Old Covenant), and they also believed in the resurrection it seems. However, Paul still writes this controversial polemic because the message of the gospel, or good news of this risen Christ has been

'nullified' by adding something to it, namely ***man's obedience or cooperation with the grace of God.***

Calvin wrote in his commentary: The false apostles, who had deceived the Galatians to advance their own claims, pretended that they had received a commission from the apostles. Their method of infiltration was to get it believed that they represented the apostles and delivered a message for them. But they took away from Paul the name and authority of apostle....In attacking Paul they were attacking the truth of the gospel."- Calvin, *Galatians*.

d. Judaizers were persecuting Paul everywhere he went.

1. Themes in Galatians

- a. Legalistic Bondage and Gospel Freedom
- b. Law and Gospel
- c. Slaves and Sons

III. Paul's Apostolic Authority

a. ***Called by Christ, not by man.***

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:1** Paul, an apostle- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead-

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:12** For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:16** was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;

- In the Greek New Testament, immediately following *Paulos Apostolos* is *ouk* or *NOT* for emphasis ("not from man, nor through man...")

J. Gresham Machen said: "All definition is by way of exclusion. You cannot possibly say anything clearly what a thing is without contrasting it with what it is not." (*Notes*, pg. 6).

Paul says ***"Not by man" in order to make clear his apostolic authority to speak God's word to the people.***

- b. **Unique as an apostle that Jesus calls after His resurrection-ascension.**
 - i. ***“Not from men (source), neither through man...”***- Paul’s unique call was from Christ alone on the Road to Damascus.
 - a. **Apostles generally** (2 Cor. 8:23) could mean “emissaries” or “those who are sent” (“messengers”).
 - b. **Apostles specially** as an Office had seen the resurrected Jesus and Jesus had personally through divine initiative called them to serve.
 - c. **Apostleship is of divine origin and initiative**: Paul was called “through Jesus Christ and God the Father”.
 - d. A general “apostle-messenger” would be from men or through a man”. Paul in his special “Apostle-Messenger” office was ***from and through Jesus Christ and God the Father”!***
 - ii. NOTE: Interpreting the Life of Paul and His Apostleship
 - 1. Descriptive
 - 2. Prescriptive
 - 3. Dangers of not interpreting correctly and taking into consideration the *descriptive and prescriptive aspect of Paul’s life*: (1) Claiming a call like Paul from Christ alone and not from men, or through man; (2) Undermining the importance of the visible Church and ordination; (3) Thinking that one needs only to be taught by Christ, called by Christ, etc.

IV. **Paul’s Christ and His Gospel**

- a. Resurrected Savior (‘raised from the dead’).
 - i. Christ “gave himself” for our sins...”
 - ii. “...to deliver us from the present evil age...”

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:19-22:** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church...

1. Present Age
2. Age to Come

- **Two Ages:** “Present Age” from the fall of man to the Second Coming of Christ and the renewal of all things. “Age to Come” from the resurrection of Christ to the Second Coming and the renewal of all things (two ages overlap until the return of Jesus).
- **Already, Not Yet:** Important for this letter (as well as for understanding the rest of New Testament teaching!). Paul is saying that have already been delivered by Jesus, even though we await his return and restoration of all creation. We are already sons, not slaves; we have been freed from bondage to the sin and misery that characterizes this present age, but we not yet have fully and outwardly been set free in our glorified bodies (cf. Romans 8:19-25).

iii. “...according to God’s will”

b. “Grace and Peace”

- i. Grace
- ii. Peace

c. “To Whom be Glory Forever and Ever”