

“The Book of Grace”

January 12, 2025

Galatians 1:1-10

I. Background

It seems fitting that with the beginning of a new year that we begin studying a new book and since we just finished Jude’s letter regarding false teachers, it seemed appropriate that we look at the Book of Galatians—a book also dealing with false teachers. The Book of Galatians was one of the major influences in the heart and mind of a man by the name of Martin Luther. It was in Galatians not in Romans or Ephesians that he discovered God’s plan of salvation by grace working through faith—a doctrine contrary to the teaching of salvation by works which was prevalent in the 16th Century. Turn to the key verse of Galatians, [turn to Galatians 2:16.](#) (*Read verses 15 & 16.*) Galatians was also an important book for the Protestant Reformation. One commentator, Merrill Tenney, wrote that “*Galatians was the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation, because its teaching of salvation by grace alone became the dominant theme of the preaching of the reformers.*”

As we begin the “Book to the Galatians,” it might be good to look at some background. The opening verse, along with the rest of chapters 1 and 2, identify the author of Galatians as the Apostle Paul. On Paul’s 1st missionary journey—recorded in [Acts 13 and 14](#), Paul and Barnabas established 4 churches in the southern part of Asia Minor or Turkey; the churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They were all located in the province of Galatia. Even though they aren’t specifically identified, it would seem that this letter was written to them—“[To the churches in Galatia.](#)”

At the end of his 1st missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas left Galatia to return to Antioch, the church that had sent them out ([Acts 13:1-5](#)). Soon after they left Galatia, false teachers came and began teaching a different message. They taught that Gentiles must become Jews by circumcision before they could become Christians and that all Christians, Jewish and Gentile alike, must keep the Mosaic laws, regulations, and ceremonies. In their minds and from their teachings, Christianity was a part of Judaism. Because of these teachings, such false teachers were called the “Judaizers.” In addition to teaching the

necessity of being circumcised and of keeping the Mosaic laws, the Judaizers attacked Paul personally—if they could discredit Paul, then his doctrine would be faulty as well. For this reason, the first part of Galatians repeats Paul’s history and the reasons for his claim of being an apostle.

As we read the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Galatian Christians, you may have noticed something different from the rest of his letters—he didn’t open with his usual praise to God and prayer for the saints. The issue at hand was important, and he couldn’t waste any time. He was about to engage in a battle for the truth of the Gospel and the liberty of the Christian life. Paul wasn’t going to stand by and do nothing while the false teachers were spreading their mixture of Law and grace. So, after a brief salutation, he immediately stated the problem that brought about the letter in [verses 6 & 7](#): “**I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.”**

This morning, we’ll look at just the salutation of Galatians—The Book of Grace—as Paul began to do battle. In these first five verses Paul summarized his authority, his message, and his motive.

II. Salutation

A. Paul’s Authority One way to negate a particular message is to destroy the authority of the one who gave it. The churches in Galatia had heard Paul’s message—the gospel of grace—and had believed it until some persuasive false teachers came along after he had left. It would seem that these Judaizers had convinced some of the Galatian Christians that Paul was a self-appointed apostle with no commission from God. So, before he could counter the teachings of these false teachers, Paul had to remind the Christians that the authority he had was from the Lord. Skipping the usual personal greetings, in this short salutation, Paul began defending his authority. He began with his apostleship—his right to speak.

1. He was an Apostle. Paul called himself an apostle. The word *Apostle* means “*one who is sent with a commission.*” While He was on the earth, Jesus had many disciples and from them He selected 12 Apostles—[turn to Mark 3:13-15](#). Later, when Judas was being replaced, one of the requirements for an

Apostle was that he had witnessed the Resurrection—turn to [Acts 1:21-22](#). In the narrow sense, an Apostle was one who had been with Jesus and had seen His resurrection.

In a broader sense, the term *apostle* or sent one was also used of other men who were sent, men like Barnabas in [Acts 14:14](#) and Silas and Timothy in [1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6](#). In [2 Corinthians 8:23](#) such men were called messengers of the churches, but only the Twelve Apostles and Paul were called “**apostles of Jesus Christ**” ([Titus 1:1](#); [1 Peter 1:1](#)). Paul was neither a disciple nor an apostle during Jesus’ earthly ministry, but he had seen the risen Lord and had been commissioned by Him. Many of you may remember Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus recorded in [Acts 9:1-18](#). In [1 Corinthians 9:1](#) Paul wrote, “**Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?**”

2. He was chosen by God. Paul’s apostleship may have been different. But Paul was careful to point out here in the salutation and in the next 2 chapters of Galatians that he had been chosen and made an apostle by Jesus Christ just as much as the original Twelve. His apostleship was not from human selection and approval, but by divine appointment—“**sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.**” Because his authority was not man-given nor self-given but God-given, Paul had the authority to deal with the problems in the Galatian churches. Paul never missed the opportunity to mention the resurrection, without which the gospel is powerless. The God who appointed Paul as an Apostle, had raised His Son from the dead.

3. He established these churches. Finally, these same churches to which he was writing were also Paul’s basis for authority—he had established the churches in Galatia. He wasn’t writing to them as a stranger, but as the one who had brought them the message of life in the beginning. [Galatians 4:12-19](#) tells of his affection for them, but this affection wasn’t returned. Paul always had a loving concern for his converts and a deep desire to see the churches he had founded glorify Christ, e.g., [Acts 15:36](#) says, “**Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached**

the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.”” Paul was not content to lead men and women to Christ and then abandon them.

Paul had authority as an apostle, as one chosen by God, and, specifically, as the founder of the Galatian churches to which he was writing. After establishing the point that he had the authority to deal with the problems in the churches, Paul then turned to his message.

B. Paul’s message Following the short standard greeting—“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul clearly stated the message of the Gospel—Jesus Christ willingly sacrificed “Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.” Salvation isn’t earned by one’s efforts to eliminate the punishment of sin through works, i.e., doing something—in [Romans 3:20](#) Paul wrote, “No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” The only way to be saved—saved from an eternity of suffering, an eternity in hell—is by trusting in God’s promise to forgive sin through the work of Jesus Christ—[1 Peter 2:24](#) says, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” Paul wrote about this, too, [turn to 1 Corinthians 15:17-21](#). Paul summarized it this way in [Galatians 3:13](#), “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”

Jesus paid the penalty for sin so that if and when a person believes in Him, he will be rescued or delivered from “this present evil age.” The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians out of the liberty of grace into the bondage of Law. Bondage was not a part of the message of the Gospel, for Christ had died to set men *free*—in [John 8:36](#) Jesus said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Although believers are not removed from the earth until they die or are raptured, they are rescued from this “present evil age” the moment they receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They are still in the world, but they are no longer of it—in [John 17:15-16](#) Jesus prayed, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.” Paul reminded the Galatian Christians that the source of this rescue—their rescue—wasn’t

something that they had done or would do. The source of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ is “according to the will of our God and Father;” the sovereign, gracious will of God. [John 1:12-13](#) says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

Believers are saved by grace, God's grace, not by works.

C. Paul's Motive Paul closed his salutation with praise of his loving, saving God. This was Paul's motive for writing to the Galatian churches—to glorify his Lord; in [1 Corinthians 10:31](#) he wrote, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Paul wanted all believers to do everything “for the glory of God.” On the other hand, the false teachers were not ministering for the glory of Christ, but for their own glory—[Galatians 6:13](#) says, “They want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.” Paul closed his praise with “Amen.” It was more than saying , “The End,” Paul was saying, “With all my heart this is what I wish.”

Following this brief salutation, Paul immediately turned to the reason for his writing—his concern and surprise about the false teachers who were so easily undercutting the gospel of grace which he had preached when he was in Galatia. “I am astonished—I am amazed—that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.” We'll pick up here next week.

III. Conclusion

We may smile at the gullibility of these first Gentile Christians as they were so ready to accept works as part of their salvation, but we aren't any different. In our human nature, it is hard to accept that all a person has to do is to make Jesus his Lord and Savior and he will be saved. We want to “pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.” For some, it seems just too easy. So, we add things as ways of earning salvation—things like baptism, church attendance, getting involved in social justice, tithing. Some even add things like reading particular versions of the Bible or accepting only a particular stand on the Rapture. Paul wrote in [Galatians 2:16](#), “A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”

Good works—like these that were just listed—are important—not for salvation but as the results of salvation. The familiar verses of [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) which say, “**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so no one can boast,**” are followed by [verse 10](#): “**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**” Peter put it this way in [1 Peter 2:12](#), “**Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**” Just like the Galatians, we must guard our hearts and minds from false teachers—good works don’t lead to salvation, they are to be the results of salvation. As Peter wrote, they are to bring praise to God. [Galatians 5:6](#) says, “**The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**” As one hymn writer wrote, “*They will know we are Christians by our love.*”

So, on what do you base your salvation? To put it a different way, when it comes time for you to stand before God and He asks why you should be let into heaven, what will your answer be? According to God’s Word, there is only one correct answer, [Romans 10:9](#) says, “**If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**” On what do you base your salvation?