

The Introduction to Galatians

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AM Service

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Text:

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2: And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4: 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: 5: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 6: I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8: 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. 9: 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.

Introduction

“**No Other Gospel!**” that’s our theme this year. We begin this morning a series of sermons based on the letter of the apostle Paul to the Galatians. The book of Galatians is **one of the shorter epistles of Paul**. It is **only six short chapters** and the entire book can be read in one sitting which I suggest you all do as we begin our study on Galatians. It is a short book but do not be deceived by its size. The book of Galatians is one of the most important books of the Bible. In this book we find **a clear and powerful declaration and defense of the true gospel and its implications**. It is a very important and appropriate letter for us to be studying at this particular time where **the gospel is under attack, watered-down, tampered, and distorted**.

Being the pastor of this local church, **I am deeply concerned** that all the who worship at Grace & Truth be **firmly grounded** in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to know what the gospel is. **We need to know how God saves sinners**. We need to know for ourselves that we have been saved by this gospel. Then having been saved by this gospel we may be **able to declare and defend the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. As born-again Christians we must be faithful in the **propagation and preservation of the Biblical gospel**.

It has often been said that *“one generation knows and loves the gospel, the next generation assumes the gospel and the next generation forgets the gospel.”* Those who know and trust and love and treasure the gospel have a **serious responsibility to pass that gospel** to the next generation. Because the gospel can be so quickly be forgotten as we shall see in this study.

My prayer as we study the book of Galatians is that **we would all be passionate about the gospel of Jesus Christ**. May this study cause us to be deeply committed to the good news of Jesus Christ. Would to God that we would **fall in love with gospel** of Jesus Christ. Would to God that we would **commit ourselves to faithfully teach it** to the next generation. Would to God that we would own our great responsibility to **accurately convey the gospel** to the coming generation. We need to think long and hard of the legacy we would leave to the future generations.

Let's begin with these three headings — the **Occasion** for Galatians, the **Outline** of Galatians, and the **Overview** of Galatians

I - The Occasion for the Epistle

If we are going to understand Galatians, we have to **know the occasion for it**. It is important for us to understand **why Paul wrote this letter**. What was **Paul's purpose** for this letter? What is going on in this book?

[Acts chapters 13 and 14](#) tell us that Paul and Barnabas, his partner in ministry, came into Galatia, preaching the gospel in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra. And as they were faithfully preaching the gospel, souls responded to Christ and got saved and local churches were planted in these cities. Paul established these Christians in the gospel of grace.

So, at the end of [Acts 14](#) we read how Paul went back to his **home church Antioch** to give report to the church. Now while he was there at Antioch, Paul received the **disturbing report**. The very churches which he had planted in southern Galatia had been **infiltrated by false teachers** who began teaching a different gospel. **They were corrupting the gospel** of Jesus Christ. These false teachers who were troubling the Galatians were called **Judaizers**. Judaizers were Jews who claimed to be followers of Christ. They claimed to be born again **but taught that in order to really become genuine Christians**, the Gentiles **would have to be circumcised**, keep the ceremonial law, and obey the Old Testament rituals. The teaching of the Judaizers **contradicted the gospel** of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. **They insist that in order to be saved one must have Christ plus the keeping of the law**.

Today, after over 2000 years, people are still trying to mix Grace and the Law, and Faith and Works. And this is why I believe that the study of Galatian is so important and very applicable for the days we are living in. **The "Judaizers" are alive and active even in this very day**, tampering and corrupting the gospel.

These Judaizers are clever, because they not only attacked Paul's gospel, but **they also attacked Paul's authority**. They questioned the Paul's apostleship. They claimed that he was not one of the original Twelve. The goal of the Judaizers was to get the Galatians to deny Paul's authority, for **if they could discredit Paul's authority, they could discredit his message**. These Judaizers resorted to character assassination. They know that one way **to deny the message is to**

undermine the authority of the messenger. If you could discredit someone, you nullify what they say. Just look at the current political debates. Politicians resort in slander and character assassination. It's not about issues, it's all about character.

So, in this letter, **Paul defends his apostleship**, and the reason why that is important is because he delivered the content of the gospel. **Paul could not remain silent.** He could not allow the gospel to be corrupted and the churches to be weakened. And so, Paul sat down and wrote out a response, which call the book of Galatians.

II - The Outline of the Epistle

Now, quickly I want to give a simple outline of the Book of Galatians. In **chapters 1 and 2**, Paul gives a **personal vindication** (defense) of his apostleship. In **chapters 3 and 4**, Paul gives a **doctrinal explanation** about justification by faith. In **chapters 5 and 6**, he gives a **practical exhortation** to sanctification by grace through faith.

III - The Overview of the Epistle

In this letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul basically accomplished **three significant things** regarding the defense of the gospel, namely, he **exposes the false gospel**, then he **expounds the true gospel**, and then he **explains the relationship of the Law and the Gospel**.

1. Paul Exposes the False Gospel

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [distort] the gospel of Christ.

The Judaizers who came into and infiltrated the churches in Galatia started to convince the Christians that **in order to be saved, it is necessary for them to become Jews**. This means that in order to be right with God, they must be circumcised and obey the laws of Moses. These false teachers are not denying that a Christian must trust in the death of Christ in order to be saved but they also believed that faith in Jesus Christ is not enough. **They insist that circumcision is necessary** in order to complete their salvation.

In **Galatians 4:10**, Paul mentions that the false teachers were also instructing their converts to observe the feast days.

Galatians 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Warren Wiersbe commenting on this verse wrote, *“Does this mean that it is wrong for Christians to set aside one day a year to remember the birth of Christ? Or that a special observance of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, or the blessing of the harvest in autumn is a sin? Not necessarily. If we observe special days like slaves, hoping to gain some spiritual merit, then we are sinning. But if in the observance we express our liberty in Christ and let the Spirit enrich us with His grace, then the observance can be a spiritual blessing.”*

But if we observe special days and months and times and years in order **to gain spiritual merit we are putting ourselves under the law**. So, Paul could not remain silent. He exposes in this letter the false gospel that these false teachers are teaching.

2. Paul Expounds the True Gospel

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Here, Paul clearly articulates the gospel. He answers the all-important question that Bildad, one of Job's friends asked in Job 25:4 *How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*

In other words, **how can a man stand before God without sin**, completely right before Him? How can I stand before God **as if I have lived my life to never have done anything wrong and have done everything right?** The answer is obvious. You and I cannot do that.

Job 25:5 *Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. 6: How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?*

In chapters 3 and 4, Paul gives a doctrinal explanation about justification by grace through faith. Paul appeals to the fact that even Abraham was declared righteous because he believed.

Galatians 3:6 *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

Paul emphasizes that Abraham's faith in God's promise came long before the law and was in no way dependent on the law.

Galatians 3:17 *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18: For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

In other words, the Law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise was given to Abraham, the Law had no power to cancel it.

Salvation comes through faith alone. This is the gospel of Christ—salvation is by **grace alone**, through **faith alone** and in **Christ alone!** Any supposed gospel which contradicts this gospel is a false gospel.

3. Paul Explains the Relationship of the Law and the Gospel

An understanding of God's law and the gospel is essential to comprehending the entire Bible and coming to truly know God. **The Law is not the gospel, and the gospel is not the Law.** Paul makes that distinction in this letter to the churches in Galatia. This distinction between the Law and the gospel **if understood right, brings great peace and comfort to the believer.**

The German Reformer, Martin Luther wrote, *“Distinguishing between the law and the gospel is the highest art in Christendom, one who every person who values the name Christian ought to recognize, know, and possess. Where this is lacking, it is not possible to tell who is a Christian and who is a pagan or Jew. That much is at stake in this distinction.”* - Martin Luther, The Distinction between the Law and gospel,” January 1, 1532

For Luther, being able to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel was the essence of true Christianity. Studying the Scriptures for himself, Luther discovered Paul’s teaching on justification by faith.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Scripture teaches that we are not justified by the works of the law. So, the question is, **what is the right and proper use of the law of God?** We need to understand that the law plays a major and important role in two areas, namely the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of the saints.

This is the overview of the Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Here he **exposes** the false gospel, **expounds** the gospel, and then **explains** the proper relationship of the Law and the gospel. These are the things we are going to learn in the coming weeks.

Closing Thoughts

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [distort] the gospel of Christ.

Can you hear from these words, Paul’s great concern that the Galatians not depart from the true gospel?

We too should be concerned about the truth of the gospel. We should know it, defend it, and proclaim it. Without the truth of the gospel, there is no true Christianity. We should be passionate for the gospel.

Why is it important to understand the biblical gospel? Why is it of such personal concern that I embrace that gospel? Having embraced it why should I be involved in its propagation, in its preservation, in its defense? Apostle Paul’s words in [Galatians 1](#) are a very vigorous answer to all those inquiries.

AMEN!