

# #1 Galatians

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Paul's letter to the Galatians is unique; his other letters were addressed to Christians in specific cities: Corinth, Thessalonica, Rome, etc. or to specific people: Titus, Timothy, etc. This letter to the Galatians is written to all of the Churches within an entire region: the province of Galatia which is in today's central Turkey. The cities to which Paul was writing are those in which he had planted churches during his first missionary journey about which we read in Acts 13, 14: Churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

Paul, remember, was from Tarsus: *Saul of Tarsus*, a city in the province of Cilicia which is next to Galatia. Saul was headed up to Damascus, from Jerusalem, when he was 'accosted' by the Lord Jesus Christ, causing him to turn to Him in faith for Salvation. His name was then changed, by the Lord Jesus Christ, from Saul to Paul.

Paul knew who he was; he had been a pride filled, self-righteous murderer of Christians. He knew that when the Lord Jesus Christ called him to Himself, it was not because of anything good Paul had ever done; he knew, with all certainty, that God's election and call to him was all by God's Grace; he was *saved by Grace, through faith and that, not as the result of any good thing or any good work he had ever done*. That is the heart of the Gospel: God's Salvation is all His own work according to His Grace and Mercy toward those He had chosen for Himself before He ever laid the foundation of the World. We are only saved through faith by God's Grace: Sola Scriptura! Sola Gratia! Sola Fide! Solus Christus! Scripture: Given by God through which we receive Christ. Grace: Given by God through which we receive Christ. Faith: Given by God through which we receive Christ. All by faith alone through Christ alone... that is the very heart of the Gospel.

False teachers, Judaizers were subverting the truth of the Gospel which Paul had preached to the Galatians.

This was the heresy which Paul was writing to condemn and correct in this letter. False teachers were bringing in the lie that in order for Gentiles to be saved, they must first convert to Judaism, submitting to all its laws, works and ceremonies while the Judaism they preached was nothing like the true Law which was given to Moses and which was, in itself, impossible for anyone to keep. Remember, the point of the Law was never to offer an avenue of acceptance with God but rather, to show that the Righteousness of God is impossible for any human to achieve... but thankfully, it was **accomplished for us by God Himself** in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For centuries, the Rabbis had added layer upon layer of impossible strictures onto the *already* impossible to keep Law of Moses. These were the works of the Pharisees which Jesus condemned: 'Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. <sup>3</sup> Therefore what-ever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. <sup>4</sup> For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. <sup>5</sup> But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their **phylacteries** broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. <sup>6</sup> They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' <sup>8</sup> But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. <sup>9</sup> Do not call anyone on earth, father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. <sup>11</sup> But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' Matt 23

Phylacteries are a perfect example of Rabbinic Judaism run amuck as developed in the centuries before Jesus Christ came and especially in the centuries since.

Today, most Jews don't even try to keep the Law if, that is, they even know what the Law is. Regarding phylacteries: God's Word to Moses said, "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>19</sup> You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>20</sup> And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, *like the days of the heavens above the earth*. Deut 11:18

You may recall seeing pictures of Jews praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem or elsewhere; they put Scripture verses inside little boxes and then elaborately tie them to their foreheads and around their arms. Obviously, God's command to Moses was meant to be taken figuratively; it was to represent the fact that everything they did with their hands and everything they thought with their minds should be guided and influenced by the Word of God.

Centuries later, the Rabbis decided to interpret it literally, calling it a command of God. That is just one of hundreds of intricate rules developed through the centuries after the Temple was destroyed. The Rabbinic system developed because Jews were scattered around the known World with no Temple to go to regularly. With no Temple, there was no place for the Levites to do their 'work.' They began to meet in synagogues. It was this 'rabbis in synagogues' system that Jesus spoke against: 'Then the Lord said to him, "Now, you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?"<sup>41</sup> But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.<sup>42</sup> "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and cumin and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.<sup>43</sup> Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.<sup>44</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over *them* are not aware of *them*.'" Luke 11:39

This, then, is the thrust of Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia: false teachers, Judaizers, were teaching the Gentiles that they must first become Jews and then they could be accepted as Christians; Paul's forceful letter of condemnation is meant to dispel any such false claim. We'll see that he actually calls the Galatians, foolish and that he wishes the Judaizers would castrate themselves. Paul is not happy with the Galatians at all; they were so quickly embracing false teaching which was so clearly antithetical to the message of God's Grace which Paul had taught them.

Justification by faith: that is the heart of the Gospel and that is what is quickly denied in every false religious system since the very beginning; Abel was justified by his faith in God's Grace; Cain was angry because his best efforts, his good works, were rejected by God. Catholicism is the pinnacle of the false religious systems which grew out of true Christianity but which tear the heart out of the Gospel: Catholicism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventists and others, followed by countless lesser known religious systems, along with every false religious system throughout history but they all lead their people to the same place: into the bondage of the hope of righteousness through human effort while God rejects them all. Only when faith is founded in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His sinless life, death and resurrection is that faith acceptable to God.

Paul begins this letter like his others, with a small greeting, but quickly launches into his defense of truth and attack of falsity.

**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),<sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me,'

Paul immediately reminds his readers of his own God-given legitimacy as a *true Apostle*, a legitimacy which was being attacked by those opposing his teaching saying that he was not a 'real' Apostle since he was not one of 'The Twelve.' Paul's office of Apostleship comes directly from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and not from any other Apostle, or anyone else, as we will see later in this letter.

The true Gospel is further delegitimized today as hundreds, if not thousands, of so called 'apostles' have sprung up throughout this country and around the World. Years ago they began calling themselves 'bishops' to differentiate themselves from the regular, run of the mill, lowly pastors over whom they advertised themselves to be far wiser and far more spiritual and therefore far more deserving of far higher salaries... if you look closely, it's always about the money: the more churches and pastors you claim to oversee, the more of their hard earned tithe dollars can be filtered back to you as '*tithe of the tithe*'... always follow the money. Now, in today's high stakes hustle and bustle world of international religious stardom, 'bishop' just isn't a big enough office anymore. Now they've promoted themselves to be 'apostles,' the NRA, the New Apostolic

Reformation: men and women alike: apostles for the new century with the ultimate effect being that they simply cheapen everything about Christianity or, at least, the imitation brand of 'churchianity' they foist on their many followers.

**Verse 3:** 'Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.'

Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from our own present ever-increasingly evil age while today's Church's glaring impotence calls virtually no one to repentance and faith in Him. In fact, so much of the Church today simply adds to the evil of our culture because so much of the Church has become the Last Days Church of Laodicea, so sickening to Jesus Christ that He said He would vomit it out of His mouth.

**Verse 6:** 'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.'

Usually Paul had good things to say to the various recipients of his letters, not so to the Galatians; here, he immediately begins his chastening.

**Verse 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.'

Paul and the other Apostles were chosen and trained by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to teach the doctrines of the Faith and to lay the foundation of the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, planned and executed exactly what He wanted written and preserved as His Word for the Church for the next 2000 years; nothing false was to be tolerated. Even if an angel were to bring a word contrary to the Truth, or simply adding or supplementing the Truth, it was to be rejected, completely. It was an angel which brought a different gospel to Joseph Smith as the false foundation of Mormonism. False teachers of today routinely receive 'words from the lord;' false prophets fill many churches today announcing their 'words from the lord.'

Paul says if anyone, even an angel, were bringing another gospel, let him be accursed, let him be anathema. According to the concordance and Bible dictionary, anathema is defined as: '*a person or thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, without hope of being 'bought back,' an animal to be slain, a person or thing doomed to destruction.* A lamb, and ox or dove which had been devoted to God, meant that it was doomed to be killed on the altar and then destroyed in the flames. We think of 'being devoted' means being 'a follower' or 'being dedicated to' but the Biblical definition is not something you want to be: '*doomed to death and destruction without hope of being redeemed.*' The Bible teaches that God created some people to be redeemed as His own people and others, devoted to destruction.'

It's a difficult concept for us but it's what God's Word clearly teaches: 'For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" <sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? <sup>22</sup> *What* if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the **vessels of wrath prepared for destruction**, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the **vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory**, <sup>24</sup> even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?' Rom 9:17

Also, He says, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." Isa 55:8

Even if we might not be able to bring ourselves to embrace the Biblical Truth that God actually created some for destruction and Hell, the fact remains that for some people, for most people, God specifically chose to not

step into their paths, reveal Himself to them, beyond His revelation of Himself in Creation, and then draw them to Himself, to be saved, in the same way that He did for each of us whom He had chosen before the foundation of the World.

God does not make men sinful but He does choose to leave them in the sin they have chosen for themselves. The Word clearly declares that He actually hardens the hearts of some while softening, enlightening and drawing others, whom He had chosen before the foundation of the World, to Himself.

Some people were created by God, anathema, devoted for destruction. These false teachers who were bringing a false gospel to the Galatians were part of those who were created for destruction as are every false teacher and false prophet of today. They were devoted to destruction because of their damning heresy.

**Verse 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.'

When Paul was a Pharisee, he, like every other Pharisee, sought the approval and praise of men, especially other Pharisees but after he was called and set apart by God for His own use and purposes, Paul chose to please God, never changing or softening the truth of his Gospel and so, incurring the wrath and persecution of men. False teachers choose to please men, tailoring their message to tickle and massage itching ears and will incur the wrath of Almighty God as they stand before Him when it will mean absolutely nothing to Him how many goats had filled their Sunday pews or how many, as false apostles, churches they oversaw or how many tuned in to their TV broadcasts. False teachers and false prophets today, by the boatload, are all, unless granted repentance by God, devoted to destruction.

Paul writes to Timothy, '...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, *if God perhaps will grant them repentance*, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.' 2 Tim 2:25

**Verse 11:** 'But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

Now Paul is referencing that to which he alluded in 2 Cor 12: 'It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— <sup>4</sup> how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. <sup>5</sup> Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. <sup>6</sup> For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.'

After Paul was abruptly knocked off his donkey while on his way to Damascus to persecute and kill Christians, he was taken up into Heaven, he says that he does not know whether it was just his soul within his spiritual body or if his physical body was also taken up, where he was taught, personally, by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. Everything Paul writes in his letters, every previously hidden 'mystery of God' was revealed and taught to him there. He absolutely understood all of the Old Testament Scriptures but Jesus Christ taught him how they all, entirely point to Himself. Nothing that he writes in his letters was taught to him by other Apostles; he learned everything from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

False teachers of today, some calling themselves '*Red-letter Christians*,' denigrate the writings of Paul, saying that the Words of Jesus, in red ink, are more important than Paul's words. Paul's words are the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. These false teachers ignore the truth that while on Earth, Jesus Christ was teaching and speaking as an Old Testament/Covenant teacher to Israelite Old Testament/Covenant listeners. Paul was entrusted with the Doctrine and teaching for the New Testament/Covenant mostly Gentile Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Church is removed, at the Rapture, it will become, once again, Old Testament times as God completes His dealing with Israel during the final, 70th week of Daniel's great prophecy in chapter nine.