

Galatians 1 Continued

Paul's introduction within his first chapter works to draw his audience's attention to the gift-giving God we serve. But Paul has more to say; he has filled Galatians 1 to the brim with wisdom applicable even today. As we continue forward we can notice two more major themes found within Galatians 1.

Part Two: A Counterfeit Gospel (Galatians 1:6-10)

As the Apostle Paul transitions from his introduction, he begins to defend the true gospel against the Judaizers. The Galatians claim to be Christians but are teaching a false gospel of salvation by adding bits of the Old Testament law to the gospel of Christ. As these Judaizers take an eclectic approach to the gospel, Paul says they are only perverting the good news of Christ. It is interesting to note that Paul has no praise or thanksgiving for the Galatians. He hits them with hard truth right from the beginning. Why? He wants them to know this is no mere philosophical discussion or theological debate; rather, it is an issue where peoples' souls are at stake.

Paul's rebuttal to the churches in Galatia offers his audience three lasting lessons still being discussed in today's world.

Lesson One: The Faithful Can Fall (Galatians 1:6)

Paul's first lesson immediately refutes the notion of "once saved, always saved." We can see the weakness in such an idea when we notice Paul's description of the Gentile converts as children of God and heirs to eternal promises while still calling them to faithfulness or else they will fall from grace.

- What do we know about the Christians in Galatia?
 - Galatians 3:26, 4:7

 - Galatians 4:31

Throughout the letter to the Galatians, Paul continually reminds them of their inheritance in Christ and of the blessings offered to them because of their conversion. Yet, Paul also repeatedly

highlights the need for their faithfulness. Paul's astonishment in Galatians 1:6 stems from their "turning away" or more literally "deserting." The word "deserting" means "to transfer one's allegiance" and is used by soldiers who revolt or desert: that is, men who change sides in war, politics, or philosophy.

- Read Galatians 5:2-4.
 - What does Paul say will be the outcome of returning to the Old Law? (v. 4)

- Having read Galatians 1:6 and Galatians 5:2-4, who is to blame for falling from grace?
 - How does this teaching align with Ezekiel 18:20?

Paul speaks of a grim future for those who desert the gospel of Christ; these are the ones who have fallen from grace, meaning they have fallen from God's loving-kindness and favor. This fall occurs not because Satan has snatched us, but rather it is the result of our decisions to depart from the faithful teachings of God.

Lesson Two: The New Testament Stands Alone (Galatians 1:6-7)

Paul's most important purpose is to remind the churches of the one true gospel. Now, the value of the gospel and, by extension, the New Testament is made clear throughout God's word. What we must do is understand what the Judaizers are doing to the churches in Galatia. They are not teaching a different holy book; in their eyes, they were proclaiming "*Sola Scriptura*," that is, God's word only. Their problem comes from trying to mesh the Old Testament and the New Testament together. That's what makes this teaching so relevant to us today; we sometimes hear people do this very thing as they uphold Old Testament commands such as the Sabbath. Paul's blunt response to this teaching is to call it a perversion of the gospel.

If Paul's condemnation is for binding both Old and New, it becomes essential to distinguish the two and understand why we bind only the New Covenant.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5



List the three major points of the gospel: _____ _____ _____

The gospel of Christ is the proclamation of the good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It is upon this good news the Old Law has been taken away.

- Read the following verses and describe what has happened to the Old Law.

- Hebrews 7:18-19
- Hebrews 8:6-9
- Hebrews 8:13



- Is the Old Testament still important?
 - Romans 14:15
 - Does important mean binding?

Lesson Three: We Must Seek After God's Approval (Galatians 1:10)

Why would the Christians of Galatia refrain from perverting the one true gospel? The answer is that the New Testament stands alone and they had a desire to please God. The Apostle Paul illustrates this point with two questions in Galatians 1:10, asking: "For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men?" Both of these questions can be taken to have the same meaning.

Regarding Paul's use of "persuade," many translate it to mean "winning the approval of" or "seeking the favor of." In either case, Paul's question is one that is equally relevant today. Paul would not compromise the truth of the gospel just to please men.

- Read Galatians 5:11. What was Paul's outcome for not altering the gospel message?

- Read Acts 5:27-29.

- What were the apostles commanded not to do? _____

- What did the apostles do? _____

The apostles' example sets the bar for us today. Would we be able to fill more pews with a social gospel? YES! But Paul calls the gospel the "gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7); thus, it is not ours to alter or change. Instead, we are to be like salt (Matthew 5:13), which acts as a preservative for meat before refrigeration. In the same way, we are called to preserve the truths of the gospel without compromise! Paul's final lesson here is to illuminate the fact that once we compromise the truths of God's word, we are no longer servants of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

Part Three: Paul the Apostle – Galatians 1:1, 11-24

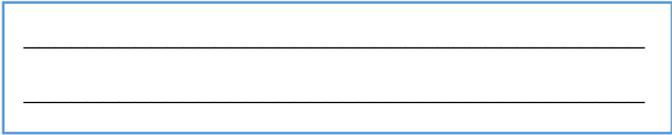
As mentioned in the introduction, this letter is autobiographical. Only 2 Corinthians gives more autobiographical information about the Apostle Paul. It is here in Galatians 1 where Paul outlines his qualifications as an apostle, defending his God-given authority to all those who would question his position. As we learn from the autobiographical section of chapter one, we should first remember that an apostle is someone sent out to be a messenger. Understanding this point, we have three final lessons we can learn from Paul's apostleship.

Lesson One: Paul was an Apostle of Christ (Galatians 1:1, 11-12)

Paul was an apostle who preached wherever he was sent. How do we know his apostolic authority came from heaven?

- Who does Paul say sent him out?

- Galatians 1:1
- Acts 26:15-18
- 2 Corinthians 1:1



- As God's messenger, what did he preach?

- Galatians 1:11-12 _____

- 2 Peter 1:21 _____

- To whom was Paul explicitly sent?

- Galatians 1:16
- Galatians 2:7-8
- Acts 22:19-21

Paul instantly calls to mind the authority that sent him out: God. To call into question Paul's writings was to call into question the message of God. Now, Paul commends a person who asks in the spirit of discerning the truth (see Bereans in Acts 17); however, the Judaizers question Paul with insincere hearts, seeking to return to the Old Law. It is this questioning mentality that Paul condemns.

Lesson Two: Paul's Past Did Not Disqualify Him – Galatians 1:11-14

If anyone could have a past that would disqualify him from service for God, we might say it was Paul/Saul.

- Read the following verses and describe Paul's previous life.

- Galatians 1:13
- Acts 22:1-5, 19-20
- Acts 26:10

- Read the following verse and tell how Paul felt while doing these things.

- Acts 23:1

It can be easily known, thanks to Paul's confessions, that his previous life was one filled with actions set on destroying the church, even to the point of striking fear in the hearts of those who were sent to preach to him (see Ananias in Acts 9:13-14). Yet, this rocky past did not disqualify Paul from being a worker for the Lord. As Paul proved his faithfulness to God, his conversion proved to be an excellent encouragement for Christians everywhere.

- Read Galatians 1:23-24. What was the people's response to Paul?

Lesson Three: Paul was a Hand-Picked Apostle (Galatians 1:15-16)

Few can say God hand-picked them for a specific job. Only Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John (cousin of Jesus) obtained this privilege (Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:15). The Holy Spirit guides Paul to include himself in this short list. Despite Paul's divine appointment, God did not predestine him to live without the difficulties of the flesh.

- Read the following verses and describe Paul's spiritual walk.

- 1 Corinthians 9:27

- Philippians 3:12-13



While Paul was picked for a work, he still struggled to live faithfully. If God's choosing of Paul for this work meant he was also saved, why would Paul be worried about being disqualified? Why would he feel the need to press on so that he could "lay hold" of the heavenly promises? The truth is Paul's call to work was just that—a call to a position. He still had to live faithfully, lest he be disqualified in the end.

In Conclusion

Paul's letter to the Galatians is filled with his addressing problems we still face today. The understanding of how Paul addresses these problems is essential in our own lives as we go about fighting similar battles. In coming studies, we will see that Paul also fills this letter with great encouragement in order to strengthen the faith of each Christian's spiritual walk.