Introduction to Galatians and Chapter One

Introduction
The Apostle Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia is one of his most unique. Unlike the other letters, which begin with thanksgiving and move to encouragement, Galatians begins with outraged astonishment and moves on to admonition. Paul is intimately concerned with the spiritual well-being of these Christians as he helped start the churches in Galatia. This letter is recorded during Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas. During this trip, Paul and Barnabas work from Antioch to the Island of Cyprus (Acts 13:1-13) before moving north through what is now Turkey. During this time, Paul and Barnabas preach in numerous cities, four of which are in the region of Galatia: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:13-14:25).

While Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia is filled with the Good News of Christ, forgiveness, and justification, we should not miss the worry and anguish that is expressed by the apostle. He highlights this worry in Galatians 4:8-20. After writing to defend the gospel, call the Christians to action, and remind them of their inheritance in Christ, Paul asks, "Have I, therefore, become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16) This question stems from Paul's "fear" that his work will have been for nothing (4:11) and from his "doubts" about whether they will remain faithful as a result of the Judaizing teachers (4:19-20).

As Paul writes to the churches in Galatia, he addresses three interrelated issues, the first of which is The Singular Nature of the New Testament. Bennie Cryer writes in his commentary on Galatians, "Paul was the first to preach the gospel to the Galatians. Judaizers, however, had crept into the church and had brought false doctrine about justification to these people." Judaizers were those who taught it is necessary to adopt Jewish customs and practices, especially those found in the Law of Moses, to be saved. It is crucial for Paul to address these issues quickly since his
primary audience is Gentile (Galatians 4:8; 5:2; 6:12). Before these young Christians get drawn into observing the Old Law, Paul will use chapters 1-4 to deal with the concept that all we need for salvation can be found in the New Testament. Each of these chapters will either explicitly talk about not returning to the Old Law (Ch. 2-4) or, as chapter one does, imply this truth as Paul affirms there is no other gospel than what is being given to them (v.6-9). The second issue Paul deals with is *His Authority as an Apostle*. It would seem the false teachers are determined to discredit Paul as an apostle of Christ. Because of this situation, Paul goes into the most the most depth regarding his apostleship more than he does in his other writings except 2 Corinthians. The final issue Paul addresses is *Christian living*. As with his other letters, Paul takes the last section of Galatians to spell out for his hearers how the faithful life of a New Testament Christian is distinguished from life under the Old Law.

As a closure to this brief introduction, we want to highlight some unique characteristics about this letter, some of which have been referenced already. First, the message is autobiographical. Only 2 Corinthians gives more autobiographical information about Paul. This information seems to be the result of his seeing the need to defend his apostleship. Second, this letter is the only one Paul wrote that addresses a group of churches as opposed to a single church or an individual. Third, this letter reflects a severity of tone coupled with moments of tenderness. Fourth, Paul appeals to multiple literary features in an attempt to convince his audience; these features include the use of personal experience, Old Testament exegesis, logic, warning, rebuke, rhetorical questions, allegory, and exhortation.

**Questions**
Q. Who wrote the letter to the churches in Galatia?

Q. What was Paul's attitude in writing this letter?

Q. What three issues does Paul deal with during this letter?

**Chapter One: A Three-Part Breakdown**
Having now a cursory understanding of the entire book of Galatians, we are ready to begin working through each chapter. We will now explore three significant points from Galatians 1 to understand the chapter as a whole.
Part One: The Gifts of God (Galatians 1:1-5)
Paul's salutation immediately reminds us that God is a gift-giving God, a much-needed reminder as we are often bogged down with work, worry, and weariness. These verses introduce his audience to four gifts God has offered to the world and has given to those within His Church.

Gift One: A Risen Lord (Galatians 1:1)
The first gift from God is the glorious resurrection of Christ. It is this gift that makes every sacrifice, every moment of our lives worthwhile.

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<th>Verse:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 15:16-22</td>
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Gift Two: Grace (Galatians 1:3a)
Grace is an essential part of God's character, closely related to His benevolence, love, and mercy. Thayer defines grace as "…loving-kindness, favor." God's loving-kindness has been instrumental in our salvation.

- What is the reason for the gift of salvation, according to Ephesians 2:8?
- What is necessary to receive God's grace (loving-kindness), according to James 4:6?
- What does God's loving-kindness (grace) afford us, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:16?

God's grace is the reason for His sending Christ down to this earth to die and to be resurrected. Through humble submission to God, we can take advantage of this loving-kindness and have eternal comfort.
Gift Three: Peace (Galatians 1:3b)
Peace is that which everyone wants but so few seem to find. Thankfully, God has made the path to peace obvious; yet far too often, we get in our own way. As Christians, we are called to "…let the peace of God rule in [our] hearts…” (Colossians 3:15). This verse means we have the choice either to trust God's promises (letting His peace rule) or to rely on ourselves (rejecting the peace He offers).

- Two Types of Peace
  - Read Romans 5:1
    - What does it mean to be at peace "with" God?
    - How do we accomplish this peace?
  - Read Philippians 4:7
    - What does it mean to have the "peace of God"?
    - How do we get this peace (Philippians 4:6-7)?

God has blessed His people with peace. First, we can have peace “with” God, meaning we are no longer in opposition to Him and also meaning that through Christ, we can have the forgiveness of our sins. Second, we can have the peace “of” God, meaning we can rest assured that He will take care of us and that we have a home with Him in heaven.

Gift Four: Deliverance (Galatians 1:4)
Before Paul goes into his rebuke, he reminds Christians of their great exodus from sin to spirituality. It is this sacrifice about which Paul has written in Romans 12, where he says our total dedication to God is only our "reasonable service." It has always been God's plan for all of humankind to be saved. His plan for those who submit to Him is to deliver them from sin. When Paul says "deliver," he means “to rescue or deliver,” according to Thayer. God is seeking "to rescue or deliver" us.

- Read Colossians 1:13-14
From what has God delivered (rescued) us?

How do we have redemption from the power of darkness?

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-10
  - What are the blessings of being called out of darkness and into the light?

- Read John 3:16-17
  - What was Christ's purpose in coming to this world?

God seeks to deliver this world from sin. Christ's purpose in coming to this world was to rescue it from death and destruction brought on by sin. This hope—deliverance through Christ—comforts Christians in their daily walk. Paul's reminder to the churches in Galatia is a call to remember their Savior and what He has already done for them as they stand in the presence of those who wish to pollute the true gospel.

To Be 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. For this reason, we will continue our three-part break down of chapter one next week, looking at Part Two: A Counterfeit Gospel and Part Three: Paul’s Apostleship.