

Galatians 1

Introduction

1. Galatia was a geographical and racial district in what is now central Turkey. See map below.
2. Paul and Silas preached throughout Galatia on Paul's second trip out of Antioch (Acts 16:6).
3. He returned to Galatia on a third trip from Antioch to strengthen the disciples there (Acts 18:23).
4. We are told that Paul had taught the churches of Galatia about Sunday giving (I Corinthians 16:1).
5. Toward the end of Paul's life in Rome, a minister named Crescens went to Galatia (II Timothy 4:10).
6. Peter also addressed an epistle to the Jews scattered throughout the churches of Galatia (I Peter 1:1).
7. False teachers, likely of Judea, added circumcision and Moses' law to grace and Christ (Acts 15:1).
8. They did this in superstition for Moses law and the political expediency of avoiding persecution.
9. False teachers, likely of Judea, had despised Paul's apostolic authority to boost their own credibility.
10. They did this by reducing him to merely a pupil of the apostles and a chameleon in salvation doctrine.
11. Peter may have been presumed to be his superior for Peter's Jewish preeminence and Jewish conduct.
12. He will use two chapters to defend himself, two to defend his doctrine, and two for various duties.
13. The language may appear Arminian at times, but it is due to setting faith up against Jewish legalism.
14. Paul had never met an Arminian, so the Spirit and he do not take pains to avoid difficult terminology.
15. He will use "faith" in several senses – Christ's faith, our faith, Christ himself, and Christ's religion.

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

- A. From his first words, Paul began establishing his authority as a great apostle of Jesus Christ.
 1. Ministers cannot allow themselves to be despised (Rom 11:13; I Tim 4:12; Titus 2:15).
 2. Apostle was the greatest office in the New Testament – eyewitness of Christ (Acts 5:13).
 3. He was not *of men* by virtue that he was not part of any body of men, especially the 12.
 4. He was not *by man* by virtue that he was not sent by any body of men, especially the 12.
 5. His apostleship was by the direct choice and intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 6. His apostleship was by the direct choice and intervention of God the Father of Christ.
- B. Paul was like one born out of due time, in that his ordination followed Christ's resurrection.
 1. The twelve had been ordained during Jesus Christ's humiliation (Mark 3:14; I Cor 15:5).
 2. But Paul was special for a special mission, ordained by the glorified Christ (I Cor 15:8)!
- C. The glory of the gospel is the true God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and He resurrected!

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

- A. Paul usually had ministerial associates and helpers with him, who also cared for the saints.
- B. Galatia was a region like the state of South Carolina with many cities and several churches.

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

- A. Here is Paul's common salutation and greeting, which would stand us all in good stead.
- B. Though he is about to unload on them, he treats them as elect brethren with needed blessings.

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:*

- A. The Lord Jesus Christ gave His life a sacrifice for our sins – He obeyed the Father’s will.
- B. His death paid for our sins legally, but made vital, practical, and final deliverance possible.
- C. Blessed be God! The originating Source of these blessings was in the eternal will of God!

5 *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

- A. Glory and honor is due to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ forever (Rev 5:13; 7:10).
- B. Paul’s mind from the first words is on the task at hand, but he still glories in God his Saviour!

6 *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

- A. Showing holy restraint, Paul used *marvel* rather than anger, frustration, jealousy, or wrath.
- B. Showing holy restraint, Paul used *removed*, a passive rather than an active verb like rejected.
- C. The *him* they had left was the God of all grace, not Paul among the plural preachers (1:1-2,8).
- D. The thought is severe; Paul could hardly believe they had departed from God and His truth.
- E. This is a lesson in two directions – we must hold fast, and even a great apostle lost converts.
- F. It is a fact of life, even from these Pauline churches, that sheep can be unstable doctrinally.
- G. Consider Paul’s fearful jealousy for Corinth and their vulnerable condition (II Cor 11:1-4).
- H. It is our duty to hear well, hold fast what we hear, defend what we hear, and never move.

7 *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

- A. There is only one faith, and it does not allow for acceptable variations (Eph 4:5; Jude 1:3).
- B. The idea we can agree to disagree on apostolic doctrine – like Arminianism, sacramentalism, infant baptism, eternal generation, or other heresies – is false (Rom 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11).
- C. Here is reference to false teachers who perverted grace (2:4; 3:1; 4:17; 5:10,12; 6:12-13,17).

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.*

- A. This is as strong of language as Paul by the Spirit ever used for false doctrine and teachers.
- B. Here is the fire and hammer of God’s word so unlike the scribes (Jer 23:28-29; Mat 7:28-29).
- C. It is not the only case, for he gave a strong anathema against them at Corinth (I Cor 16:22).
- D. There can be no variation from apostolic doctrine, no matter the reputation of the preacher!
- E. And like all faithful ministers, he warned his hearers even against his own possible heresies.
- F. Let those who think they can cuddle with false teachers but reject false doctrine read this!
- G. All such false teachers are to be marked as heretics and avoided as enemies, and if necessary, turned out of the church and over to Satan for destruction from Christ (I Cor 5:5; I Tim 1:20).
- H. Here is similar language to what Israel used in public worship about sinners (Deut 27:11-26).

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.*

- A. In case the fainthearted, compromising, or politically correct missed the point, he repeated it.
- B. Regardless of personal connection, esteem, reputation, or pedigree of a man, demand truth!

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

- A. Since God cannot be persuaded, as instructed, nor did Paul ever attempt it, there is an ellipsis.
 - 1. As is the case with ellipses, they are understood by the immediate context or other places.
 - 2. For example, Pr 22:1 has a verb in the first clause that is understood in the second clause.
 - 3. For example, Pr 18:22 can only be understood of a godly wife (Pr 12:4; 19:14; 30:21-23).
 - 4. The second clause of this verse shows his scope and thrust to limit our sense of the first.
- B. Consider, Do I now persuade men, or God, *for the approval of my doctrine and practice?*
- C. It is not sinful to *persuade God* to accept you. Other holy men did (Neh 5:19; 13:31; Is 38:3).
- D. And Paul stated this ambition in other places, though in other words (II Cor 5:9; Phil 3:8-12).
- E. Paul used *now* to describe his present effort to recover them from the false teaching of others, and this was also in contrast to his past religion in seeking the approval of the Jews by *yet*.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

- A. Paul gives his personal guarantee of the origin and source of the gospel that he preached, and then he entered into the history of his conversion and instruction by the Lord Christ Himself.
- B. Our doctrine and practice as Pauline New Testament saints is totally void of human thought!

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- A. God communicated the pure gospel to Saul directly through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- B. His private revelation and instruction likely occurred in Arabia, as we shall see (Ga 1:15-17).
- C. See his directions for the Lord's Supper, though he was not at the first one (I Cor 11:23-25)!

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

- A. So far from being a student of the apostles and their doctrine, I was a fanatical enemy!
- B. I was not one of their pupils or students, because I was dead set against their Christianity!

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

- A. The commitment to Jewish tradition on Paul's resume precludes a long educational process.
- B. Paul in other places lists his Jewish pedigree and accomplishments to convince Jewish gainsayers (Acts 22:3-5; 26:4-5,9-11; II Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:1-8).

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

- A. God was pleased to reveal His Son to Paul for ministry, which He did on the Damascus road.
- B. Since parenthetical elements, or nonrestrictive phrases, are not necessary to a sentence, verses 15 and 16 may be read for clear understanding without the last two phrases of 15.
 - 1. The time element of *when* applies to the revealing of Jesus Christ to Paul for preaching.
 - 2. The decision element of *pleased* applies to God's providence in timing the revelation.

3. The other two phrases are nonrestrictive phrases or parenthetical elements that are not necessary to the sentence. They provide further facts concerning God's choice of Paul.
- C. There is nothing in this verse about salvation, especially about the timing of regeneration.
 1. Some impulsive teachers have tried to teach that Paul was born again when he was born!
 2. But the two parenthetical elements or nonrestrictive clauses have no grammatical or logical connection, especially not any that requires a cause and effect relationship.
 3. If the Spirit wants to use similar language for salvation, He will state it (II Tim 1:9-10).
- D. The separation and call of this verse are God's providential plan for Paul to be an apostle.
 1. The context demands that the scope and intent is Paul's apostleship (1:1,11-12,16-17).
 2. The issue at stake is Paul's conversion out of Judaism to preach to the heathen (1:13-16).
 3. The terminology of the parenthetical elements in 15 does not indicate any other subject.
 4. The introduction of childbirth would mean and prove nothing, since the other apostles and even the false teachers and all men have been physically born by God's providence!
 5. Nowhere in Holy Scripture is *separate* or *separated* used for childbirth. Nowhere at all!
 6. The introduction of salvation, especially regeneration, would have no value whatsoever, for the salvation of the apostles or even the false teachers is not the topic being argued.
 7. By comparing scripture (I Cor 2:13), we find a ministerial application (Is 49:1,5; Jer 1:5).
 8. By comparing scripture (I Cor 2:13), we find a perfect explanation about Paul (Rom 1:1).
 9. By comparing scripture (I Cor 2:13), we find other cross-references (Act 13:2; I Cor 1:1).
 10. God *separated*, meaning He appointed or ordained or sanctified, Paul to be an apostle of Jesus Christ from the very beginning of his life (Jer 1:5).
 11. God *called*, meaning He appointed or ordained, Paul to be an apostle (I Corinthians 7:20; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11; Hebrews 5:1,4).
 12. Any effort to see anything else in this text is willful ignorance or rebellion against truth.

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

- A. Clearly, the first revelation of Jesus Christ as a blinding light was on the road to Damascus.
- B. Jesus certainly appeared to Paul, but He appeared again as well (Acts 9:17; 22:14-15; 26:16).
- C. However, Saul needed much more than that, and he went to Arabia to obtain what he needed.

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

- A. Luke does not tell of a trip to Arabia in Acts, for he leaves him in Damascus (Acts 9:19-25).
- B. It is possible that it was in the dark and pagan outreaches of Arabia where Jesus taught Paul!
 1. After all, it is God's revelation of Jesus Christ that is clearly in the context (Gal 1:11-17).
 2. Luke records in the sacred history that he was strengthened during this time (Acts 9:22).
 3. Most of the three years of verse 18 were likely spent in Arabia, explaining why those at Jerusalem knew so little of him when he came from Damascus. Contrast Acts 9:13-14.
- C. Luke shows him preaching at the beginning and end of the three years (Acts 9:20,22-26).
- D. The intent and object of the line of reasoning here is that he did not get his gospel from men.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

- A. Paul went to Jerusalem from Damascus and was rejected by the church until Barnabas came.
- B. Unconvinced he had been converted, they accepted him by Barnabas's word (Acts 9:26-28).
- C. His stay here was very short, because the Grecians immediately went about to kill him.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

- A. There are three apostles named *James* by comparing this verse to Acts 1:13-14 and I Cor 9:5.
- B. There is no necessity to modify *brother* here, except to defend Mary's perpetual virginity.
- C. There are explanations of stepbrothers, cousins, and even sisters with the very same name.
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ had brothers and sisters (Psalm 69:8; Matthew 12:46-50; 13:53-58).
- E. His brothers, likely in some order of age, were James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Mark 6:3).
- F. Some or all of the brothers were later converted (John 7:1-10; Acts 1:14; I Corinthians 9:5).
- G. We find James in an important role here, and Jude the brother of James later (Jude 1:1).

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

- A. The importance of this controversy for the salvation of these saints required a Pauline oath.
- B. Here is an oath, contrary to the ignorant superstition of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mennonites.
- C. Observe that a godly oath is only for very important matters and only in the name of God.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

- A. When the Jews tried to kill Paul in Jerusalem, the brethren took him to Tarsus via Caesarea.
- B. This Tarsus was a border city of the two regions, where he went from Jerusalem (Acts 9:30).
- C. Barnabas took him from Tarsus to Antioch, which became his home church (Acts 11:25-26).

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

- A. Paul did not visit the churches of God in Judea: there was no personal relationship with them.
- B. He took pains to verify with a timeline and details that he did not get his gospel from others.
- C. How do we reconcile this verse with Acts 26:20? Either (1) the *coasts* refer to border nations, (2) the time period was the three years in context, or (3) various definitions of Judea are used.

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

- A. Paul did not have a ministry like the apostles that began in Jerusalem and proceeded to Judea.
- B. Though the churches of Judea had not seen him, they knew his incredible conversion story.
- C. Paul also described the verbal spread of the conversion of the Thessalonians (I Thess 1:6-10).
- D. Here *the faith* is put for the object of faith, the gospel or religion of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:5).
- E. Paul is very thorough in denying any personal connection or authority for him from Judea.

24 And they glorified God in me.

- A. The many converted Jews in Judea glorified God for changing their former enemy so much!
- B. Let us glorify God for the wonderful work of grace He did in our apostle. Thank you, Lord!
- C. Let us examine ourselves to see if there is any change in us to cause others to glorify God!

On the map below, find the following locations from Acts 9 and Galatians 1

Jerusalem	Antioch	Galatia
Cilicia	Syria	Tarsus
Caesarea	Bithynia	Asia

