

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 24TH-25TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

THE AUTHOR: THE APOSTLE PAUL

- Jewish-born in modern-day Turkey.
- Also a Roman citizen.
- A highly-educated religious leader and Pharisee who persecuted Christians until his dramatic conversion around 35 A.D.
- Ministered mostly to Gentiles (non-Jews).
- Executed by Nero in 68 A.D. in Rome.

THE SETTING OF GALATIANS

- This letter was written around 49 A.D. to the churches in Galatia, a region, not a city, in modern-day Turkey.
- Galatians were mostly Celts who had migrated because of conflicts with the Romans in their homeland.
- At this time, Galatia was a Roman province.

PURPOSE OF THIS LETTER

Most likely, Paul helped start these churches during his missionary trips. Over time, false teachers undermined "Paul's gospel."

- The false teachers taught that one is saved through the Mosaic Law of Moses. This contradicted **salvation by grace through faith** (Ephesians 2:8-10).

CREDENTIALS (GALATIANS INTRO AND 1:1-5)

A "REBUKE LETTER"

Most of Paul's letters began with an opening, thanksgiving, a body of ethical content, and a closing. This letter is built as a rebuke because people had failed to follow instructions and were foolishly changing their minds.

- **This kind of rebuke is only possible when there is a strong relationship established.**

DIVINE CREDENTIALS

An **apostle** was one who had direct contact with, and a commission from, Jesus. Paul immediately cites his direct calling because people were questioning him.

- **Spiritual titles need to be given and received with trepidation. Fruit will ultimately decide if one is worthy of their title.**

"GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD"

Grace and peace essentially summarize the message of salvation Paul brings. When one gives their life to Jesus and is saved by grace, peace is a natural byproduct.

- If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, **followers saved by His grace should be at peace with God, others, and themselves.**

DON'T WORRY, IT IS A PROCESS

Jesus "gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age." **It is Jesus' desire to not only save the lost, but to shape us over time to be more and more like Him.**

- **Sanctification is the evidence of salvation. If one is truly saved, there will be evidence of walking in the will and ways of God.**

DISTORTED (GALATIANS 1:6-10)

FRUSTRATED

Paul was angry that the churches he helped plant and mature were quickly turning from a relational view of Jesus to a religious/legalistic view of Christianity.

- The Bible defines how Christians are to live. False teachers add their "moral laws" as amendments to salvation. This is legalism.

EASY BELIEF-ISM?

Paul was being accused of belief without any kind of standard for living. This wasn't true.

- **Legalism says we're saved by our works. The gospel teaches that we're saved by grace through faith (simply surrender), then we produce works as an evidence of salvation** (Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2).

TO BE FAIR, EASY BELIEF-ISM IS OFTEN TAUGHT

Many modern "Christians" mistakenly believe that simply knowing Who Jesus is saves them. If this were true, every demon and Satan himself would be saved (James 2:19).

- **We're saved by grace through faith, but the response is us taking up our cross and following Jesus** (Matthew 16).

"...NOT THAT THERE IS ANOTHER GOSPEL"

The "good news" is **God loves us so much He graciously gave His Son as a sacrifice for our salvation and restoration.** Any message that claims we can earn that is not of God.

- Believing salvation is up to us isn't "good news." Ironically, this is what every ideology in the world teaches except Christianity.

WHO ARE WE STRIVING TO PLEASE?

Legalism creeps in when minors or personal preferences become majors and people, churches, or denominations teach requirements of Christians that aren't biblical.

- **It is a question of who we are trying to please. Christians are to search the scripture, pray, and respond to conviction.**

THE SOURCE (GALATIANS 1:11-24) SOMETIMES IT TAKES SOME DIGGING

Christian Jews called Judaizers believed that when Jesus said, "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law" (Matthew 5:17-18) that He meant Christians had to observe OT law.

- To be fair, one can see how this could have been misconstrued, but this is why Paul received a "revelation of Jesus Christ."

WHAT WAS THE LAW OF MOSES?

Judaizers said Paul was wrong for omitting the Law of Moses, but Paul taught what Jesus did, that He fulfilled "the Law and the Prophets."

- Mosaic Law has 3 parts: **ceremonial, social, and moral** (10 C's). Jesus ended the need for ceremonial and social law and fulfilled the prophecies, **but the moral law is eternal.**

HOW ARE WE TO TRUST PAUL'S WORDS?

Paul's teaching is validated by Jesus' words, OT prophecies, other apostolic letters, and fruit (practicality). Essentially, **all spiritual teaching should be held up to the Bible, and if true, it will produce long-term fruit.**

- **The Bible must be our anchor for our beliefs and spiritual decisions.**

SPEAKING OF EVIDENCE AND FRUIT

Not only were Paul's teachings supported by Jesus, his life was a testimony of God's grace and power to change people.

- Paul was a zealous, legalistic Pharisee who persecuted Christians, but he became a prime example of Jesus' love and truth sent out to "preach Him among the Gentiles."

CONSULTING WITH JESUS, THEN THE CHURCH

Paul didn't immediately go to Jerusalem but prayed and studied for three years. Then, he met and learned from the other apostles. Ironically, the disciples learned from Jesus for three years.

- **Jesus and His Word are the first source of direction, but we need the church for community and further maturation.**

"AND THEY GLORIFIED GOD BECAUSE OF ME"

False teachers were saying salvation came from laws, customs, and works. Paul taught salvation is a gift received through faith.

- Like Paul, **we're to be testimonies** of God's salvation, love, truth, and ability to change. **How we live is evidence of true faith and the method of attracting people to Jesus.**

SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

- The Bible is clear; we are saved by God's grace when we put our faith in Jesus. **There is nothing we can do to earn salvation except surrender to Jesus.**
- Many will distort this simple truth by either teaching works-based salvation or easy belief-ism. Neither is biblically supported.

CAUTION TOWARDS ANYTHING EXTRABIBLICAL

- The best way to avoid falling to false teaching, apathetic belief-ism, or legalism is to go to the Bible and prayer. **The Spirit of God will never contradict His Word.**
- We must focus on the majors of scripture and minor on non-essentials and personal preferences.

GRACE IS FREE, BUT NOT CHEAP

- Salvation is a free gift, but it cost God His Son. If we believe this to be true, **our lives will reflect the receiving of God's grace.**
- Though salvation is free, **the Christian life is sacrificial** and leads us on a road which includes suffering that identifies us with Jesus (Philippians 3:10-11).

EVIDENCE OF SALVATION BY GRACE

- Salvation is evident in a **true love for God, repentance, prayer, loving other people, humility, spiritual maturation, a growing distance from the ideology of the world, the decreasing of sin in our lives, and an increasing obedience to the Bible.**
- **These works don't save us, but they're evidence and natural byproducts of salvation.**
- So, some questions arise. **Are we showing evidence of saving faith?** If not, **are we confident with the state of our soul?** Lastly, **if we're not testimonies of Jesus' grace, how do we expect others to glorify Him?**