

Date: Wednesday April 14, 2021 **Scripture:** Galatians 1

Who are the Galatians? [See the Resources page for additional information and a map.](#)

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Galatians chapter 1. In 1994 there was a document titled Evangelicals and Catholics together, The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium, some of you might remember that document that was signed. It was led by Chuck Colson on the Evangelical side, and Richard Neuhaus on the Catholic side. Men such as Chuck Colson, J.I. Packer, Pat Robertson and Bill Bright signed the document agreeing that Evangelicals and Catholics should be united.

The document did confess that there were differences between Evangelicals and Catholics. In fact, it says this: "On these questions, and other questions implied by them, Evangelicals hold that the Catholic Church has gone beyond Scripture, adding teaching and practices that detract from or compromise the gospel of God's saving grace in Christ. Catholics, in turn, hold that such teaching and practices are grounded in scripture and belong to the fullness of God's revelation. Their rejection, Catholics say, results in a truncated and reduced understanding of the Christian reality."

And so, although they admit that the Catholic Church has gone beyond Scripture, adding teachings and practices that detract from, or compromise the gospel of God's saving grace in Christ, these men still signed this document to be in unity with the Catholics.

However, there were four men who didn't sign this document. Four men who stood up for the truth. Four evangelical men who didn't sign the document. They refused to sign it. These four men were RC Sproul, John Ankerberg, John MacArthur and James Kennedy. They wouldn't sign it. Why? Why do they refuse to sign it? Because they are not willing to unify with a church who preaches a false gospel.

What is the false gospel that the Roman Catholic Church teaches?

- The Roman Catholic Church denies salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. They deny it. In fact, this comes directly from the Roman Catholic Church's Catechism. It says this in paragraph 1213. It says this: "*Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as Sons of God.*" Through baptism....that's a "work".
- They go on... paragraph 1257 says "*the church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the new covenant are necessary for salvation.*" The sacraments of the new covenant are necessary for salvation.
- Then it goes on... paragraph 1477 says this: "*in the Treasury too, are the prayers and the good works of all the Saints. All those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by His grace have made their lives holy, and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In*

this way, they attained their own salvation, and at the same time, cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the mystical body.” It's directly from...you can go and read it yourself, directly from the Roman Catholic Church's Catechism. A false gospel.

Notice what they teach -- they teach that salvation is not by faith alone, in Christ alone, but they teach that it is by faith plus works. Faith plus works. And as we're going to find out in our text here tonight, anyone -- and Paul doesn't care who it is -- but anyone who teaches another gospel, other than the true gospel, is to be what? Accursed, accursed.

But before we get into Galatians 1, we need a little bit of a background here...a little background to help us understand the context of Galatians, and what's going on. As you study this week, in your worksheet, we're introduced to the churches in Galatia in Acts chapter 13 and 14, on Paul's first missionary journey, taking Barnabas along with him, he went to the region of Galatia. Now, notice Galatia is not a city. It's not a city, but it's a region. It's a region in central Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. If you were to look at a map today, modern-day Turkey, that's central region there, that's Galatia, and it consisted of many different cities. And down on the southern region of Galatia, in that center piece there, and you would see Galatia, you have a map there on your worksheet as well.

You see that there are four cities in that Southern region of Galatia: Antioch, which is also known as Pisidian-Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derby. Those are the four cities there. Those four cities make up Galatia, and who Paul is writing this letter to.

Paul went on his first missionary journey and he goes through Galatia. He goes and preaches the gospel. And what was the response? Acts chapter 13 and verse 48.

“When the Gentiles” (in Antioch) “heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48)

But what was the response of the Jews? They didn't like it. They didn't like Paul going and preaching the gospel. A gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. They didn't like that. And so they drove Paul and Barnabas out of town. So, what do Paul and Barnabas do? They just move on. Off they go -- and they go to Iconium. And what's the response there? Acts chapter 14:1

14:1 “In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.” (Acts 14:1)

But the next verse tells us that the Jews went after the Gentiles, to get them to turn on Paul and Barnabas, and the people wanted to stone them. They wanted them stoned. So what did Paul and Barnabas do? They leave. Off they go... “We'll just go to the next town,” right? They go to the next city.

What is that? They go to Lystra. Go and preach the gospel there. But the Jews followed them to Lystra, and they got the crowds to turn on Paul, and they actually stoned him, there in Lystra. Paul gets stoned. Almost to death.

Acts Chapter 14:19:

“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” (Acts 14:19)

But the disciples come out. They pick Paul back up. Off we go, go into the next city, right? We're not giving up. Paul is not giving up, he's just gonna go and preach the gospel and that's what he does. And the next day Paul and Barnabas head off to Derby, and they preached the gospel and they made many disciples there. And then they do something that I don't think any of us would be brave enough to do. They head back into the cities that they were just stoned at, and were just kicked out of, and they go back there to preach the gospel again, to strengthen the churches, and to establish elders in the churches that are founded there in the region of Galatia.

But shortly after Paul leaves those churches in Galatia, there was a sect of Judaism-- these guys were called Judaizers. Judaizers who began to infiltrate the church and teach a false gospel. According to these Judaizers, salvation was by faith in Christ **AND** a strict adherence to the Mosaic law. Notice that? Faith **AND**. Anytime you hear faith **AND**, that's a false gospel...run from them. They're preaching a false gospel. That's exactly what the Judaizers are preaching. Faith in Christ **and** works...'You must hold to the Mosaic law.' Sound familiar?

That's the Roman Catholic Church. Faith **AND**. It's a false gospel. And as they begin to teach this to the churches there in Galatia, the believers began to be confused. And many began believing this false gospel that these Judaizers are preaching. And Paul is not happy about it. Paul is not happy, as we'll see as we get into the book of Galatians. Now think about Paul. Think about Paul at this time. Paul has just gone on this missionary journey. He's gone all throughout Galatia, he goes and preaches the gospel, he establishes churches, and then he leaves. He leaves. And then these Judaizers come in, they begin teaching their false gospel of faith **and** works. And how can these Judaizers easily discredit Paul's gospel that he was just there preaching?

Think about this. Remember, Paul is not around. So what do they do? How can you get to Paul? What do they attack? His credentials. That's what they're after. They attack the credentials of Paul. If we can attack his credentials, and get them to question who Paul is, we'll tear him down, and they'll listen to us. That's what they were after. They wanted to get them to question who Paul is. And they get them then to question his message too.

Which is exactly what they do, and Paul addresses that in his letter here to the Galatians. In fact, Paul defends himself right from the beginning of this letter. Paul is giving a defense of himself of who he is, and so let's pick up in Galatians chapter 1 and we're going to break this down into three sections here.

1. Paul's defensive intro
2. Paul's distressing reply, and then
3. Paul's detailed credentials

Let's start...point number one.

1. Paul's defensive introduction

Galatians chapter 1:1:

"Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)" (Gal 1:1)

Now notice Paul's introduction here. He tells them that he's an apostle, but then he qualifies it with a defensive parenthetical phrase. And in some of your Bibles, it's got parentheses around there. It's this parenthetical phrase, that Paul gives here to this church at Galatia...the churches in Galatia.

If you were to look into the introduction of Ephesians. The introduction of Ephesians. Paul says this:

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (Ephesians 1:1) then he goes on...

In Philippians he says

“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,” (Philippians 1:1) and then he goes on.

In Colossians he says

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God” (Colossians 1:1) and then he goes on.

And he could have easily said here to these Galatians, “Paul, an apostle by the will of God,” and then just said “to the churches in Galatia...”

But notice he doesn't do that. He doesn't do that, why? Because he knows what's going on in the churches of Galatia, he understands. And he knows what's going on there. He knows that not only is the message that he went and preached there under attack, but he is also under attack. The way that they're going to tear down his message is they're going to get to him. He is under attack, and these Judaizers were infiltrating the churches and telling the Galatians that Paul is not a true apostle. “He's not a true apostle, so don't listen to him.” So he starts off this letter...we'll get into other parts of the letter... where he's defending his apostolic ministry.

One commentator says, “The first verse of this letter has a defensive tone, unlike the openings in all the other Pauline letters.” There's a defensive tone there. Paul begins defending his position and his authority as an apostle, but he does it not to build himself up...that's not the purpose of Paul defending himself... he's not trying to build himself up. But he does it because he cares about the truth of the gospel. That's what he's after. It's all for the gospel's sake.

He's not out to make a defense for himself per se, but he's out to defend the true message of the gospel. And if he can get them to see that he is a true apostle, sent from Christ (not like the false teachers who were around in that day), then he will be able to convince them that the message that he preaches is from Christ --and not from himself, and not from any other man. It's directly from Christ.

So he defends himself because his whole aim is to defend the gospel. That's what he cares about. The truth, not about himself. He cares about the truth of God's Word. And so he tells them:

“not sent from men, nor through the agency of man.” (Galatians 1:1)

What Paul is saying here is, I'm not some self-proclaimed apostle. He didn't go online and pay in \$19.99 for an apostle certificate, right? Didn't do that. Not a self-proclaimed apostle. He's called directly by God.

In fact, he says he wasn't even sent from the other apostles in Jerusalem. It's not as if Paul was in Jerusalem, and the apostles selected Paul from amongst the crowd, and gave him the gospel message, and then told him you need to go and share it with other people. No, they didn't do that. That's not

what happened. Paul was called and sent directly by Christ Himself. And he says: *“he was sent”* through or some translations, say

“by Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead.” (Galatians 1:1)

Paul says I was sent directly from Christ and from the Father who raised Christ from the dead. Want to know what my authority is? It's God Himself. You want to know who sent me? God Himself sent me to go and to preach this message. His was a divine appointment with a divine mission from God. And therefore, those reading this letter -- they needed to listen up. These Galatian churches need to listen up. They need to pay attention to his gospel message versus the false gospel that the Judaizers were preaching.

Notice in verse 2, Paul tells them of other believers who had listened to his gospel and believed. He says

“all and all the brethren who are with me.” (Galatians 1:2)

Paul is saying, I didn't just come through Galatia and preach this gospel simply to you guys alone, but I preached it to other people, and there are other people that believed, and there are other believers that are around that are preaching this true gospel, and they have believed it. You guys aren't the only ones. There are other believers around.

And then he gives them a familiar greeting

“Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:3).

Notice the order here grace, and then what? Peace. Grace and peace. Why does Paul give this order here? Because you can't have peace with God unless you first receive His what? Grace. You can't have peace with God unless you first receive His grace. And then Paul breaks out into the gospel. And he tells of the death of Christ in order to save us from this evil age, which the Galatians were succumbing to, by believing in a works-righteous salvation.

A works-righteous salvation is a part of this evil age. It's a lie straight from Satan, as it's a damning heresy that sends people to hell. You believe that gospel-- you will go to hell. It's a damning gospel. It is a false gospel. But Christ came to rescue us from that false gospel. He came to rescue us from our sins. And he came to rescue us through the true message of the gospel, specifically through faith in Christ alone. It is through Christ alone, faith in Him alone.

Now, why does Paul give the gospel here? Because they need to hear it, right from the beginning. Right from the beginning of his letter, it's so important to him -- they need to hear about the grace of God displayed in Christ as He went to a cross to die for sinners. They need to hear that, and they need to hear it, and they need to believe that message, not the message that the Judaizers are giving to them. The message that he came and preached to them. The true gospel. And this amazing gospel of grace was all according to, what? Notice what he says there...

“to the will of our God and Father.” (Gal 1:4)

Again, it wasn't something that Paul made up. Paul didn't just come up with this message on his own, it was the will of God. And it came from God Himself. And then Paul breaks out into a doxology of praise, just thinking about how amazing the gospel is. He can't hold it back. He's got to give praise to God for how amazing this gospel is. He says:

“to whom be the glory forever, Amen.” (Gal 1:5)

And then he moves right into the content of his letter in verse 6, which leads to our second point, point #2.

2. Paul's distressing reply

Paul's distressing reply. Notice how Paul begins in verse 6. He says,

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;” (Gal 1:6)

Now if you look at Paul's other letters. This is usually the part in the letter where he gives thanks to God for them and for all that God is doing in their lives. You read all of his other letters, and that's what he does there. ...“I'm so thankful for you and I give... pray... I give thanks and praise to God for all that God is doing in your life.” Does he do that with the Galatians? He doesn't. He's not thankful. Because what have they done? They're turning to a false gospel. He's amazed. He's distressed, and he's bewildered that they are so quickly turning away from the true gospel.

This word amazed in the Greek, is a strong word, and it means astounded or bewildered. Paul can't believe it. Paul is shocked at their departure from the gospel that he came and preached to them. Their only hope is in the grace of God. And yet now they're welcoming the Judaizers who are telling them that they need to do more in order to be saved. You must do more... faith in Christ alone is not enough. You need to do more.

That's what the Judaizers are teaching them. Specifically, that they need to be circumcised. They need to obey the Mosaic law. Notice these Judaizers, though, are preaching a different gospel. Which Paul then qualifies. In verse, 7 he says

which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Gal 1:7)

Now why would Paul say here that this false gospel is not another gospel? Because what is the gospel? What is the word gospel mean? Good news. Is this good news? It's not...It's damning news. If you believe this you're going to go to hell. It's not good news. There is not another gospel. There is not a different message of good news.

There is only one message of good news, and it's *faith in Christ alone*. That's it. That's how one is saved. That other gospel, he says there is no other gospel at all. There is no other gospel. There is no other good news, and the same is true of the Catholic Church today. The gospel that it preaches is no gospel at all. It is not a gospel of good news. Not at all. If you were to believe what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, or the social gospel, or any other false religion, all of these other false gospels that are out there...if you were to believe any of them, you would be damned to hell. Those are damning messages.

Now, why pick on the Roman Catholic Church? Because if you see what the Judaizers are teaching here, it's similar to what the Roman Catholic Church is teaching today. Faith plus works, and that's exactly what Paul is arguing against here. Paul is saying that if anyone preaches another gospel, whether himself or an angel from heaven. Which Paul is using hyperbole here, but he's saying if they did, or a gospel, contrary to what we have preached to you. What is the result of that person? He is to be, what?

Accursed. Accursed. The Greek word there is *anathema*. (Gal 1:8) *Anathema*, meaning *condemned to hell*. You preach another gospel – condemned --to hell. Their end destruction. Their final destruction is damnation in Hell, forever. And Paul is so serious about this that he actually says it again in verse 9.

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Gal 1:9)

But this time he broadens it to anyone who preaches a false gospel. He's not using himself or angels anymore. He's not using hyperbole anymore. He broadens it to any person who preaches a gospel contrary to what the Scripture says, their end is destruction.

This isn't the first time that they've heard this message from Paul. Notice what he says there.

"As we have said before..." (Gal 1:9)

'Look, I've told you this guys. I've told you this already. The last time I was with you, I told you not to believe any other gospel.' Then Paul gives his motivation in verse 10.

10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? (Gal 1:10)

Obviously, Paul is not seeking the favor of men here, right? By saying this. By condemning all of these people to hell. Is Paul seeking favor with man? No. There's a lot of people, millions of people. Millions and billions of people that are damned to hell because they don't believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul says that here. Is he trying to please men? If he was trying to please men, he wouldn't be preaching that gospel, right?

What's his motivation? To please God. I will please God in everything that I do. This message that he preaches here doesn't find favor with men. But it's OK. Paul doesn't care, because his motivation is to please God. Let's move on to point #3

3. Paul's detailed credentials

We'll run through this really quickly here. Paul begins this section by telling them that the gospel he preaches is not from men. Again he didn't get this from the apostles in Jerusalem and then go out and preach it for them. How did he get it? Look at verse 12

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:12)

Paul here is giving his credentials, on or as an apostle. What is an apostle? What does the apostle mean? A sent out one, one who is sent out -- and specifically with the twelve -- and with Paul, they're sent out by Christ. That's why we don't have apostles around anymore. No one is being sent out by Christ, it's not happening. But that's what Paul is. He's an apostle. And he was sent out by Christ. And when did this happen? When did the sending happen? On the road to Damascus. Remember that? When he met Christ on the road to Damascus, he received direct revelation from Christ and was sent out with this gospel message to go and preach. And then Paul gives his former life credentials in verses 13 through 14 to contrast it with his credentials now as an apostle.

And he tells them that he used to be a Jew who was advancing in Judaism. He was one of those accursed ones, whose destination was hell. That's what he's saying there. 'I was one of them. Until

Christ saved me. And it all changed. A new destination. No longer headed to hell.' Now Paul no longer relates to Judaism. Because he knows that adherence to the Mosaic law does not save anyone.

Your good works can not save you. Faith plus works will not save a single person. What were the Judaizers teaching? Faith and adherence to the law, adherence to the Mosaic Law.

Paul is saying here, 'I used to be like them. I know what it's like, but I have now been saved.' And how did this salvation come about? Look at verse 15.

15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, (Gal 1:15)

God set Paul apart from his mother's womb. Doctrine of election. Remember, we talked about this Sunday morning and equipping hour. There it is. Set him apart from his mother's womb and called him through what? Grace. Through His grace. And God revealed Christ to him on the road to Damascus. Why? So that he would go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

But then getting back to his credentials, Paul goes on and he says

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; (Gal 1:16-17)

Now the Judaizers are questioning Paul credentials saying they weren't legit, that he's not a true apostle, but Paul is saying, 'I know that it was Christ who called me. I didn't even go to Jerusalem to consult with the other apostles.' And yet, as we're going to see next week in Galatians Chapter 2, Paul talks about a time where he goes and meets with the apostles in secret to give them the gospel that he's been preaching. And you know what happens? They agree. It's the same gospel that the apostles have been preaching. Why? Because Christ was the one who sent him? Because he's a true apostle.

Paul knows that he's been called by God, 1 Corinthians 15:8:

"and last of all is to one untimely born. He appeared to me also."

He wasn't around with the other apostles, therefore he didn't get the message from them. He was given the true gospel by Christ, alone, and that is why these Galatians should listen to him.

But then, three years after his conversion, Paul went to Jerusalem, and who did he meet with there? Peter. He meets with Peter in verse 18, and he *"stayed with him for 15 days"* (Gal 1:18), and he didn't see any of the other apostles except for James. (Gal 1:19) Any of the other apostles, except for James (that's James the Lord's half-brother.) Now the Judaizers were clearly disputing the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship, and so look what he says in verse 20.

20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) (Gal 1:20)

Paul appeals to God and then tells them that he's telling the truth. We used to do that in courtrooms. I was watching the trial a couple days ago, and now they just have you raise your right hand, but they used to have you raise your right hand and put your hand on a what? A Bible. Why? To appeal to God -- to say 'before God I am telling the truth.' That's what Paul is doing here. He's saying before God, God knows that I am telling the truth.

Paul then gives his travel plans...his itinerary... to continue to defend his credentials as a true apostle who was independent from the apostles in Jerusalem. Look what he says in verse 21.

"21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;" (Gal 1:21-22)

When he went to Syria and Cilicia, those back in Judea, which would include Jerusalem as well, still didn't know about him. They didn't see him. Remember, he only went to Jerusalem for 15 days and he didn't see any of the apostles except for Peter and James. He was also unknown to the churches there in the region of Judea, and that they didn't see him physically, but look at what it says in verse 23,

23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." (Gal 1:23)

Something has happened to this guy. They hear about Paul. They didn't see him, but they heard about him. And what did the churches do when they heard about him? Verse 24.

24 "And they were glorifying God because of me." (Gal 1:24)

Because they saw Paul's heart changed, and they're glorifying God.

In closing, what is the message?

Why does the message of the gospel offend people? Why does the true message of the gospel...by grace through faith in Christ alone... why does that offend people? You want to know why? Because we're prideful. Because we're prideful people and we want to play a part in our salvation so that we get some kind of glory for it. It's a pride of man.

Man wants a part in his salvation so that he can glory in himself. But the true gospel says no, there is no boasting in yourself. You can only boast in Christ alone (*Eph 2:8-9*). He is the only one that we boast about. And even when the free gift of salvation is offered, just to receive it, we still want to play some part in our salvation. And it's a free gift and all you have to do is receive it. But there must be something I've got to do, right? Nope. Just receive. Put your faith in Christ. That's all.

But any gospel that preaches that there is something you can do, or need to do, in order to earn salvation is a false gospel. It's a damning gospel that sends people to hell. But we can't be afraid to preach the true gospel to others, right? We can't be afraid to preach this. Those who are out there that are believing a different gospel, they will be judged before God and condemned to hell. You realize that?

Those that are believing a different gospel, a false gospel, who even named the name of Jesus. They will stand before Him one day "and say Lord, Lord" and He will say "I never knew you." (*Matt 7:21-23*)

Because they believed a damning gospel. A false gospel. Paul says they are to be accursed, but what is our job? Our job is to go and to call them to repentance and faith in Christ alone, so that they can be rescued from eternal damnation, right? That's our job. That's what we're to do. Go and give them the true gospel message. That's our task and that's our mission. And that's what we must go out and do for others.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for our time in this amazing chapter in Galatians chapter 1. Lord, it is so clear there are so many false gospels that are out there and we know that that is the tactic of the

enemy. That Satan wants people to follow in all of these other ways, in all of these other false religions that are out there, that even will name the name of Jesus, because he's an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), and he seeks to destroy (1 Pet 5:8). He's a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He's a liar. And he comes to deceive people with his lies. Father I pray that no one here would ever be led astray, but that we would be fixed upon the true gospel, and that we would go out and proclaim it for your glory. And I pray that You would give us boldness that we might speak this truth with boldness and in love to others that we know in our lives, that are believing a false gospel. That we would lovingly confront them, knowing and realizing that what they are believing is leading them not to heaven but to hell. I pray that You would give us the boldness and the words to speak, and we would tell them of this good news, salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone period. That's it. Help us to go and proclaim this gospel for Your glory alone, not for our own glory, but for Your glory. We pray in Christ name. Amen.