

Studies in Galatians

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Galatians

Chapter 1

An Apostle by Jesus Christ | Galatians 1:1, 2

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:1, 2).

The first two chapters of the book of Galatians are an explanation and defense of Paul’s apostleship and of the gospel that he preached. This first verse is a defense of his apostleship. This is the cause of the words in parenthesis, saying that he was an apostle, “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead.”

Another translation is, “Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor by the instrumentality of any man, but by Jesus Christ and God our Father who raised him from the dead.”

Another is, “Paul, an apostle, not by man, nor through a man, but appointed by Jesus Christ and his Raiser from the dead, God the Father.”

The Revised Version is, “Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).”

This defense shows that his true apostleship was denied, and that he was opposed and denounced as being only an apostle of men, appointed and sent only by a man or by men.

Nor was this opposition sown only among the churches of Galatia. It was sown everywhere, especially in the churches that Paul had raised up. There were “false, skulking brethren,” who made it their business and their message, even to follow up Paul, and sow these seeds of distrust and of evil as the council at Jerusalem described it, “digging up from the foundations” the souls of those who believed his preaching.

These evil seeds were sown at Corinth. After Paul’s departure from there, these false brethren had told the brethren that he was not an apostle; and cited as proof that he had not seen Jesus; that he was only a tent-maker, who went about working for a living; and even that he was not an apostle because he had no wife!

In his letter to the Corinthians he makes answer thus (we use Conybeare and Howson’s translation, as this, *with* our common version, makes the matter plain): “Is it denied that I am an apostle? Is it denied that I am free from man’s authority? Is it denied that I have seen Jesus our Lord? Is it denied that you are the fruits of my labor in the Lord? If to others I am no apostle, yet at least I am such to you; for you are yourselves the seal that stamps the reality of my apostleship, in the Lord; this is my answer to those who question my authority. Do they deny my right to be maintained [by my converts]? Do they deny my right to carry a believing wife with me on my journeys, like the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or do they think that I and Barnabas alone have no right to be maintained, except by the labor of our own hands? . . . If I have sown for you the seed of spiritual gifts, would it be much if I were to reap some harvest from your carnal gifts? If others share this right over you, how much more should I? Yet *I have not used my right, but forgo every claim,*

lest I should by any means hinder the course of Christ's Glad-tidings . . . The Lord commanded those who publish the Glad-tidings, to be maintained thereby. *But I have not exercised any of these rights*, nor do I write this that it may be practiced in my own case. For I had rather die than suffer any man to make void my boasting" (1 Cor. 9:1-15).

They also circulated the slanderous report that Paul had held and taught the pernicious doctrine of, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8).

These are only *some* of the "perils among false brethren," which Paul cites with the many other perils among which he so constantly moved that his Christian life has been not inaptly termed a "long martyrdom." And it was false brethren such as these who, as at other places, had crept in among the churches of Galatia, and were perverting the gospel, which they had received, dragging them from liberty to bondage, from the Spirit to the flesh, from justification by faith to justification by works, and on "digging up from the foundation" their very souls' salvation.

Of Paul it has also been truly said: "It was throughout life, Paul's unhappy fate to kindle the most virulent animosities; because, though conciliatory and courteous by temperament, he yet carried into his arguments that intensity and forthrightness which awaken dormant opposition. A languid controversialist will always meet with a languid tolerance. But any controversialist, whose honest belief in his doctrines makes him terribly in earnest, may count on a life embittered by the anger of those on whom he has forced the disagreeable task of reconsidering their own assumptions. No one likes to be suddenly awakened. The Jews were indignant with one who disturbed the deep slumber of decided opinions. Their accredited teachers did not like to be deposed from the papacy of infallible ignorance . . . If arguments are such as cannot be refuted, and yet if those who hear them will not yield to them, they inevitably excite a bitter rage."

Thus it was, not only with the Jews who did not believe, but also with those "Pharisees, which believed,"—those Jews who, not knowing true faith, thought to bind Christianity in the hard bands of their ceremonialism. And thus it is ever with those who insist that all new wine must be put into old bottles. But Christianity demands always that the old bottles shall be made altogether new, that they may receive and hold the new wine.

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He Gave Himself for Us | Galatians 1:3-5

“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 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: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1:3-5).

“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such is the salutation in every epistle by Paul except that to the Hebrews; and, slightly varied, in both by Peter.

Yet it is not by any means a mere form. These epistles have come to us by the word of God, which they are in truth. This salutation, then, though often repeated, —yea, even because often repeated; —comes to us as the word of God in greeting and full assurance of his favor and peace everlastingly held forth to every soul.

Grace is favor. The word of God, then, extends his favor to every soul who ever reads it, or who hears it.

His very name is Gracious—extending grace. His name is only what he *is*. And he is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” With him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Therefore he always extends grace, boundless favor, to every soul. Oh, that all would only believe it!

“And peace.” He is the “God of peace.” There is no true peace, but that of God. And “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:21). “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa. 57:20).

But all the world lies in wickedness, yet the God of peace speaks peace to every soul. For Christ, the Prince of peace, “our peace,” has made both God and man one, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, to make in himself of two—God and man—one new man, so making peace—“making peace through the blood of his cross” (Eph. 2:14, 15, Col. 1:20). “And, having *made* peace through the blood of his cross,” he “came and *preached* peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Eph. 2:17): peace to all. Therefore, always and forevermore, his salutation to every soul is, “Peace to you from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Oh, that every one would believe it; so that the peace of God, which passes all understanding could keep the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15). *Let* it; that is all he asks of you. Don’t refuse it, and beat it back; *let it*.

“Who gave himself *for our SINS*.” O brother, sister, sinner, whosoever you be, laden with sin though you be, Christ gave himself for your *sins*. Let him have them. He bought them—*your sins*—with the awful price of his crucified self. Let him have them.

He does not ask you to put all your sins away before you can come to him and be wholly his. He asks you to come, *sins and all*; and he will take away from you, and put away forever, *all your sins*. He gave himself for you, *sins and all*; he bought you, *sins*

and all; let him have what he bought, let him have his own, let him have you, *sins and all*.

He “gave himself for our sins, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world.*” Notice that to deliver us from this present evil world, he gave himself for our *sins*. That shows that all that there is of this present evil world, to each one of us, is our *sins*.

And they were “*our sins.*” They belonged to *us*. *We* were responsible for them. And so far as we were concerned, this present evil world lay in our own personal selves, in our sins. But, bless the Lord, he gave himself for us, sins and all; he gave himself for our sins, ourselves and all; and that he did in order that he might deliver us from this present evil world.

Would you like to be delivered from this present evil world? —Let him have yourself, sins and all, which he bought, and which therefore by full right belong to him. Please do not rob him of what is his own, and so still remain in this present evil world, when at the same time you would like to be delivered from this present evil world. Please do not commit the additional sin of keeping what does not belong to you.

As they were *our sins*, and he gave himself for them, it follows plainly enough that he gave himself to *us* for our sins. Then, when he gave himself for your sins, your sins became his; and when he gave himself to *you* for your sins, *he* became *yours*. Let him have your sins, which are *his*, and take him, who is *yours*. Blessed exchange; for him you have as your very own, all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and all “according to the will of God.” Thank the Lord.

Why should there not be to him “glory forever and ever”? And why should not you and all people say. Amen?

The Scriptures came not “by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me” (2 Sam. 23:2). Then the Scriptures are the words of the Holy Spirit. Then if you will the Holy Spirit to speak to you, and to be perfectly sure that he speaks to you, just open your Bibles and read.

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In Defense of the Gospel | Galatians 1:6 to 2:14

As the “Pharisees, which believed” said that Paul was not a true apostle, so also they said that the gospel which he preached was not the true gospel. And as the first verse of the epistle is in defense of his apostleship as true, so chapters 1:6 to 2:14 is in defense of the gospel that he preached as the true, and the *only* true, gospel.

Therefore he writes: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him who called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: which is *not another*; but [“simply a contrivance of some people to disturb you.” —*Fenton*] there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert the gospel of Christ*. 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. 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” (Gal. 1:6-9).

And as those “false brethren” had reported that he preached, and was ever ready to shift his ground, only to please men, he now interjects the words, “Well, am I NOW trying to be plausible to men, or to conciliate God himself? Had I still been trying to be a man-pleaser, I should not have been what I am—a slave of Christ” (*Farrar’s Translation, Gal. 1:10*).

Again, he turns to the defense of the gospel, which he preached, “Not I declare to you, brethren, as to the gospel preached by me that it is not a mere human gospel. For neither did I myself receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but by revelation from Jesus Christ” (*Ibid, Gal. 1:11, 12*).

And that he could not possibly have received it from merely man, he proves by the fact that “you have heard of my former behavior in the days of my Judaism, how I persecuted beyond measure the church of God, and strove to root it out, and outran in Judaism many of my own age and nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Gal. 1:13, 14 —*Conybeare and Howson’s Translation*). That is to say: As when he was a Pharisee, he was ahead of many of his own day and nation, was more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers than were others, and was far beyond them in persecuting the church of God, and in striving to root it out as wild boars uproot a vineyard, —since all this was true, there was no mere man from whom he could have possibly received what he was now preaching.

But the false brethren were saying that even though he had not received his gospel merely from man, at the very most he had received it *only from the true apostles*, and *not from the Lord direct*, as had the true apostles. This he confutes by a series of indisputable facts: —

1. Gal. 1:15-17: “But when he who set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace thought good to reveal his Son in me that I should preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I *did not confer with mere human teachers*, nor did I go away to *Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me*, but I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus” (*Farrar’s Translation*). And these very

false brethren who had now disconcerted the Galatian Christians, knew that at Damascus he had preached the gospel, and confounded the Jews who dwelt there, “proving that this is very Christ,” that this he had done many days at Damascus; and that he was driven away from Damascus by the Jews who sought to kill him— all this before he had ever met personally a single one of those who were apostles before he became an apostle.

2. Gal. 1:18-20: “Next, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Kephas, and I stayed at his house fifteen days; but not a single other apostle did I see, except James, the Lord’s brother. Now in what I am writing to you, see, before God, I am not lying” (*Ibid*).

3. Gal. 1:21-24: “Next I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was quite unknown by person to the churches of Judea which were in Christ, only they were constantly being told that our former persecutor is now a preacher of the faith which once he ravaged. And they glorified God in me” (*Ibid*).

4. Gal. 2:1-5: “Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. At that time I went up in obedience to a revelation and I communicated to the brethren in Jerusalem the glad-tidings [the gospel] which I proclaim among the Gentiles; but to the chief brethren I communicated it privately, lest perchance my labors, either past or present, might be fruitless. Yet not even Titus (a Greek), my own companion, was compelled to be circumcised. But this communication [with the apostles in Judea] I undertook on account of the false brethren who gained entrance by fraud, for they crept in among us to spy out our freedom (which we possess in Christ Jesus) that they might enslave us unto their own yoke. To whom I yielded not the submission they demanded; no, not for an hour; that the truth of the glad-tidings might stand unaltered for your benefit” (*Conybeare and Howson’s Translation*).

In this citation of fact there are several facts, each of which disproves the charge that he had received his gospel from the apostles at Jerusalem: —

(a) He communicated *to them* the gospel, which he preached, instead of their having communicated it to him.

(b) And this he did, not especially to teach the apostles anything, but because of the false reports of the false brethren, so that the apostles might understand the truth of the matter.

(c) He took Titus with him, whom, with him, the apostles received, and did not compel him to be circumcised: thus the apostles at Jerusalem themselves utterly disregarded the claim of the “Pharisees, which believed,” that “except ye be circumcised . . . ye cannot be saved.”

(d) He gave not an hour's subjection to the demands of the false brethren; this in the very presence of the apostles at Jerusalem; and the apostles did not require him to yield.

(e) Not only did the apostles not require him to yield anything, but "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars," actually gave to him and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship" (Gal. 2:9).

(f) And more than this, those who were the chief in reputation, he says, "added nothing to me" — "gave me *no new instruction*" (Gal. 2:6).

All this was positive and conclusive confutation of the claim that he had received his gospel from the apostles. But he does not stop even here: that which is already conclusive, he makes overwhelming by the citation of—

5. "When Peter was come to Antioch, *I withstood him to the face*, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, *I said unto Peter, before them all*," "If you, being born a Jew, art wont to live according to the customs of the Gentiles, and not of the Jews, how is it that you constrain the Gentiles to keep the ordinances of the Jews? We are Jews by birth, and not unhallowed Gentiles; yet, knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, *we ourselves also* have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:11-16).

When he had publicly withstood Peter to his face, and had called him back to the truth of the gospel, and through him James; for it was the "certain men which came from James" who caused Peter to swerve, nothing more needed to be said, and indeed what more *could* be said, to settle it forever that the gospel which he preached was not received from men, nor from the Lord through men, not even through the first apostles, but from the *Lord himself direct*.

Thus in the book of Galatians is set forth the only true gospel, in its perfect purity, direct from the Lord himself by the hand of Paul. And whosoever misses this perfect gospel in the book of Galatians misses the whole book of Galatians.

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