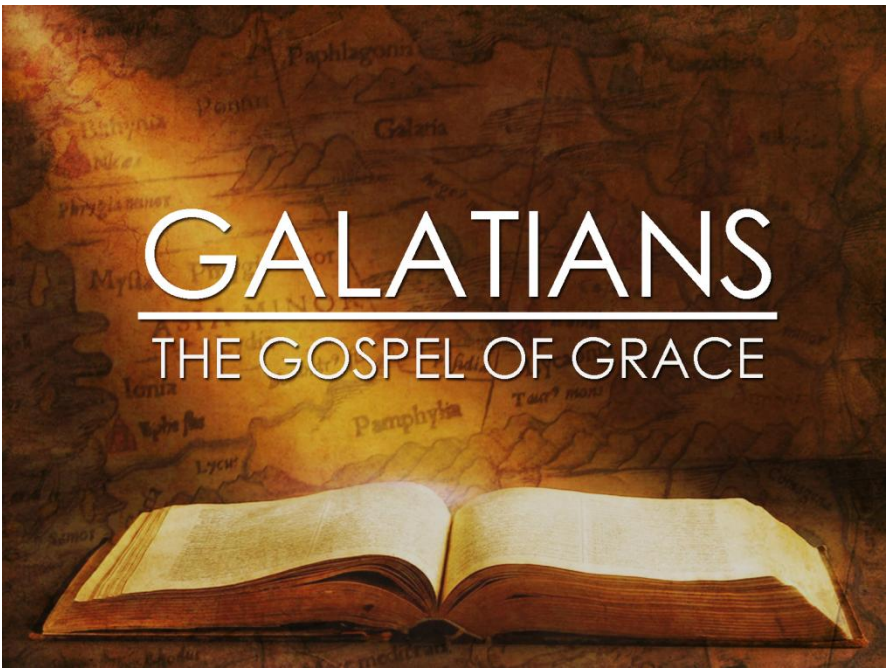
Note: This lesson includes 4 discussion questions in RED.

Galatians Chapter 1

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Updated 10/5/2022 Printed 10/12/2022



Introduction:

1. The subject matter of this book overlaps with that of the letter to the Roman church. Judiazers had followed Paul's church planting successes in Galatia.

2. The question arises about where did Paul learn about conditions among the Galatian churches:
   a) He could have been informed by travelers or messengers, but how could he get accurate information from a number of congregations?
   b) The Lord may have revealed the information to Paul using the mechanism of one of the spiritual gifts like *discernment.*

Which ever way the Lord used, Paul was certain that he understood the situation completely -- and he didn't like it.

3. These points can be seen within Galatians itself:
   a) They loved Paul when he was first among them.

      But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus Himself. (15) Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible.
      Galatians 4:14-15 NLT

   b) They had been siphoned away from the teachings of Paul very quickly after he left.

      I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News. (Galatians 1:6 NLT)

   c) This had been done by Jewish men and they insisted that it was necessary to keep Moses' Law.

      . . . They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. (Galatians 2:4 NLT)

   d) They taught that Paul was an inferior apostle and that the Twelve only must be regarded as the source of authority. This is seen in Paul's defense of his direct link with Christ.
   e) They taught that the Law of Moses was presently binding for justification. They probably had forced circumcision on some already:

Those who are trying to force you to be circumcised want to look good to others. They don't want to be persecuted for teaching that the cross of Christ alone can save. (Galatians 6:12 NLT)

f) The Galatians were pressed to observe the Old Testament feast days:

You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. (Galatians 4:10 NLT)



Galatia may have had these boundaries.

Galatians 1 NLT

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST DIRECTLY

(1) This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ Himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

- Paul opens with a strong defense of his **apostleship**. His enemies have said that he was not one of the Twelve original **apostles** appointed by **Christ**, but is a man they had commissioned and sent out and he was without any real **authority**. His critics said that at best his **authority** came from men. Paul responds to this false claim quickly and bluntly.
- Paul's **authority** as a **apostle** comes directly from **Jesus Christ and the Father who raised Jesus from the** grave. No higher source of authority is possible Therefore the words of Paul are the words of God Himself. Paul expands this a few sentences later.

(2) All the brothers and sisters here join me in sending this letter to the churches of Galatia.

- We don't know where Paul was located when writing, but he included a group of others as evidence that he was in harmony with others and not a man operating by himself.
- This letter is addressed to a *group* of churches instead of a single congregation such as Corinth. So it would need to be distributed in one of two ways:
  1. Either it was taken by a messenger from congregation to congregation or
  2. It would need to be duplicated into perhaps seven manuscripts and then distributed. It was probably the second method that was used.
- The main churches targeted by Paul were those he established on his first missionary tour. Acts 13:4 -- 14:28.

(3) May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

- **Grace and peace** were common greetings: **Grace** among the Gentile people and **peace** among the Sons of Abraham. Both kinds were among the churches of Galatia. Believers receive true **grace** and true **peace** directly from the **Father** and the Son. It is not dependent on current political alignments.

(4) Jesus gave His life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.

- Jesus surrendered His life -- it was a ***gift.***

> **He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is My body, which is *given* for you. Do this to remember Me.** (Luke 22:19 NLT)

- Since **Jesus gave His life for our sins,** that means we are not saved by keeping the law of Moses as the Judiazers insisted. And there is another implication:

(5) All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

- **God** must receive the **glory** for His grace, not individuals who tried to *earn* salvation by keeping the Law. The purpose of the entire universe is to **glorify** God.

> **The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship.** (Psalms 19:1 NLT)

> **And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever."** (Revelation 5:13 NLT)

Question 1: Since Paul highlights that his calling was not appointed by human authority, how should this shape the way we evaluate modern religious claims, titles, or movements?

PAUL WAS SHOCKED

(6) I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News (7) but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

- The formal greetings has ended; now down to business. The believers in Galatia had turned to a pretend **Good News.** The quick change **shocked** Paul. He had planted these churches and already they were turning into something else. He described the new teachers as **deliberately twisting the truth**. He didn't make allowance for the new teachers being confused. They were **deliberately** wrong.
- The actual **Good News** says that everyone -- Jews and Gentiles -- are saved by faith in **Christ** and His death in our place. These phony prophets added *keeping the Law of Moses* as well. This is a direct blow to the truth that we are saved by faith in **Christ** and not by keeping the law -- any law including that of Moses.

> See Question 2 Below.

(8) Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.

- There is no room on earth for a message other than the one Paul had **preached** to them when he established these churches. **Let God's curses fall on** the false teachers, even if one is an **angel from heaven.** Paul didn't have stronger language available to him.

(9) I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

- Claiming salvation by a modified message is worthy of a **curse**. It also shows that *they* had changed, not Paul.
- For emphasis, Paul repeats the **curse.**

Question 2: What are some common ideas or trends in our culture today that pretend to be true but actually lead people away from God's grace?

Question 3: Why do you think it is so easy for Christians to quickly drift away from regular spiritual habits when life gets busy, distracting, or when strong spiritual leaders depart?

(10) Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

- Paul does not search for common ground with the Judiazers or their disciples. None exists. He is not looking for their **approval,** but the **approval of Christ**.

(11) Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning.

- The false teaching of the Judiazers had a human-reasoning component. They certainly did not get their distorted view fom Scripture. On the other hand, Paul's message is straight from Jesus and that's what he shows next:

(12) I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

- Paul did not get his message from *anyone*, including the Twelve Apostles. His message came directly from **Jesus Christ.**

(13) You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion -- how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it.

- The story of Paul's conversion was **known** to those of Galatia. The Book of Acts, where the story is enshrined, was not written yet, so Paul must have told and retold the facts of his own **persecution** of the **church**. He had been following the **Jewish religion** and this is exactly what the Judiazers among the Galatian churches were promoting.

(14) I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

- There was no one who promoted keeping the law and associated **traditions** more than Paul. He had once held ideas similar to the

Judiazers. But did his **zeal** make him valuable before God, so that God needed him? Read on.

(15) But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by His marvelous grace. Then it pleased Him (16) to reveal His Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being.

- **God** chose Paul before he was even **born!** It was by **grace** that he was picked to tell **Gentiles** about the **Good News.** This had nothing to do with Paul's adult years or the Twelve Apostles in Jerusalem. **God** revealed Paul's responsibilities to him directly.
- Here is the **call** from **Jesus** directly to Paul as repeated by Paul:

> **But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'** (Acts 22:21 NLT)

Paul didn't prefer Gentiles. And now the Lord is sending him to be His ambassador to them!
Later Paul wrote:

> **Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, He graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.** (Ephesians 3:8 NLT)

Paul put everything that he had into the preaching.

(17) Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

- Even after his encounter with Christ, he did not compare his message with the Twelve in Jerusalem but went to **Arabia.** The word at that time did not describe modern Saudi Arabia but included an area outside of Damascus. The Lord allowed Paul time to synchronize his understanding with what the Scripture

actually taught instead of the views of the religious leaders in Jerusalem where he formerly had been so popular.

- So Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus from different evidence. He was not persuaded by the Twelve at Jerusalem, but knew of the resurrection from his own meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus. **God has provided a second line of evidence for the resurrection** apart from the stories in the four Gospels!

(18) Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.

- After **three years,** Paul traveled to **Jerusalem** to get acquainted with **Peter,** the chief spokesman for the Twelve. Observe that **Peter** heads the list in Mark:

> **These are the twelve he chose: Simon (whom He named Peter), James and John (the sons of Zebedee, but Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder") . . . .** (Mark 3:16-17 NLT)

Matthew and Luke also list Peter first when the apostles were first appointed.
Also note that **three years** is the length of time that Jesus used to train His Twelve.

- Paul stayed **fifteen days,** hardly time for any major retraining.

(19) The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother.

- This sentence presents a problem that we cannot solve. The **James** that was the **Lord's brother** was not among the Twelve. Perhaps the word **apostle** is used in some other sense. Or perhaps the word **brother** is used in a broader sense than we normally understand it.

Paul's point is that he had very little interaction with the leaders at Jerusalem.

- Paul affirmed that he was an **apostle** of the **Lord,** one sent with a commission.

(20) I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

- Paul then takes an oath before **God** that he was **writing** the truth. He has done this in other letters, too. This is an example:

> **With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it.** (Romans 9:1 NLT)

(21) After that visit I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia.

- **Syria** and **Cilicia** show on the map on page 2. Paul spent his childhood in Tarsus, a city in **Cilicia.** His gospel was true, and his experience was valid, because it all came from God, not any of the Twelve Apostles.
- We could not find why the translators injected the word **north** into the text and we could not locate any other translation that uses the word here.

(22) And still the Christians in the churches in Judea didn't know me personally.

- He didn't visit around in **Judea**, either. He quickly left the area.

(23) All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!"

- The Christians in outlying areas had heard of Paul and were amazed, but they did not influence what he **preached.**

(24) And they praised God because of me.

- These Jewish believers didn't just say "We have no objection." They **praised God** actively for the expansion of salvation to include the vast Gentile world.

- **Albert Barnes** takes all of us a step further:

> We may still glorify and praise God for the grace manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. What does not the world owe to him! What do we not owe to him! No man did as much in establishing the Christian religion as he did; no one among the apostles was the means of converting and saving so many souls; no one has left so many and so valuable writings for the edification of the church.
>
> To him we owe the invaluable epistles - so full of truth, and eloquence, and promises, and consolations - upon which we are commenting; and to him the church owes, under God, some of its most elevated and ennobling views or the nature of Christian doctrine and duty. After the lapse, therefore, of more than 1,800 years, we should not cease to glorify God for the conversion of this wonderful man, and should feel that we have cause of thankfulness that he changed the infuriated persecutor to a holy and devoted apostle.

J.W. McGarvey summarizes Paul reasoning about Jerusalem:

1. I was in no haste to go there.
2. I did not go there for the purpose of perfecting my knowledge of the gospel.
3. I was not there long enough to perfect such knowledge.
4. Leaving there, I was conscious of no deficiency of knowledge, but went at once to localities far distant, and was not personally known in the regions contiguous to Jerusalem, as I must have been had I lingered in that city long enough to learn the gospel history.
5. But I was known to them by my repentance, and by works for which they praised God, which facts show that I was recognized by them as proficient in a gospel which I did not learn from them.

Question 4 [After Gal 1:10–24]: Paul states he sought to please God rather than people (1:10). In what specific areas do modern believers face the most pressure to compromise scriptural truth for human approval?

Gal. 1:10 - "(10) Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant".

MUSIC BOX Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)		
Verse	Link:	Put in Browser:

Standard Outline of Galatians

I. The Authenticity of Apostolic Authority (Chapters 1–2)
- Chapter 1: Protection of the Original Gospel
  - (a) No Other Gospel: Rejecting human creeds or distortions that alter the original New Testament message (Galatians 1:6-9).
  - (b) Divine Revelation: Paul's apostolic authority came directly from Christ, not human councils.
- Chapter 2: Promotion of Non-Sectarian Unity
  - (a) Approved by the Apostles: The Jerusalem leaders confirm the simple, unhindered gospel to the Gentiles.
  - (b) Confronting Division: Paul rebukes Peter's legalistic hypocrisy, proving justification is by faith in Christ alone.

II. The Superiority of the New Covenant (Chapters 3–4)
- Chapter 3: Entry into the Covenant Blessing
  - (a) Law vs. Promise: The Spirit is received by believing the gospel message, not by keeping Old Testament rituals.
  - (b) Sons through Baptism: The Law was a temporary tutor; baptism clothes believers in Christ and establishes absolute equality (Galatians 3:26-29).
- Chapter 4: Freedom from Spiritual Slavery
  - (a) From Slaves to Heirs: God sent His Son to redeem those under the Law, adopting them as mature sons.
  - (b) Two Covenants Contrasted: The allegorical lesson of Hagar and Sarah urging believers to cast out legalistic bondage.

III. The Liberty and Practicality of the Christian Walk (Chapters 5–6)
- Chapter 5: Power for Spirit-Led Liberty
  - (a) Stand Fast in Freedom: Guarding Christian liberty against legalism while avoiding the license to sin.
  - (b) The Fruit of the Spirit:
  - (c) Rejecting the works of the flesh to walk in active, love-driven holiness.
- Chapter 6: Pattern for Community Restoration
  - (a) Bearing Burdens: Gently restoring fallen brethren and fulfilling the law of Christ through mutual ministry.
  - (b) Sowing and Reaping: Persevering in doing good to all, boasting only in the cross as a new creation.