

Galatians 1.1-9 “Freedom in Christ”

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Martin Luther, the reformer, claimed Galatians as, “My Epistle.” Paul’s letter to the Galatians became the spearhead of the Protestant Reformation. And through our verse by verse study we’ll discover the importance of this letter as we discover freedom in Christ.

Thesis: There is in the heart of man a yearning for freedom. We resist arbitrary and abusive authority; and there is a tendency in our culture to desire independence. Ironically, the pursuit of freedom from God enslaves to values that don’t satisfy. What we really need is freedom in Christ. We need to discover the grace of God in the gospel that frees us through Christ from the world’s influence, liberalism and legalism, and frees us from the penalty, power, and ultimately presence of sin, so that we can be free to experience contentment in Christ. Let’s explore the gospel of grace and find freedom in Christ...

Subject: The gospel of grace

Object: Be free in Christ

1. Jesus’ gospel sets you free to glorify God [1-5]

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ² and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

The letter was written about 49A.D. and is likely Paul's first or second letter in the New Testament (written just prior to the council of Ac. 15). Paul, the author of this letter, identifies himself as *an apostle* [1]. An apostle was one set forth on God's mission. Jesus' apostles received their authority from God to establish doctrine and correction in the Church. This authority wasn't *from nor through man* [1, 1:11-21]. Paul was commissioned by Jesus, on the road to Damascus, to deliver the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews) [Ac. 9].

The letter is addressed *to the churches of Galatia* [2]. This is Paul's only letter addressed to multiple churches. Galatia was a Roman province, and is located in modern Turkey. Paul journeyed there on his first missionary journey, having been sent by the Church in Antioch, he started churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe [Ac. 13-14].

Paul had established churches in the region based upon the gospel. After extending a typical greeting of grace and peace [3], Paul expounds a critical concept, *Jesus gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father* [4]. Jesus delivered us at the cross when He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins so that we could be restored in our relationship with God. The term *deliver* relates to rescuing from danger, from power,

or from influence. ***This present evil age [4], refers to the world system under Satan's control that is characterized by values contrary to God.*** It is *the will of our God and Father* that you would be delivered from the control of the world, the devil and your flesh [4, 1Jn. 2:15-17, Jn. 17:11-18].

Jesus came to free us from sin's penalty, power, and presence. Jesus' gospel can set you free so that you can truly worship God the Father who deserves *glory forever and ever* [5]. When the Jews were slaves in Egypt, God delivered them from their bondage. Egypt was a picture of the world, and Pharaoh was a picture of the devil. God sent Moses to deliver the following message, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness'" [Ex. 5:1]. It is important to see that God's plan was not to simply set the Jews free, but to set them free to be able to worship Him. In a similar sense, **Jesus' followers recognize God's grace, love, and redemption and seek to worship God in the New Covenant.**

2. What is Jesus' gospel?

Four times we see the term *gospel* in verses six to nine [6,7,8,9]. Gospel means good news. So, what is the good news? We are set free or delivered by *grace* [6] through faith in Christ,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" [Eph. 2:8-9]. Grace relates to unmerited favor. Thus, the work of salvation was accomplished by Jesus on the cross. Jesus declared from the cross that the work of salvation was finished [Jn. 19:30]. Jesus taught, "This is the work of God, that you believe in

Him whom He sent” [Jn. 6:29]. **Thus, freedom flows from trusting Jesus’ finished work and submitting to Him as Lord** [3]. Jesus died for our sins as foretold by the prophets, was buried, and rose on the third day as foretold by the prophets to prove that God had accepted His perfect sacrifice [1 Cor. 15:1-4].

Note, freedom in Christ is not license to sin [5:13]. When you understand, and appreciate what Jesus has done for you it produces gratitude and love for God and transformed lives, because you want to yield to Him.

3. Why is a different gospel bad news? [6-9]

⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Paul was surprised they were so *quickly led away from Jesus and His gospel to a different gospel* [6] which *is not another* [7]. In other words, it is not good news. After Paul left Galatia, Jewish religious leaders came in and attempted to sway the new Christians that they had to have faith in Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) *and* follow the Mosaic Law including ritual circumcision, to be saved. New believers,

and the spiritually immature are particularly vulnerable. These “Judaizers” came and tried to discredit Paul’s ministry, and message. As a result, they Galatians were *troubled* [7] in the sense they were confused and perplexed. The Judaizers *perverted the gospel* [7]. Paul passionately repeats that if anyone, even an angel [8], *proclaims a different gospel let them be accursed* [8-9]. Paul uses such strong language and tone, because false gospels, like false religions, obscure true freedom in Jesus’ gospel.

The Mosaic Law reveals God’s moral perfection, and shows us that we cannot measure up to that perfection [Gal. 2:10, Rom.3:23]. Therefore, we need a Savior. **You are made right with God by faith in Christ, not by your performance of the law or any ritual** such as circumcision, baptism, or communion [Gal. 2:11-16]. **Any belief system that conditions God’s acceptance of you by performance of the Mosaic Law, a sacrament, or any ritual is a false gospel and is bad news.** Thus, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, Roman Catholicism and ritual Judaism proclaim a false gospel.

4. How can you be free in Jesus and His gospel?

It is critical that we understand that we need the gospel not only for salvation but for life. I need to know that I’m right with God because of what Jesus did and trusting Him, not my performance. My identity as His child is by faith in Jesus not my works. I desire to follow God’s commands because I’m

saved through faith, not to earn salvation. The way to experience freedom in Christ is by avoiding legalism - rules and works beyond the New Testament [NT], and liberalism - ignoring the commandments of the NT. **You are set free by yielding to Jesus and learning from Him [Mt.11:29], and abiding in His word [Jn. 8:31-32]**

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What are some ways that the world system (“present evil age” v.4) is characterized by values contrary to God?

Q2. If someone asked you, “What is Jesus’ gospel?” How would you respond?

Q3. How would you describe the difference between works-based salvation and faith-based salvation?

Q4. How are you discovering freedom in Jesus and His gospel?

Digging Deeper

1. In John 8:31-36, Jesus offers freedom to those who believe in Him, and abide in His word. The religious leaders protested that they had never been in bondage to anyone. They were blind to their slavery to their own sin (as well as the oppression of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and

the then existing Roman occupation). Why might it be difficult to recognize our enslavement to sin, and the values of the world system?

2. Read: 1Cor. 15:10, Rom. 5:1-2, Rom. 11:6, 2 Tim. 2:1-4, 2Cor. 12:1-10. What did you discover about the gospel of grace?