**Introduction of The Book of Galatians**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Galatians 1:1-9**

**Wednesday Evening**

**May 18, 2022**

**The Purpose**

To refute the Judaizers who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish Law in order to be saved, and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ.

**Author**

Paul The Apostle

**Audience**

The Churches in southern Galatia, founded on Paul’s first missionary journey including Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Christians everywhere.

**Date Written**

Approximately A. D. 49 from Antioch, prior to the Jerusalem Council A. D. 50

**Setting**

The most pressing controversy in the early church was the relationship of new believers, particularly Gentiles, to the Jewish Laws.

This was especially a problem for the New Converts and for the young churches that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Paul wrote to correct this problem. Later, at the council in Jerusalem, the conflict was officially resolved.

**Key Verse**

**Galatians 6:7**

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”

**Introduction**

A family, executing their carefully planned escape at midnight, dashing for the border . . . a man standing outside prison walls, gulping fresh air, awash in the new sun . . . a young woman with every trace of the ravaging drug gone from her system . . . they are FREE!

With fresh anticipation, they can begin life anew. Whether fleeing oppression, stepping out of prison, or breaking a strangling habit, freedom means life. There is nothing so exhilarating as knowing that the past is forgotten and that new options await. People yearn to be free.

The book of Galatians is the charter of Christian freedom. In this profound letter, Paul proclaims the reality of our liberty in Christ—freedom from the law and the power of sin, and freedom to serve our living Lord.

Most of the first converts and early leaders in the church were Jewish Christians who proclaimed Jesus as their Messiah. As Jewish Christians, they struggled with a dual identity: Their Jewishness constrained them to be strict followers of the law; their newfound faith in Christ invited them to celebrate a holy liberty.

They wondered how Gentiles (non-Jews) could be part of the Kingdom of Heaven. This controversy tore the early church. Judaizers—an extremist Jewish faction within the church—taught that Gentile Christians had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions in addition to believing in Christ.

As a missionary to the Gentiles, Paul had to confront this issue many times. Galatians was written, therefore, to refute the Judaizers and to call believers back to the pure gospel. The Good News is for all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. Salvation is by God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus and nothing else. Faith in Christ means true freedom.

After a brief introduction (1:1-5), Paul addresses those who were accepting the Judaizers’ perverted gospel (1:6-9). He summarizes the controversy, including his personal confrontation with Peter and other church leaders (1:10–2:16).

He then demonstrates that salvation is by faith alone by alluding to his conversion (2:17-21), appealing to his readers’ own experience of the gospel (3:1-5), and showing how the Old Testament teaches about grace (3:6-20). Next, he explains the purpose of God’s laws and the relationship between law, God’s promises, and Christ (3:21–4:31).

Having laid the foundation, Paul builds his case for Christian liberty. We are saved by faith, not by keeping the law (5:1-12); our freedom means that we are free to love and serve one another, not to do wrong (5:13-26); and Christians should carry each other’s burdens and be kind to each other (6:1-10). In 6:11-18, Paul takes the pen into his own hand and shares his final thoughts.

As you read Galatians, try to understand this first-century conflict between grace and law, or faith and deeds, but also be aware of modern parallels. Like Paul, defend the truth of the gospel and reject all those who would add to or twist this truth. You are free in Christ—step into the light and celebrate!

**Galatians 1:1-9**

1 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.

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But 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. 9 As 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.

**1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),**

Saints, First-century letters often began by introducing the writer, although this “writer” often dictated his letters to a scribe. Paul used a secretary for most, if not all, of his letters, usually writing the last few lines in his own hand to authenticate his message.

**Romans 16:22**

“I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord”

Paul was called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples (later called apostles), but Jesus had specially called him on the road to Damascus to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:3-19).

**Acts 9:13-16**

13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Saints, the apostles’ mission was to be God’s representatives; they were envoys, messengers, and delegates who were directly under the authority of Jesus Christ. They had authority to set up and supervise churches and discipline them if necessary.

Paul presented his credentials as an apostle at the beginning of this letter because his authority was being undermined in the churches in Galatia.

No human had appointed Paul; Jesus Christ, the one who had been raised from the dead, had spoken to Paul.

**Acts 9:4-5**

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Paul explained his apostleship in these words, not to separate himself from the original Twelve, but to show that his apostleship rested on the same basis as theirs. If the believers in Galatia questioned Paul’s apostleship, then they also should question the apostleship of Peter, John, James, and all the others—and such questioning would be absurd. All the apostles were called by Jesus Christ and God the Father, and they answered to God as their final authority.

**2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:**

Saints, Paul’s fellow Christians in Antioch joined him in sending greetings to the Galatian believers. These coworkers in Antioch were a sizable group, including Barnabas, Titus, Timothy, and some of the men that were with Paul.

**Acts 13:1**

“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul”

Saints, this letter is an example of Paul writing to a region or group of churches. In Paul’s time, Galatia was the Roman province located in the center section of present-day Turkey. Much of the region was on a large and fertile plateau; many people had moved to the region because of its favorable agriculture.

During his missionary journeys, Paul planned to visit regions with large population centers in order to reach as many people as possible and to plant churches in those centers. This letter was to be circulated among the churches planted by Paul and Barnabas during the first missionary journey—in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium.

**3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Saints, Paul used grace and peace in all his salutations, wishing his readers the benefits of both. “Grace” was the Greek greeting, as “peace” was the Jewish greeting. Jointly used in the context of the gospel, these two words gained great depth.

The word grace reminded Paul’s readers of God’s kindness in offering salvation to undeserving people. Peace reminded the readers of Christ’s offer of peace to his disciples as they lived out their faith in an evil world.

**John 14:27**

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”

Christian letters not only expressed the wish for peace, but identified the source of peace. If “grace” summarizes God’s gift to us, then “peace” summarizes the personal results of that gift.

True peace comes only from a right relationship with God because peace comes from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. As in verse 1, the connecting of “God” and “Jesus” reveals their oneness.

**John 10:30**

“I and My Father are one."

God is called “Father,” a name Jesus taught his disciples to use in the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus Christ is identified as “Lord,” a title given to him after his resurrection and ascension that reveals him as worthy of worship.

**John 20:28**

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

**Philippians 2:9**

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name…”

**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,**

Saints, Jesus died for our sins, not his own, for he was sinless. Jesus’ sacrifice was ultimate, voluntary, and substitutionary. This is called “substitutionary atonement.”

Christ died for our sins, in our place, so we would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve.

**1 Peter 2:24**

“who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed”

Saints, this was not an accident; it occurred just as God our Father planned. God made a way of salvation—the ultimate sacrifice of sending his only Son to die on the cross, taking the penalty for humanity’s sins. People can only be saved through Christ.

The result of Jesus’ gift of himself was to rescue us from this evil world. This rescue or deliverance does not remove believers from the world (at least not yet); instead, it gives us the blessings of our future eternity with Christ and offers us his guidance and presence as we serve him in this evil world.

Indeed, if all the early believers had been rescued out of the evil age in which they lived, there would have been no hope for us. To use Jesus’ expression, though we are still “in” the world, we are no longer “of” the world.

**John 17:15-18**

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

**5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Saints, Thoughts of God’s love, mercy, and guidance, and Christ’s ultimate sacrifice on our behalf evoke words of praise and thanks. Does the glory of God lead you to give such praise?

Glory belongs to God alone. Even if God had not done so much for us, he would still be the only one deserving glory from his creation. As believers, we will be able to glorify our God through all the ages of eternity because of the promise of eternal life with him.

With a decisive Amen (“Let it be so,” “Let it come to pass”), Paul closed his introduction to this letter. In these first five verses, Paul touched on what would be the intent of his letter: his authority as an apostle, and the fact that salvation is not by works but by grace through faith in Christ alone.

**6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.**

Saints, Paul immediately expressed shock at the Galatians’ behavior. He found it difficult to comprehend that the believers were turning away so soon from God. They had been called, but they were throwing aside that privilege in order to try to earn their salvation.

Paul was shocked that someone would insist on attempting to pay for a free (and priceless) gift! Those who turned to this different way would no longer be Christians. This different way only pretended to be the Good News, but it was not the Good News at all.

The false teachers, Judaizers, were teaching that to be saved, Gentile believers had to follow Jewish laws and customs, especially the rite of circumcision. Faith in Christ was not enough. They may have included in their teachings the need for faith in Christ for salvation, but they taught that additional requirements had to be met before true salvation could occur.

This twisted and changed the truth, and it infuriated Paul. Whether or not the Judaizers were sincere, their teaching fooled these new churches and had to be countered. They were loading down people with the requirements of the “law” instead of encouraging them to live by grace in joyful obedience to Christ.

Jesus Christ has made the gift of salvation available to all people. Faith in Christ is the only requirement for salvation. Beware of people who say that we need more than simple faith in Christ to be saved. When people set up additional requirements for salvation, they deny the power of Christ’s death on the cross.

**8 But 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. 9 As 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.**

Saints, Paul denounced the Judaizers’ perversion of the gospel of Christ. Using strong language to deal with this life-or-death issue, Paul said that God’s curse should fall on anyone, even himself, who preaches any other message than the one originally brought to them.

In fact, even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, that angel should be forever cursed. This passage strongly refutes the claim by Mormons regarding the source of Joseph Smith’s teaching, that the angel Moroni appeared to him.

If the truth is changed, the teacher is false, regardless of his or her qualifications, accomplishments, or experience. Paul has already noted that there is no other gospel, thus any other message would be false.

The gospel teaching must not be changed, for the truth of the gospel never changes. Paul’s repeated use of the condemnation of God’s curse conveys the most severe penalties imaginable for distorting the truth of the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas preached; the Galatians accepted. That decisive experience did not need to be added to by certain actions required by the false teachers. The acceptance of the message alone had accomplished their salvation.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**