If our faith costs us nothing, others will value it at nothing.
William Barclay

GALATIANS CHAPTER ONE

Prayer Study #457
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Sources:

1. *Day of All Saints* by Bishop Bill Hamon
2. *Paul's letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, & Colossians: Morningstar Vision Bible* by Rick Joyner
3. *Understanding Galatians* by Jim Staley
4. *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* by William Barclay
5. *Through the Bible* by J. Vernon McGee
6. *The Open Bible: New King James Version*
7. *A Light in the Darkness* by Rick Renner

God's Timetable

Galatia in the time of Paul was a Roman province in what is now modern Turkey. It was not a city but an entire region. In fact, the ancient capital of Galatia is now the modern city Ankara, which is the capital of Turkey. This territory is located in the north central part of the body of land which is between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea and was settled by the Gauls in ancient time. Galatia was a heavily populated area in that day and was the center of Greek culture. The area was noted as a great commercial area, political area, and educational area.

The first mention of Galatia is in Acts 16:6: *Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.* Paul had come from the East. He wanted to preach in Galatia to the South, and the Holy Spirit certainly wanted the Word to be shared, but the timing was not right. The Lord had a different place for Paul to be. He led Paul to the West which led Paul to cross over into Europe where he received the Macedonia call. Macedonia was north of Greece. Here the first convert to Christianity in Europe was Lydia.

Who are these Galatians? 1st Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace, be multiplied.

Peter is writing here to the Israeli aliens who have been scattered through the Roman Empire (the Diaspora). Galatia is one of these places. Perhaps Peter had already preached the Gospel there. He was the apostle to the Israelites. The Holy Spirit, however, initially sends Paul, not to Galatia, but to Macedonia to preach to the Gentiles who had never heard the Gospel message.

In this passage, Peter presents the doctrine of the trinity (which is found throughout the Bible): the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, the sanctification of the *Spirit*, and the sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*. He also talks of a people who were strangers, who were scattered, and who were elect. To understand this, we must go back to Israeli history in the time of the death of Solomon. The kingdom was divided into the House of Israel, which consisted of 10 tribes and was in the North, and the House of Judah, which consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and was in the South and included Jerusalem.

The Northern Kingdom broke covenant. Yahweh divorced the House of Israel, allowing them to be taken into captivity in 722BC by the Assyrians.
They never came back and were dispersed to the four corners of the world in the Diaspora.

These Jews were hated by the Southern Kingdom or Judah because they had broken covenant. They were considered Israeli Gentiles. Gentile means *out of covenant.* So, we have pagan Gentiles and Israeli Gentiles. Many Jews of the Southern Kingdom believed that both sets of Gentiles would be fuel for the first of Hell. They believed God loved only Israel. They believe He would judge the Jews with a compassionate judgment but would judge Gentiles with a harsh judgment. It was against the law to help a Gentile mother in giving birth. So, the Jews were infuriated when they saw Paul brining the Gospel to the despised Gentiles.

The Judaizers demanded that, if Gentiles wanted to become Christians, they had to become Jews first, be circumcised and follow the law. Of course, in reality, no one could every aspect of the law, and besides, the Jewish approach left out the grace and mercy of God. The point is not what we can do for God, but what God has done for us. Ironically, the founder of the Jewish nation, Abraham, could not have gained the favor of God for keeping the law because the law was not given until 430 years after Abraham.

The Torah says that if a priest divorces his wife because of adultery, he is not allowed to marry her again. He has to die so she can get out from under the law of adultery and marry someone else. In order to restore the Northern Kingdom, Yahweh had to send the Bridegroom to die for the lost House of Israel so that, when she rises from the grave, she will be able to marry Him again. This is in scripture the events of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Southern Kingdom also eventually had to suffer harsh judgment, and they were carried into Babylonian captivity, but they were allowed to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity.

Theme of Galatians

Paul's theme in Galatians is the glory of the grace of God and necessity of realizing that we can never save ourselves. We are not saved by our works. The law makes people guilty and bounds them. Faith sets men free and justifies them. Paul is universally considered the author of Galatians. It is the only one of Paul's letters that was written to a group of churches, and it was written in Paul's own hand. This book was probably written by Paul in Antioch in AD 49. He wrote the book to answer the false teachings of Judaizers who believed in Jesus but sought to have the Gentile converts placed under the requirements of the Mosaic law.

Galatians 1 New King James Version (NKJV)

Greeting

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.*

Some people had come to the Galatian churches and said that Paul was not really an apostle, and therefore the churches did not need to listen to what he had to say. They based this on the fact that he was not one of the original twelve and had no official appointment from the Church leaders. Paul did not argue but just stated facts. His appointment came not from men but from Jesus Himself.

J. Vernon McGee presents an unusual opinion concerning Paul. He believes that Paul was meant to be the disciple that took the place of Judas. Matthias was chosen instead, but Matthias is never mentioned in the Bible again after his selection. He says that Matthias was chosen before Pentecost, which was before the Holy Spirit came into the Church. He says that he does not think Matthias' selection had anything to do with Holy Spirit, much like many people put in positions in our modern day churches are *man-called,* not *God-called* to those positions.

Apostles are still being called by God in our day and are gifts which the Lord gives to the Church. Apostles are often paired with prophets (Luke 11:49).

Apostles should have the gifting to do signs and wonders (Acts 2:43, Acts 4:33, Acts 5:12) and should serve with prophets as the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20). In addition, it is my personal conviction that one who calls himself an apostle should have had an encounter where he sees Jesus.

This is how Bishop Hamon from Christian International describes *apostles* (pp. 183-184 in *The Day of Saints*): *Apostles specialize in supernatural signs and wonders. They give building strategies and lay foundations, along with the prophet, in the lives of people and the local church. The prophet receives the blueprint for the building of the Church, but the apostle is the master builder. Biblical examples of apostles' ministry to the Believers reveal that they help found and ground the Believers in foundations of the faith and present day truth. Apostles' miraculous* signs and wonders enable Believers to be delivered from evil spirits, disease, and strongholds in their lives. Some apostles not only demonstrate the supernatural but are able to activate the Believers in their power gifts of the Holy Spirit.

As part of the foundation of the Church, apostles are often sent to establish new works and then to support those works. Apostle Paul founded many of the local churches in the New Testament. Apostles in the marketplace may be those who launch a business or who form a network to accomplish certain purposes. As initiators and those who help provide structure and leadership, apostles make a place for the Believers. They provide platforms where others can serve God through their unique giftings. The apostles have a special ability to be master builders of the Believers in their callings and ministry. Apostles will be key in helping transform Saints from pew-sitters to active participants in the Day of the Saints.

Paul ends this first section with a formal greeting. In that day, the Jews, as now, greet people with *shalom* (peace). The gentiles, on the other hand, greeted people with *charis* (grace).

Christ gave Himself. We do not need anything more nor can we give or add anything to the sacrifice of Jesus. That sacrifice is so powerful that it delivers us from this present evil world, and it is evil! Yet the incarnate Word can deliver us from drugs, alcohol, religion, sexual sins, etc. The deliverance is not according to the law or our performance but it according to the will of God our Faithful Father.

Paul ends this beginning section with praise to God. I believe we have gotten away from the praise of God, and that's one reason why you never feel His presence in some of our churches because He inhabits the praises of His people! (Psalm 22:3)

Only One Gospel

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.*
***10** For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

Immediately after his gracious introductory greeting, Paul gets right down to business. He sees the situation in Galatia as very serious. J. Vernon McGee says that Paul is *hot under the collar.* He would gladly give his life for the Gospel. He believed that strongly. He was indignant that the Galatians would so quickly allow Judaizers to come in and pervert that Gospel and teach that the believers would have to be circumcised and dedicate their lives to carrying out all the rules and regulations of the law. Paul's detractors believed he was making Christianity far too easy and doing so to win favor with the Church. They believed he was trying to win the approval of men. Of course, we know that the very opposite was true. Paul spoke truth whether people liked it or not. He refused to compromise his positions because he had the assurance and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

We have spoken of *bondslaves* before in our study of Romans, but it is important to repeat this. The word *doulos* is the Greek word translated either bond servant or bond slave. The meaning of a bond slave is: *One who has a complete and utter devotion to his master to the disregard of his own desire or interest.* A bond slave to Christ loves as Jesus loved, walks as Jesus walked, stays strong even when he is weak and feels he has nothing else to give, completely obeys His word and His will, and always seeks God first, above all others. Bond slaves have absolutely no rights. In the Jewish culture, slaves could only be enslaved for so many years. When their period of enslavement was over, they were free to go. Bond slaves, however, loved their masters so much that they gave themselves to their masters so that they could continue the rest of their lives to serve the master. To make this official so that everyone would know instantly that they were bond slaves, the master had the bond slave place his ear lobe on the door facing, and the master knocked a big hole in the ear lobe with a punch.

I believe the ultimate goal of every Christian should be to aspire to be a bond slave to Jesus Christ. Paul is not merely saying words here. He has proven over and over with his life that he sincerely and genuinely is a bond slave. There are others in the New Testament who took this title. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but among them are Simeon in Luke 2:29 who recognized the baby Jesus as the Christ in the Temple; James (James 1:1) who was the head of the Church in

Jerusalem, and Jude (Jude 1:1); Timothy (Philippians 1:1); Peter (2nd Peter 1:1-12); and of course, Paul (Titus 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Romans 1:1). In addition, the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation to the bond slaves of Jesus Christ.

Even in the Old Testament, which was written in Hebrew, there were bond slaves. The Hebrew word translated as *servant* in Joshua 1:1 really means Moses was the bond slave of God. This is repeated in Joshua 24:29 when Joshua was also referred to as the *servant* of God. To the prophets, there was no greater honor than being a bond slave to God (Amos 3:7, Jeremiah 7:25).

Call to Apostleship

11 *But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.* ***12*** *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

13 *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.* ***14*** *And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

15 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,* ***16*** *to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,* ***17*** *nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

Paul is making a very bold statement here. He is saying that the Gospel he preached was not merely something he had heard or learned from others. The Gospel he taught had come to him directly from God. In order for people to believe such a radical statement, Paul had to offer some proof. First, Paul testifies of his transformation from a fanatic for the law to a preacher of grace. Instead of bragging on how much of a Pharisee among Pharisees he was, he now only gloried in what God had done for him instead of what he had done for God. He notes that he had been the chief persecutor of the Church. Here Paul uses a word that in Greek means *to utterly destroy.* His mission in life had been to destroy the Church, but now his mission was to give himself for the Church, and he was even willing to die for the Church. God had intervened in his life, and Paul recognizes that it was in God's eternal plan to do so and that he had been saved to serve.

Paul went to Arabia, I believe, to spend time alone both to think through what had happened to him and to spend time alone with God. Returning to Damascus was a brave step. This was where he had been headed to persecute the Church. Then all the Christians there most likely feared him.

Now he returns to the city where the Christians would be suspicious of him,

and the Jews would want to kill him for converting to the new beliefs.

Contacts at Jerusalem
18 *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,[a] and remained with him fifteen days.* ***19*** *But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.* ***20*** *(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)*
21 *Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.* ***22*** *And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.* ***23*** *But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."* ***24*** *And they glorified God in me.*

Paul waits for three years and then goes to Jerusalem to see Peter. Again, this was taking his life into his own hands. The Jews would be out to kill him, and the Christians in Damascus might well ostracize him.

Then Paul goes back to Syria and Cilicia. That was where Tarsus, his childhood home, was.

I want to see Israel marching,
I want to hear the kingdom call!
I want to see Zion's mountain,
I want to see great Babylon fall!
I want to see Jesus reigning,
Upon King David's royal throne.
O, won't that be a glorious sight to see,
When Israel comes marching home!