

I'D RATHER FIGHT THAN SWITCH!

Galatians 1:1-10

Paul wrote Galatians in the fall of 49, after he was back in Antioch, recuperating from his journey. Right from the start we get the idea that this is no "just keeping in touch" card from the local drugstore. Actually it turns out to be more of a severe "get-well - or else!" card. Something drastic had taken place in the short time since Paul had left the Galatians, and he writes this letter to remedy the situation.

¹ Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead --² and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: ³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel --⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! ¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Look up the word "*grace*". How many times is it used in the New Testament? How many times is it used in Galatians? What does it mean?

"Grace and Peace" is a unique Christian combination of two already commonly used words for greeting in the first century. "*Grace*" was a Greek term which communicated a general gladness, and "*peace*" was the Jewish term ("shalom" in Hebrew) which denoted a similar feeling in that culture. However, in Christ, both terms come alive; grace is God's surprising gift of love and forgiveness, and peace is the resulting effect of that grace in a believer's life - a sense of well-being and hope because the barrier of sin and guilt has been broken down.

Look up "*gospel*". How many times is it used in the New Testament? How many times is it used in Galatians? What does it mean?

What does "*rescue*" mean?

See verse **6** - Who is "*the one who called you*"? Is it Paul, or someone else?

See verse **8** - What other recent religious group, supposedly an "updated version of Christianity", was given revelation by an angel?

Verse **9** - on a scale from 1 to 14, how high does Paul rate the importance of accuracy in the message of the gospel?

What gave him the right to be so dogmatic?

APPLICATION: If an accurate view of the gospel is so important, do you think you can explain it clearly in five minutes? (What are the essential ingredients?)

See verse **10** - Why is "*pleasing men*" and being a "*servant of Christ*" like oil and water? (Share from your own experience.)

Compare the way Paul starts other letters to the way Galatians begins. Notice anything different?

Why do you think Paul is so upset?

"There is a common misunderstanding about Christianity. This is the idea that it is quite optional whether a Christian lives by law or by grace. That is, if grace is found to be too difficult or demanding, the Lord will accept sincere legalism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Legalism is sin! If you discover it in your heart, you ought to be down on your face before God repenting and confessing the thing. It is corrupting, it is vile, it is disturbing; it destroys the unity of the Spirit and produces the works of the flesh in your life."

Ray Stedman

LIFE RESPONSE

Paul felt like the Galatians were being told lies. How had he experienced those lies in his own life, and what did they produce?

What lies have you been told that led to trouble in your life? What lies do you think people are often told about God and Christianity?

Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* How has the truth of Christ set you free?

"God's love and our salvation are completely expressed and fully accomplished in Jesus Christ. That is good news. As we receive Him, we live freely and not apprehensively. We live in open praise and not in piggish greed. Our lives are changed from being obsessed with guilt and ridden with fear to being spontaneous and filled with hope. That's good news!"
- Eugene Peterson

From your study of just this portion of Galatians, what would you say are some of the major issues that will be addressed in this book?