

Galatians

Lesson 1

Chapter 1:1-10

Leader Guide

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Lesson 1
Galatians 1:1-10
Paul, An Apostle Sent by Christ and God the Father

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 — which is really no gospel at all. (*Galatians 1:6-7*)

Prayers

Introduction

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter of Galatians to Christians in the Roman Province of Galatia, central Turkey, between 50 and 60 AD. The letter focuses on one central theme, "How do we become right in God's eyes?" Are we made righteous solely through faith in Christ, or are we righteous by our obedience to the law and doing good works? The doctrine of becoming righteous in God's eyes is referred to as justification. We are justified (declared righteous) to God because of Christ's righteousness, not our actions. False teachers led Christians in Galatia to believe they were righteous by obeying Jewish law, then by Christ. The false teachers taught that new believers needed to first convert to Judaism, become circumcised, obey the 613 commandments and traditions found in the Torah, and then live as Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

We likely don't struggle with whether or not we need to be Jewish to worship Christ, but legalism easily pervades our thinking. We often look to our actions and obedience to measure our righteousness rather than Christ. Christians often struggle with both legalism and sinful disobedience; both rob our joy and peace in Christ. Christians burdened by legalism have difficulty accepting God's grace and the depth of His loving forgiveness. They carry a nagging guilt that they are not good enough, need to do better, or work harder in their relationship with Christ. Does our freedom from the law (yes, even the Ten Commandments) give us the license to sin? Paul answers, certainly not. The Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, guides our lives rather than the law. Paul's message to those struggling with legalism is, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Let faith and love direct our actions. God loves us from before creation, and Christ's sacrifice completely satisfied the requirements of the law; we are forgiven. No matter how great our sins or failings, God's forgiveness and grace are greater.

In your study of Galatians, I truly hope you discover God's rest. Put down your burden of guilt and understand with complete clarity that Christ has done everything needed to secure your eternal inheritance, bring you to God, and give you a life of abundant joy through the Holy Spirit.

Read Galatians 1:1-5

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle —sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead —

Gal 1:2 and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia:

Gal 1:3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Gal 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Gal 1:5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Gal 1:6 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 —

Gal 1:7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 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!

Gal 1:9 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!

Gal 1:10 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.

Discuss

1. Paul's introduction to the Galatians is unlike any other in Scripture and is a defense of his apostleship that is two chapters long. Why might Paul have felt compelled to write such a lengthy defense?

Paul must have felt he needed to remind the Galatians of his authority as an apostle because his letter was one of rebuke as well as teaching and encouragement. He probably also knew false teachers and Judaizers were undermining his authority and influence in the Galatian churches.

2. Discuss the similarities and differences between an apostle (someone sent with a message) and a disciple (someone who learns and follows).
 - a. Refer to the following verses about being an apostle of Christ.

Jn 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ^j

Jn 15:27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Lk 24:46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Lk 24:48 You are witnesses of these things.

Lk 24:49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

2Co 12:12 The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles —were done among you with great perseverance.

b. Refer to the following verses about being a disciple of Christ.

Mt 10:42 **And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."**

Jn 21:24 This is the **disciple** who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Jn 15:7 **If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.**

Both disciples and apostles are learners and followers of Christ who are called to love God and advance God's kingdom by loving and serving others. The apostles were Christ's disciples who witnessed his life and were sent into the world as his witnesses to preach the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ as the Son of God. The apostles were given miraculous powers through the Holy Spirit as proof their testimony about Christ was true.

3. Grace and peace to you in verse 3 were the two most common greetings in the Greek and Jewish world. Grace to you (charis) was the Greek equivalent to "Have a good day." Peace (Shalom) in Hebrew was wishing someone well in every aspect of their being. Paul used the same greetings from the perspective of someone who has received God's grace to be in Christ so they can be at peace with God. In this way, God's grace always comes before his peace. What are some of the many blessings you have in Christ that you could complete Paul's greeting with:

Have a good day because of _____.

God's abundant grace!

God's love for us as his children!

God's forgiveness of all our sins!

Our salvation! Our hope for eternal life!

Unity and fellowship in Christ!

Loving relationships, family, God's provision, and many more!

4. A short definition of grace is God's unmerited favor toward us. We receive God's gifts through his grace. God's grace begins with his unconditional love for us, and by his grace, we receive every spiritual blessing. These blessings include the plans he made for us before creation to be his children, our faith in Christ, his Spirit to guide us in our Christian walk, and daily provision for our needs. What is the grace of Christ the Galatians were turning from that Paul refers to in verse 6?

The grace of Christ is his sacrificial death for us through which we find forgiveness and removes our sins. But there is so much more Christ accomplished through shedding his blood. Through Christ's blood we receive our sanctification, redemption, justification, atonement, and reconciliation with God so that we are at peace and in union with him, serving others in his kingdom as his holy priesthood.

5. The teaching of the Judaizers must have seemed reasonable to new believers, both Jew and Gentile since the thought was sweeping through the new churches. Why might the teaching that Christians should live under Jewish law and have faith in Christ seem reasonable?

Three reasons the false teachings may have seemed reasonable are:

For two millennia, circumcision had been a sign of God's covenant with his people. Scriptures taught that the uncircumcised were cut off from God's covenant (Genesis 17:14). Jews and Gentiles would have wanted to be considered God's chosen people and accepted the teaching of obedience to the law and tradition.

Jesus was Jewish and kept the law perfectly; new believers would have wanted to do as Jesus did.

Grace and justification by faith rather than obedience to laws and rituals are difficult concepts to accept – both for the Galatians and us. We naturally want to make our standing before God about our own actions rather than Christ's sacrifice for us. The Galatians were new believers and did not have the maturity to see the serious implications of thinking they needed to justify themselves by the law rather than by faith in Christ. Faith in Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for them.

6. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, Greek did not have punctuation like periods or exclamation points. If you wanted to make a strong point, you said it twice in Greek. What is Paul's main point about the false teachers in verses 8-9?

With Christ's authority as an apostle, Paul is emphatically handing over the false teachers to eternal condemnation for teaching another gospel than salvation by faith in Christ.

7. Was Paul making too big of a deal about the message of the false teachers? After all, Paul circumcised Timothy so that Timothy's ministry would be acceptable to Jewish communities. What harm could emphasis on the obedience to the Law of Moses possibly do?

The issue of whether someone was circumcised meant nothing to Paul. He circumcised Timothy so that Timothy could preach the gospel of Christ to Jewish communities. In his

closing remarks to the Galatians, Paul writes in Galatians 6:15, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." The real issue to Paul was whether the Galatians were placing their faith in Christ or in their adherence to religious rituals and Jewish laws. Paul made it clear that faith in Christ, accompanied by love, is the only thing that saves.

8. You might think that Paul had an unfavorable view of the Mosaic Law after the first reading in Galatians, but nothing could be further from the truth. Read Paul's comments on the law in Galatians and Romans and discuss his view of the law.

Gal 3:21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Gal 3:23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

Gal 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 3:25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

1Ti 1:8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

1Ti 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels

Ro 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

Ro 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Paul said the law was holy, righteous, and good. The weakness of the law is us, not the law. We are prisoners of sin (without Christ). Just as God came to us to restore unity with him, God restores our righteousness and gives us life through Jesus Christ.

As a young man, I believed I was "good enough" to please God. I was certainly better than most of my friends! It wasn't until a pastor took me through the Bible that I understood my sin and my need for a Savior. The law convicts us of sin so that we look to Christ as our savior from sin and all its consequences. The law was good but could not deliver people from their sins and reconcile them to God's holiness because of their own corruption. If we could obey the law perfectly, Christ's death would not have been needed. The law was the basis of the Old Covenant through Moses, but now we live under a New Covenant, put in place through Christ's blood and kept in us through God's Spirit. If we walk by the Spirit, we will not sin, but when we do sin, God is quick to forgive us because of our faith in Christ. We are free to put down our guilt and lovingly serve others in Christ's name.

9. What parallels do you see between the mindset of legalism in the Galatians and your thinking?
- a. Judging yourself by your obedience?
 - b. Judging others by their dress, appearance, or worship style?
 - c. Other parallels?

We probably judge ourselves most legalistically. We feel close to God when we've obeyed and distant from God when we've sinned. We are trying to justify ourselves to God through our own actions. We are like spiritual yoyos, going up and down by our last action or thought. Christ calls us to peace and rest. He is our justification, our holiness, and our righteousness.

It seems we can't help but judge others by their outward appearances. Those who dress and worship casually might be seen as irreverent. Those who dress formally might be seen as judgmental hypocrites by those who are casual. We have many stereotypes and filters in our thinking we need to deal with.

There is no end to accounts of church division due to the songs, hymnals, worship style, or even the new carpet color in the church building. We all have personal preferences, but they represent a legalistic mindset if they lead to divisions.

10. The blood of Christ accomplishes our sanctification, redemption, justification, atonement, and reconciliation. Paul refers to these acts and others throughout his letters; we should have a good idea of what they mean. Match the words on the left with their definition on the right.

Adoption	10	1	God's unmerited gifts and blessings to us.
Atonement	5	2	To make holy through faith in Christ and to set apart for God's purposes.
Election	12	3	To buy something back that has been held in bondage, as Christ bought us from the bondage of sin.
Faith	11	4	To make a defense to God for our righteousness or holiness.
Gospel	9	5	To suffer the consequences of sin to reconcile us to God.
Grace	1	6	To bear the punishment for another person, as Christ bore the punishment of our sins for us.
Justification	4	7	To make a sacrifice for sin to turn away God's wrath.
Predestination	13	8	To be rescued from sin's consequences and given eternal life through faith in Christ.
Propitiation	7	9	The good news of God's salvation for us through faith in Jesus Christ.
Reconciliation	15	10	To become God's children through faith in Jesus Christ.
Redemption	3	11	To be sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see.
Repentance	14	12	To be chosen by God for faith in Christ and eternal life.
Righteous	16	13	God's actions to make our salvation and eternal life in Christ sure.
Salvation	8	14	To be convicted by sin and to turn away from it.
Sanctification	2	15	To bring unity to a broken relationship, as Christ did between God and us.
Substitution	6	16	To be holy and act in ways pleasing to God.

Closing Prayer