

## Parson to Person

### Galatians 1

#### (Introduction – Part 1)

*“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:*

*Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 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, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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

*But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and*

*returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me" (Galatians 1).*

### **The Date of This Epistle (48–49 A.D.)**

While scholars argue the date of Paul's letter to the Galatians, we know that it was among the first letters written. His other earlier letter is 1 Thessalonians. Therefore, we can see the importance of the two letters—one giving focus to the nature of the end times (eschatology), and the other on the Gospel itself (soteriology).

### **The Purpose of this Epistle**

The critical importance of Galatians is Paul's defense of the Gospel—a message he received from the Lord Himself. Paul wrote, *"the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (vss. 11b–12). This is a powerful and profound statement from the apostle—for it was a divine *"revelation"* on the Gospel of Grace as compared to the Gospel of the Kingdom. Moreover, it was a Gospel message that brought needed clarity to all the apostles and, therefore, the Church as a whole. In fact, much of this message seems to have been a revelation to the other earlier appointed apostles who may have needed this clarity (see Galatians 2:11–21).

With this in mind, it seems best to recognize that Galatians was written prior to the *"Jerusalem Counsel"* (see Acts 15) where the

early apostles met to pray and discuss the details of the Gospel of Grace and how it related to the Gentiles' reception of salvation—apart from the deeds of the Law, circumcision, etc.

## **The Gospel of Grace**

The Gospel of Grace was elongated in Paul's epistle to the Romans but definitively simplified here in Galatians. An even further simplification was given to the Corinthians. It reads, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved"* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2a). Added definition was given to the Ephesians when Paul wrote, *"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"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

## **To The Jews and Also to the Gentiles**

The message of hope was provided to both Jews and Gentiles without distinction. Paul wrote, *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26–28).

## **Distinctions Remain**

The universality of the Gospel of Grace did not remove the realities of the distinction between the Jew and the Gentile—any more than it did male and female, slave or free. However, it did dispel the idea that a Gentile must become a Jew in order to be saved.

Salvation as cited at Candlelight is often mentioned with the five distinctions of the Gospel of Grace: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as declared in the Scriptures alone, for the

glory of God alone. The Gospel of grace contains no front-loading and no back-loading. It contains no human-centric prerequisite work (GK: ergon) in order to obtain salvation and no post-salvific work (GK: ergon) designed to maintain salvation. The Gospel of Grace is simply the good news that man may respond to the divine call of God, by faith alone, in the finished work of Christ.

## **The Gospel of the Kingdom**

The Gospel of the Kingdom is a distinct message concerning the future earthly kingdom of our Lord (see Revelation 20). The coming earthly reign of the Messiah is the fulfillment of many promises made to the Jewish people—who will be healed of their current blindness and revived to enjoy its blessings (see Psalm 2; 110; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 31; 33:14–18; Ezekiel 36; Matthew 4:23; 24:14, and Romans 9–11). It is the anticipated Kingdom the Old Testament saints looked for but died before receiving the promise (see Hebrews 11:13–16). They, along with the Tribulation saints, will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Jesus in order to reign with Him (see Hosea 6:1–3, Isaiah 26:12–21, Daniel 12:2, Revelation 20:4–6). We too, as believers from the Church Age, will also be raised to live and reign with Him before that great and glorious day (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

It should be noted that those who do not respond to the Gospel of Grace will forfeit the blessings associated with the Gospel of the Kingdom (see Matthew 8:11–12, Luke 13:28–30). Moreover, one may preach and/or believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom while rejecting the Gospel of Grace—and thus forfeit the blessings associated with the Gospel of the Kingdom. This has been, is, and will be a great tragedy. This was the case with the Christ-rejecting Jews and many today!

## **In Defense of the Gospel of Grace—A Stern Warning**

Paul was greatly pressed to defend the Gospel of Grace. He knew that the reception of Jesus as Messiah by grace alone, through faith alone, was the only hope for the salvation of man—and was indeed the only way one would see the Kingdom (see John 3:1–21). For this reason (among others), he declared, *“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. 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”* (vss. 8–9).

I cannot think of a stronger warning in any epistle. Therefore, we heed the warning and preach the Gospel of Grace.

Love you all,  
Pastor Paul