

Galatians 1 - JESUS PLUS NOTHING! - Part 1
Paul's Salvation, Calling, and Message

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

No Other Gospel

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! ¹⁰Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:1-10, NIV).

Let us pray.

I want to begin this trek through the New Testament with some words about Paul. I want to examine his conversion, his calling, and his message. You might want to ask, "Why should we believe what Paul says? Is his message really from God? Is this really what Christianity is all about or is it just his ramblings?" As I've grown older in the faith Paul has become more important to me. I don't think I fully appreciated Paul until I took a trip to Greece and saw the places where he had his ministry. Many of you all in the congregation this morning don't really know a lot about Paul, so we're going to talk about him before we launch off into reading so many of his writings that are now the bulk of the New Testament.

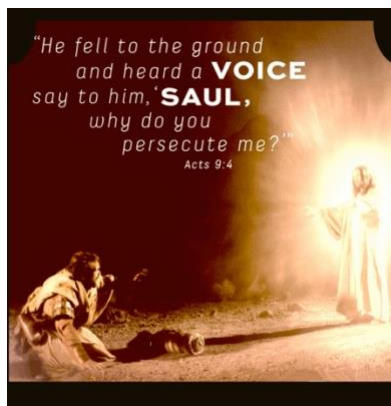
Between Paul's conversion and his imprisonment was about 30 years. He lived an INCREDIBLY difficult life. He began going east of Israel and ending up founding churches all over what is now modern Turkey and Greece. After he had founded these churches, he sent letters to them detailing much of the fundamental doctrine we now follow as Christians. He would go and found a church, and then later he would send a letter to help with some problem, some

question, or some event that was going on within that church. This is how we, as Christians, receive a lot of our instruction as to how we are to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Inevitably, after he would leave, someone would come through and give a different message and the bottom line of their message was that Jesus was not enough. Sometimes they would say that since Jesus was a Jew and salvation was from the Jews, that you had to submit to the law of Moses to be saved. This WAS NOT THE MESSAGE THAT PAUL HAD PREACHED. He came under all kinds of attack (including attacks on him as a person) if they didn't agree with him. That is called an "ad hominem" argument. It is an argument "against the person." It was a way to get at the message of Paul which over and over tells us, "JESUS IS ENOUGH!"

Galatians is thought to be the first book that Paul ever wrote to any of the churches. It is a very old book of the New Testament. In this letter, as in most of his other letters, Paul not only defends himself, but has to again and again restate and reemphasize just exactly what the gospel is. In the first verses of this letter, Paul goes through his calling and his message. And what was his message? Jesus is enough. Salvation comes through Jesus + NOTHING. We get into all kinds of trouble when add things on to Jesus, don't we?. What am I talking about? Jesus PLUS an organization, Jesus PLUS an institutional church, Jesus PLUS a list of conduct, Jesus PLUS anything is not the gospel.

As Paul left Galatia, there were those who came behind him asking, "Who is this guy and what gives him the right to come tell us what to do?" Paul starts right off saying, "Paul, an APOSTLE." That means one who has been sent by God, not by men. Let's go back and look at how Paul, this Jew of all Jews, become a Christ-Follower. It needs to be reviewed before we launch into reading all of his letters to the churches. Turn in your Bibles to Acts Chapter 9 and read with me. This is the account of: (1) where he was saved, and (2) where he was commissioned.



9 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." ⁶So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a

vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

¹³ Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much ^[b]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." ¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. (Acts 9:1-19, NKJV).

Paul's salvation was dramatic! He was a persecutor of Christians and he was a tormentor of the church. God called him dramatically. The Lord reached out to him. The Lord called Paul to Himself. The Lord chose Paul and knocked him down to bring him to where he was supposed to be.

Then in Acts 13, Paul is commissioned. He received his calling.

13 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. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13: 1-3, NKJV).

Luke tells us that it was the Holy Spirit that spoke and set apart Barnabas and Saul. God made a declaration, and Paul tells the Galatians, "God saved me and God appointed me to this." You'll notice that Paul tells us exactly where he got the good news in verse 11 of our text. Remember that Paul had never known Jesus personally.

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. (Galatians 1:11-12, NKJV).

Paul went to seminary at the feet of Jesus. Paul's conversion, then his appointment, and then his message **ALL** came from the Lord. So is it a logical question to wonder what makes Paul so different from others that come along and claim to have a gospel? What others am I talking about? Well, people like Mohammed, the father of Islam, or Joseph Smith, the father of Mormonism). Both men claimed to have had a vision from God and both men wrote down

what they said was scripture. One huge difference is that Paul questioned himself as to whether or not what he had received was real. He wondered if it was really from God. When we come to Galatians Chapter 2, Paul will tell us how he met with some of those who had known Jesus personally, and he will tell us how he was vetted. He was willing and went to compare what he had received from what they had received. He wanted to know the truthfulness of what he had been shown.

Peter in his own epistles, would later write about Paul. *"¹⁵and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16, NKJV).*

So let's return to verses one and two of our text, and look at how this letter begins. Galatians 1:1-5 again. —*1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV).*

Look at the words again, that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead AND Jesus is enough. There is nothing else to add to Jesus. Anything you add to Jesus is a different gospel. It is not THE GOSPEL. The ONLY THING is Faith in Jesus Christ. It does not require baptism, it doesn't require confession to a priest, it does not require church membership, it does not require taking Holy Communion, it does not require a certain lifestyle. It is not Jesus plus speaking in tongues. It is JESUS AND HIM ALONE. Remember what scripture tells us,

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10, NKJV).

Biblical Christianity is the ONLY religion in which you can't do ANYTHING about your sin and being saved. All you can do is say, "Lord, I believe! Lord, I give up." He does all of the saving. We try over and over as humans to make our religion and our faith, and our salvation about something we can control. We want to be able to control whether or not we are acceptable to God. We will be studying Titus very soon, so listen to a preview of what we'll be studying.

⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7, NKJV).

Today's message is:

- 1) Jesus came to Paul in a vision and Paul dramatically surrendered his life to Christ.
- 2) The Holy Spirit of God was who called Paul to share the gospel that he had received to the Gentiles.
- 3) The true gospel NEVER adds anything to Jesus. It is always JESUS PLUS NOTHING. NOTHING YOU CAN DO BRINGS YOU SALVATION.

The Gospel remains the same. You may not be on the road to Damascus, but you're on the road to somewhere. God is pursuing you. Are you pursuing Him? If you are, today may be the day of your salvation. In chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, Jesus told the righteous Jew Nicodemus that in order to be saved, a person must be born again. That means that the dead spirit that is within each of us, can only come to life through Jesus. In a mystery that none of us can understand, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16, NKJV).

Paul, in a letter that we'll study later, sort of lays down the stepping stones to show each of us the pathway to salvation and eternal life. Paul tells us:

- 1) All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). This means that none of us is righteous, not even one. You were born in sin and you will die in sin unless the spirit within you comes alive by being born-again.
- 2) The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). This means that if you desire to be apart from God in this life-time, He will allow you to be apart from Him for all of eternity. That is hell. It is eternal separation from a God who loves you and wants to have fellowship with you.
- 3) If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). That means that you just need to truly understand that Jesus is your ONLY hope and He is your only Lord and Savior.
- 4) Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13). That is an affirmation of the first three points on this list. If you acknowledge that you are a sinner, and if you desire to be with Him for eternity, confess with your mouth that He is Who He said He is and that He is your only hope. When you cry out to Him, His promise is that YOU WILL BE SAVED.
Let us pray.

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