

Thirty-Five Days in Galatians

Study One: Days One to Seven

Galatians 1:1-2:10

Day One

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.

v. 1 – Paul was making a strong statement in the opening line, obviously countering criticism that he was a self- or man-appointed apostle. An apostle is one who was “sent forth.” Paul was “sent forth” by the Father and Jesus. He wanted to establish his authority, which was a clue to the tone of the letter. Paul was writing to set some things straight, and he needed to present his credentials right up front.

Paul knew his life purpose. He never wavered in unbelief or doubt. Read his own account of his Damascus Road experience in [Acts 26:12-19](#). What is your “heavenly vision” for your own life? Is such clarity reserved only for apostles or does God want you to know the purpose for your life as well? If God wants you to do His will, He must show you what that will is?

v. 2 – Paul traveled with a team. At one time or another, he traveled with Barnabas, Titus, Timothy, Luke and others. In [Acts 13:1](#) we also see that Paul ministered in the context of a team, even in the local church. Are you part of a ministry team? Why or why not? What is the value of team ministry?

This was a letter that was to be distributed to the churches that Paul and Barnabas planted on their first missionary journey to the southern part of the province of Galatia. Paul used the postal system to stay in touch with his church responsibilities. Today Paul would use email. Are you using all that is at your disposal to do what God has created you to do?

v. 3 – Paul prayed for grace and peace to be on the churches there. But this wasn’t just a nice greeting, nor was it just a wish for any grace or peace. It was for the peace that comes from the Father and the Son. Paul was writing to confront conflict in the church and his goal was “grace and peace” from God. That is a good ministry goal for all of us to pursue.

vs. 4&5 – Paul, as usual, made it very clear that he was not writing or ministering in his name or to establish his ministry or position. Paul focused on Jesus, who paid the price to rescue not only the Galatian believers, but Paul as well. In the first five verses, Paul

mentioned the Father three times and Jesus twice. I am endeavoring to do the same in all my written and spoken ministry these days. It's all about Jesus! It's all about the Father and not about me.

Jesus gave Himself according to the Father's will and now Paul was doing the same. We are all to follow Jesus' example by laying down our lives for the brethren.

Notice the progression: the Father sent the Son and now the Son sent Paul. There is a divine flow in what Paul is writing and he wanted everyone to understand where the source was.

Day Two

- 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!

v. 6 – Paul immediately confronted the reason he wrote the letter: the Galatians were going astray from the gospel he had presented them. There were men who were teaching that the Galatians, and all believers for that matter, had to follow the Law of Moses and be circumcised. Notice that Paul portrayed this doctrinal shift the equivalent of deserting him, who had called them by the grace of Christ. He was surprised that it had happened so quickly after his initial work among them.

Doctrinal issues in the early church helped the early church define difficult issues after Jesus' ascension. The controversy allowed the Holy Spirit to work through the leaders to define what was and wasn't true. The issue of the Christian and the Law of Moses was the first issue to be confronted by the Church.

v. 7 – The gospel (the good news) that the Galatians were beginning to follow was no good news at all. It was a perversion of the truth, and Paul spent the remainder of this letter refuting and correcting this perversion. It *does* matter what you believe. That is why you and I need to be taught and continue to learn and grow in the knowledge of God. I pray regularly, "God, keep me from 'funny' doctrines. Don't let me deceive myself or be deceived." When it comes to the gospel, there is no room for personal preference or opinion. Ask the Lord to show you if you have strayed into any areas of doctrinal deception or "fuzziness."

v. 8 – This verse lets us know that these preachers of another gospel were not to be tolerated in the name of love. They were to be eternally condemned, according to the apostle. That is how seriously he took this controversy. It does matter what you believe,

and Paul wanted his churches to believe correctly. Paul saw that to put any trust in the flesh in **any** way was to negate faith and without faith, it is impossible to please God. So the Galatians were wandering into an area that wasn't just a matter of perspective or preference. They were in the minefield of heresy!

v. 9 – In case the Galatians missed his first condemnation, Paul repeated it a second time. There could be no toleration of this gospel aberration. If anyone preached it or believed it, they belonged in hell! Paul left no room to misunderstand where he stood on this subject. So much for the thought that there are many roads to heaven, as long as someone is sincere. Paul was clear: there is only one gospel and one way to salvation.

Day Three

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.

11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.

12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

v. 10 – Paul posed a good question and one that I asked myself the other day. I have found that often I have been trying to win the approval of men and at times it has hindered my effectiveness for God. It seems that it is impossible to please men and be a servant of Christ. Although men's approval may not conflict with the service for God, it very often does. Many who have served God have often been opposed in their own generation and immortalized by the next generation. When I was thinking about this issue, I looked at the following passages:

"I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41-44)

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5).

No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2:29).

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).

Also read John 2:24-25; 7:12; 9:22; Matthew 6:5-6; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 10:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:4

vs. 11&12 – Paul let the Galatians know that the gospel he preached was not an option or one of many ways of serving God and Christ. Paul did not devise this gospel himself; it was a revelation from Jesus. This fact required obedience on the part of the people to whom Paul preached. Jesus referred to the same dynamic when he talked with Peter:

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven (Matthew 16:15-17).

What we “see” and “know” is a gift of Jesus. When men and women teach us truth, they are only God’s instruments that He uses to impart His revelation. We owe our allegiance not to the one who taught us but to the One who revealed the truth to our hearts and minds, namely Jesus. We also owe our obedience not to doctrine that has been contrived by men but to truth from God. That is why the word of God is so important, for it is the core of God’s revelation to man. Anything extra is simply the teaching of men. You honor men, but you worship God.

Day Four

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased

16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

v. 13 – When Paul was with the Galatians, he must have been open about his previous life and told them how much he at one time hated the church. If God can save and use Paul, God can use anybody! This man was persecuting and murdering believers and felt like he was doing God a favor. He was as radical as any Middle Eastern zealot that we see on television today fighting for a cause. Yet God apprehended Saul on the Damascus road and called him to a divine mission to the Gentile world. This should encourage you in your prayer life, for no one is beyond the touch of God’s grace. Keep praying, even for the most hardened soul.

Read Acts 9:1-21; Acts 22:17-21; Acts 26:9-19

v. 14 – When Paul became a believer, his peers hated him and tried to kill him on several occasions. We can only believe that most of his family also disowned him. This is how powerful the “traditions of the fathers” can be. Their way of thinking became so hardened that they could not accept or even tolerate any deviation as represented by Paul’s conversion. The Jews way of life was so bizarre that they would kill to maintain it rather than change it. Where has your thinking “hardened?” Do you know? Ask God to show you if it has in any area.

vs. 15-17 – Paul saw his calling as one similar to the Old Testament prophets. It was a calling directly from God and not through any human agency. Therefore Paul saw that he was ultimately accountable to God for this message. What faith! What courage! Paul believed that this radical and new revelation was from God and acted accordingly. He did not waver in unbelief or doubt.

Paul also referred to himself as an apostle. He knew who he was and what his role was in the body of Christ. I admire Paul’s certainty and clarity. We are not sure what Paul was doing during those years in Arabia and Damascus. I think he would have been going into synagogues to preach Christ, but I am sure he was also clarifying and praying about what had happened to him on the Damascus road.

Who are you in Christ? What is your purpose? What does He want you to do? Are you doing it, or are you wallowing in self-doubt and God-doubt? Are you afraid of what people are saying or thinking, or are you more afraid of not doing what God wants you to do?

Day Five

- 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.
- 19 I saw none of the other apostles-- only James, the Lord's brother.
- 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.
- 21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.
- 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
- 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."
- 24 And they praised God because of me.

vs. 18&19 – Paul established his apostolic credentials once again for the Galatians. He received his revelation directly from God and only after three years did he go to Jerusalem to consult with Peter. (This was his first of four or five visits to Jerusalem after his conversion.) Paul wanted the Galatians to know that his message and ministry did not originate in Jerusalem with the original apostles. His ministry was from God!

Notice how you always went “up” to Jerusalem no matter whether you approached it from the north or south. Jerusalem was the “high” holy city of God and was the pinnacle of worship for Judaism. But Jerusalem quickly faded in importance, mainly due to their

resistance to the mission to the Gentile world. God was moving on, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem never did and were relegated in importance to Antioch and other Gentile centers.

At this time, Paul also saw James, brother of Jesus and probable writer of the epistle by that name. This visit was well before the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

v. 20 – This is a curious statement and probably a response to the charge that Paul was indeed lying about the nature of his message or his apostleship. Perhaps those who were preaching the Law and circumcision were making a case that Paul had strong ties to the Jerusalem leaders and that Paul himself would approve of Christians following the Law. Paul worked to distance himself from any ties or influence from Jerusalem so that the Galatians would follow his teaching as the revelation from God.

This is similar to Jesus repeatedly saying during His ministry, “I tell you the truth” or “Verily, verily I say unto ye.” The truth was so strange that it seemed untrue and the proclaimers of truth had to assure their hearers that they were speaking truth.

v. 21 – Paul was a man on the move. He was an apostle. I do not understand modern-day apostles who don’t go anywhere. They pastor a church or get on the conference circuit and go from place to place preaching. But they do not plant churches or do much to personally engage the people except from the pulpit. I don’t understand this. Paul did not pastor a local church and also travel to speak in churches.

vs. 22-24 – Paul once again tried to distance himself from any connection with the Jewish church that would allow others to connect him to the heresy he was confronting. He had met with Peter once and had not even visited churches in Judea. The churches were worshiping and praising God because of Paul’s testimony, but they had never met him.

Day Six

1 Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.

2 I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.

3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

4 [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

v. 1 –When was this visit that Paul referred to? It was probably on his mission of mercy to the Judean churches that is mentioned in Acts 11:27-30 and Acts 12:25. We may also

assume that it was on this visit that the events described by Luke in [Acts 22:17-21](#). (I would suggest that you read those verses.)

v. 2 – We cannot underestimate how radical and controversial the revelation of going to the Gentiles truly was. Up to this point, Jews had done very little to convert the Gentiles. If a Gentile wanted to convert, then he or she had to commit to live like a Jew, including a kosher lifestyle. Paul was now working among the Gentiles in Antioch and had come to the point of clarity of what God commanded him to do on the Damascus road. This represented a radical break with the Jewish mindset, which was held by most believers as well.

It takes time to understand the call and purpose of God for you. When I heard that I was to bring “order out of chaos” as a life purpose, it took me another 10 years to better comprehend and begin to do just that. Now 20 years later, I have an even better understanding of what that means and what I am to do. But just because you don’t fully understand your purpose doesn’t mean you shouldn’t make every effort to fulfill it, walking in the understanding that you have at the moment. I believe that Paul went into the Arabian desert after the Damascus road to reflect and to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles who were there. It is hard for me to imagine a man like Paul waiting 14 years to do what God told him to do as some have assumed.

What are you doing about what God has told you to do? What has He told you? What can you do today, this week, with the purpose that God has established in your life?

v. 3 – Remember that Paul was confronting the teaching by so-called believers that male believers in Jesus had to be circumcised. He pointed out that, after his meeting with the apostles, Titus, who was a Greek, was not required by the apostles to be circumcised. Paul was a logical man, who argued and taught with facts and passion. Your faith isn’t a matter of feelings but of logic as well.

Vs. 4&5 – Paul referred to these so-called teachers in military terms. They had “infiltrated the ranks” to “spy” and make the believers “slaves” of conquest. Paul was not kind or loving toward these spies. He saw them for what they were. That is another role of the apostle: to protect the flock from false doctrine and ministry wolves.

The early church had its share of doctrinal controversies. But every controversy served to help focus the leaders on the issues that needed attention and allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work. As painful and divisive as these issues were, they served the church and the Lord well, for they paved the way for clarity of thought and doctrine that has made the Church the great and lasting institution that it is today.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see

me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come (John 16:7-13).

We owe a great debt to all those who served the Lord in their day and who helped bring the truth to us today in such a clear and concise form. May you and I be as faithful to serve in our day as they did in theirs.

Day Seven

6 As for those who seemed to be important-- whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance-- those men added nothing to my message.

7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.

8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.

10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

v. 6 – At first appearance, this seems like a harsh statement concerning the leadership of the early church. Paul saw the importance of putting his unique message before the Jerusalem leaders but he was not a man who was intimidated by the outward rank or seeming importance of other apostles or leaders. Remember, Paul was a Pharisee and there was a definite hierarchy of leadership in that movement. He saw that those who were “important” in Judaism actually resisted the gospel, so he wasn’t going to surrender the truth he had received from God in return for the endorsement of leaders who did not fully understand what he was called to do, even the Lord’s apostles.

Paul saw himself as a prophet in the true tradition of the Old Testament. Many of those prophets had to stand alone or confront the leaders of Israel when they had gone astray. Paul was now walking in that role.

How much of what God has called you to do have you surrendered to other people, especially leaders? Remember that your first and foremost priority is to obey God and not men.

vs. 7&8 – The leaders saw and recognized the grace of God at work in Paul’s life. They did not have to like or understand what he was doing; they simply had to recognize that it was from God. Paul equated his work among the Gentiles to the work of Peter among the

Jews. And he pointed out that God was at work in his ministry just like God was at work in Peter's.

It is a bit unusual that Paul had to endorse his own ministry to the Galatians. I wonder why the Jerusalem apostles had not written their own endorsement. My opinion is that while the Jerusalem leaders recognized God's hand in Paul's work, they were hesitant to support it publicly due to its controversial nature among Jewish believers.

I don't think Jerusalem liked Paul or his message. When Paul came to Jerusalem in [Acts 21](#), the apostles indicated that many people in Jerusalem were believers who had been informed that Paul taught against the traditions of the Jewish fathers. They urged Paul to take steps to prove his support of Jewish traditions, steps that proved unsuccessful. Why didn't the apostles step in to endorse Paul when the crowds rose against him? Because they did not like Paul, his methods or his message.

What do you think about this theory? Does it have merit?

v. 9 – Why didn't the Jerusalem church go the Gentiles themselves? Why did they delegate this work to Paul and his team? Probably because the apostles did not want to go to the Gentiles themselves, or at least in the manner that Paul did. It is amazing that the apostles, the "sent forth ones," were unwilling to be sent forth and if they were sent forth, they only wanted to go to Jews. This seems to reek of prejudice.

Is it possible to reject God's purpose for your life? In [Luke 7:30](#), Luke reported, "But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John." Eventually tradition reports that the apostles did go to the nations, but it sure took them a long time to come to grips with the directive from Jesus, which said,

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

They were so steeped in tradition and Judaism that they had to be convinced that Paul was doing the will of God and even then weren't willing to join him, although to their credit they endorsed him, at least in private.

What implications does this have for you and me? We can know the will of God, talk about the will of God, sing about the will of God, but until we *do* the will of God, we are disobedient. And we cannot count on other's support or understanding as we seek to walk out our obedience.

v. 10 – What poor were the apostles referring to? Since he was in Jerusalem on a mission to the poor, I wonder if the apostles meant the world's poor or the poor in Jerusalem? Were the apostles concerned about all the poor or just their own? We have an account in

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[Acts 6:1](#) where the apostles were only concerned with the Hebraic widows and not the Greek widows. Is this another example of the apostles' prejudice?

I hope I am not being too hard on the apostles. They were great men. But they were not perfect men; they were products of their culture and upbringing, and culture is difficult to overcome for anyone as they follow Jesus. I am sure future generations will look at this generation and marvel at our materialism, treatment of women and minorities and greed. May the Lord help us to serve and obey Him as He commands.