



SERIES: GALATIANS

GALATIANS 1:1-10

November 23, 2009

This book of the Bible is about the gospel. Paul, who planted the churches in Galatia, writes this letter to defend himself and the gospel against false teachers who have crept into the church in Paul's absence and attacked him and his teachings.

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

Paul identifies himself as being called by God, not by men. This is essential as it ascribes authority to Paul; if God truly chose Paul as His messenger, then Paul's teachings must be adhered to since they are the very teachings of God. Just like many Old Testament prophets who consistently declared "Thus says the Lord", Paul makes the bold claim that he is speaking on God's behalf. He clearly states that he did not get his teachings from any men, nor his authority from any man, but from God alone.

Paul immediately declares the gospel: Jesus gave his life for our sins to deliver us from evil and reconcile us back to God. This "present evil age" likely refers to the current sinful, fallen world that we live in, from Adam and Eve to now. God, through Jesus, came to rescue us from this miserable helpless state and give us life and hope for a better future with him.

Note that in response, Paul makes a declaration of praise to God (vs. 5). The truth of God's saving grace stirs up praise in the hearts of God's people.

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

This is the primary issue at hand: false teaching. Deceivers have come into the church and are preaching a different gospel than the one Paul preached (remember, if Paul speaks for God, then these false teachers are opposing God's teachings).

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you another gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Paul states *twice* that anyone who preaches a false gospel is damned to hell. This includes himself or even an angel. Paul demonstrates humility here in challenging his listeners to make sure even he is preaching and teaching accurately.



It is also interesting that both Mohammed (the prophet of Islam) and Joseph Smith (the founder of Mormonism/Latter day saints) claim to have encountered an angel who essentially gave them a new gospel. Both Mohammed and Joseph Smith undoubtedly encountered an angel—however, it was a damned angel (a demon) masquerading as an agent of God. These angels shared a false gospel and thus two false religions were birthed.

God plainly declares that any human or angelic being that teaches a false gospel is of the Devil and is cursed. Thus, we must always ensure that the Bible is our highest authority and that all teachers and angels serve Jesus Christ.

10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Because Paul is serving God, he has suffered great hardship, including being stoned, beaten several times, imprisoned, and forced to flee for his life. Paul is basically asking, why would I suffer all this if I was simply pleasing men? Paul indicates that he suffers because he is doing so for God; if not, he would have quit many years ago. This challenges us to ensure that we are God-pleasers and not people-pleasers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it significant that Paul's authority comes from God and not men? How does this affect me when I read the Bible?
2. What are ways I can spot false teachers?
3. Am I a people-pleaser or a God-pleaser? What in my life gives me evidence of this?