

## **The Letter to the Galatians**

### **Lesson Two**

#### **Galatians 1: 2-14 / Grace vs Legalism**

##### **Synopsis:**

Galatians is an exciting book.

In it, the Apostle Paul lays down a foundation which every Christian needs in their life to guard against the most subtle trap believers can fall into, the trap of legalism.

##### **Introduction:**

Most of the books making up the New Testament have one central theme.

For example, the book Ephesians deals with the Church, while Philippians deals with joy.

The theme of Galatians deals with the dangers of legalism.

It has two positive themes, salvation by grace, and spirituality by grace.

When I refer to legalism, I am referring to the idea that something must be added to the grace of God either to get saved or to grow spiritually.

To most of us, this idea seems ridiculous.

We sometimes pride ourselves that we could never be as foolish as these people to think that we could ever do anything to merit God's favor.

Yet there is a great lesson for us in this book, because at times, we come much closer to this way of thinking than we realize.

Legalism takes our eyes off God and others, and onto ourselves.

That is exactly what the devil wants us to do, to start looking at our own self-righteousness or to overfocus on our own shortcomings and failures.

Once we start doing that, it can become a trap.

This has the potential to cause us to fail to reach out to bless and win others.

Paul knew all this.

This is the reason he wrote this strongly worded letter to the churches in Galatia.

He was extremely concerned that they would fall victim to legalism because as he said in ***II Corinthians 3: 6 Part-b for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

Keeping this in mind, let's begin where we left off at the end of Lesson one and start with ***Galatians 1: 2;***

***2 and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:***

Here we see that Paul continues to emphasize his qualification and authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ by pointing out that he is not alone in the ministry but is accompanied by other well-qualified and recognized leaders in the Church.

Here in ***verse 2***, he is quick to point out that although he is personally chosen, hand-picked by the Lord Himself, he does not stand alone, he operates with a team.

Like Paul, all of us must understand that we do not stand alone.

As individual members of a family, we must all work together in unified purpose if we are to accomplish what God has called us to do.

As members of the body of Christ, none of us must think of themselves as some great high and mighty person whom others owe allegiance.

Even Jesus said that He came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

He also made it clear that he who would be great in the Kingdom of God must be servant to all.

At this point, I need to answer a question, who were the members of Paul's team that I have referred to?

The rest of the team was made up of Titus, Silas, Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus.



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Let me make this clear, at the time of this writing, the other team members were not physically present with Paul.

They were spread throughout the province of Asia.

But they are one with him in purpose and goal.

## **Grace and Peace**

***3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,***

Here Paul gets right into the theme of the of this letter: The grace of God!

He immediately points out where grace comes from, God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

These people in Galatia had left grace and moved their belief into that of works.

This the basic problem that Paul is addressing even in his greeting.

Know this about works, am I saying that works are wrong?

No, not at all.

Works are fine.

We are supposed to work, just as the Lord worked.

Do you remember that Jesus told us that he who believed in Him would do the SAME works that He did and even greater works than His? (***John 14:12***)

But How?

He gave us that answer in ***John 15: 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.***

Fruit, (good works) are produced through us not because of anything we are or do of ourselves, but because of the Word which abides in us.

Works are produced by the same indwelling Spirit which did the works through Jesus.

We work because He has blessed us so much in grace that we just want to work for Him.

I don't know if what I am about to write will explain grace verses works or not, but here we go; have you ever noticed that the bible does not say that God loves the biggest givers, but that He loves the cheerful givers.

T. L. Osborne loved to tell about the old Methodist preacher who used to ask his parishioners, "Has God done anything so good for you that you just can't keep quiet about it?"

When God so freely provides for you that you just want to do something for Him.

You want to work for Him, you don't care if its cleaning the church building, or the carpet, sweep the floor, take up the offering, work in the nursery, visit the sick or to tell others about Him.

Then there is the matter of peace.

Notice that peace always follows grace.

People who are caught up in salvation by works are without peace.

Once you understand grace, then you begin to understand peace.

## **Deliverance**

*4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*



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The simple English word in this passage maybe one of the most powerful, the word *for*.

The Greek word translated in English means, "*in exchange for*."

Jesus Christ gave Himself in exchange for our sins.

You see, throughout the Word of God we read that Jesus took the curse of the law upon Himself and gave us the blessings of God in its place,

We received redemption.

But what did He receive?

Unrighteousness, our unrighteousness.

We received riches.

He received poverty.

He traded all that He had for all that we had, and trust me, our stuff has never been as good as His stuff.

How do you like that trade?

Notice the word *deliver*.

If there are people in this evil age who are not delivered from it, it is not God's fault.

Jesus traded His righteousness for our sin, but He will not force that exchange upon anyone.

Now let's consider the last portion of this scripture.

I really enjoy teaching the Word of God; however, I never want to imply that I am a smart guy and know a whole lot of anything.



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I can't explain this with a broad spectrum of intelligence, but the word *and*, between God and Father doesn't show up in the original Greek.

It really doesn't change the message of this scripture much, but it reads more accurately if you say, "***according to the will of God our Father.***"

**To whom be the glory**

***5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.***

Let's jump right to the last word in this scripture, "***Amen.***"

We are used to seeing this word coming at the end of a prayer or a hymn or even a sermon.

To us it marks the end of a prayer or thought.

But here, we find it inserted between the fifth and sixth verse of the very first chapter.

Why?

This word marks the end of Paul's greeting or opening remarks.

In the first three verses of this letter, Paul gives the entire plan of salvation, ending it with an amen.

Technically, he could have ended the letter right there.

He has given a pretty good synopsis of what needed to be said.

Take note though, that legalism is not mentioned in any form yet.

Nothing about Jewish law, animal sacrifice, circumcision, dietary restrictions, no dress code, or no list of do's or don'ts.

None.



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The whole plan of salvation is summarized in one concept: Jesus Christ went to the cross for sins, that we might be delivered from this present evil age. Amen.

### **Another Gospel**

***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.***

***8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a 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.***

Its in these verses that Paul gives a face to the problem.

In most of Paul's letters he starts with a positive message that edifies or lifts the church.

According to this passage of scripture, these people had left grace behind and moved into works being the foundation of their salvation.

***Verse 6*** can be more accurately translated; ***“I am shocked”*** rather than ***“I am astonished.”***

The phrase, ***“so quickly,”*** is used for a very good reason.

As far as I can tell, Paul was the first apostle God had called specifically to the gentiles.

What Paul found the hard way was that there were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem that were known as Judaizers who did not trust that Paul was a true apostle.

They would follow-up on what Paul was teaching by waiting until he moved on before they revealed their presence and began to spread their poisonous gospel of legalism.



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In this case, Paul had only been gone from the province of Galatia for a matter of a few short months.

It shouldn't really surprise us that it only took this long to twist the Gospel for these people because there is something about human nature that loves legalism.

What Paul is saying here is, ***"I am shocked to hear that some of you who joined ranks with Lord Jesus Christ have so quickly deserted."***

I'm sure that many of those who read this letter said to themselves, "We haven't deserted!"

But they had.

To turn away from the grace of God by mixing anything in with it is to go A.W.O.L.

Paul was using military terms to describe the condition of the Galatian Christians, so it is correct to say that it couldn't have been any worse if they had climbed over the fence and ran away.

Look again at ***"verse 6"*** as well as ***"verse 7."***

Here, Paul tells the Galatian Church that they have removed themselves from the grace of Christ to follow, ***"another gospel, which is not another gospel."***

This may seem a little confusing so let's look at this term, another gospel.

In the Greek, there are two words for another.

One is *heteros* and the other *allos*.

*Heteros* means another of a different kind.

*Allos* means another of the same kind.

In most translations of the bible such as the King James Version as well as the English Standard Version both Greek words are translated as, another.



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But this is unfortunate because they don't have the same meaning.

For example, if someone gave you an apple and then handed you an orange, they would both be pieces of fruit, but the second one would be *heteros*, another of a different kind.

However, if I had an apple and someone gave me another apple, it would *allos*, another of the same kind.

So what Paul is saying here is, ***"I am shocked that you have so soon deserted Him Who called you into the grace of Christ to follow after another gospel of a different kind which is not another of the same kind."***

In other words, Paul is telling these people that the Jews are telling them that their message is just another of the same gospel-but it is not.

It is another gospel, but it is not the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ.

It is *heteros*, another gospel of a different kind than what Paul and Barnabas taught them.

But, is there such a thing as *allos*, another Gospel of the same kind?

Yes, there is!

The Bible mentions the Gospel of Grace, the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of peace and more.

All of these are Gospels of the same kind.

They all refer to the same Gospel, they just emphasize different aspects of it.

But when something other than grace is mixed with the Gospel message, it ceases to be a different form of the same Gospel and becomes a different gospel altogether.

That's what Paul is telling these people about the new Jewish gospel they have been so quick to embrace.

Now let's look at the latter part of verse 7 through 9.

***7 but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.***

***8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a 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 is telling these people that if anyone, whoever they may be, preaches a gospel other than the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, that person is accursed.

By the same token, if anyone preaches the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, they must be blessed.

#### **Not to Please Man**

***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.***

***For am I now seeking the approval of man.....***, By this expression Paul means, "Am I trying to be pleasing people?"

*Paul and Dale Carnegie would never have gotten along. (Author of How to Win Friends and Influence People.)*

If that were the case, then Paul would be joining the ranks of the Jews and their message that he had just finished disputing.

Instead he is standing firm against them and their gospel message.



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When Paul was Saul of Tarsus, the zealous Pharisee, his whole life was wrapped up in pleasing the “powers that be.”

So much so that he hunted and persecuted the Church so he could advance himself in the Jewish religion.

But no more.

Now his whole life is wrapped up in pleasing God.

Even if it means being persecuted himself, as he was, repeatedly, until the end of his life.

If you ever concluded that it would be so cool to be an apostle, keep in mind that all the apostles that we know of in the early church were killed because of their service to Jesus Christ except John.

But we must remember, a servant pleases his master.

If you seek to please men then they are your master.

Be a servant of Christ and please Him.

### **Religion Versus the Gospel**

***11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.***

***12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.***



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***13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.***

***14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.***

Notice the contrast Paul makes here between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the religion of the Jews to which he himself was at one time totally dedicated.

***11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.***

***12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.***

The first difference is that religion comes from the mind of men and is passed on through their teachings, but the Gospel comes directly from Jesus Christ through personal revelation.

***13a For you have heard of my former life in Judaism,...***

Now Paul revisits his former life.

What Paul is referring to here is his lifestyle before he met Jesus Christ face to face on the Damascus road.

Now note the phrase *Judaism*, or the *Jews religion*.

As we have seen, religion is man's effort to achieve salvation through his own efforts.

That's why Paul goes on to stress how zealous he was when he was religious.

Look at these three passages of scripture written by Paul and let it touch your understanding about why he was the way he was.

***Philippians 3: 4-6 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:***

***5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;***

***6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.***

***1 Timothy 1: 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.***

***Galatians 2: 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.***



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This lets us know that if anyone could have been by works, Paul would have been our guy.

Now back to:

***Galatians 1: 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.***

Let's jump to the word "***traditions.***"

That word is a good definition for the word "***religion.***"

Paul knew that religion may be the worst to happen to mankind since the fall. Look at history carefully from this point of view and you will discover that religion has been responsible for the persecution of Christians than anything else you can find, combined.

Paul's conversion is a perfect example of what religion does TO us and what the Gospel does FOR us.



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