

# The Book of Galatians

## Lesson 1: No Other Gospel -- Galatians 1:1–10

Imagine opening a letter from someone you love and finding no warmth in the greeting, only urgency. Paul usually begins his letters with a string of thanksgivings, telling his readers how grateful he is for them and how often he prays for them. Not here. He says his hellos, and then, almost before the ink is dry, he is on his feet. Something is wrong in Galatia, and it is the kind of wrong that cannot wait for pleasantries. You can feel the table shake as he leans into it.

What had happened was this. Paul had walked into these towns with nothing but the good news of a crucified and risen Lord, and people had believed. Lives had turned. Then, after he left, other teachers arrived with a polished addition: faith in Jesus is fine, they said, but you also need to take on the works of the law of Moses to really belong. It sounded like more. It sounded like seriousness and devotion. And the Galatians were beginning to buy it.

Paul calls this a different gospel, and then he corrects himself, because there is no such thing. There is the gospel, the announcement that God in Christ has done for us what we could never do for ourselves, and there is everything else, which is not good news at all but a counterfeit that quietly empties the cross of its power. The stakes could not be higher. To trade the true gospel for an improved one is not an upgrade. It is desertion.

We are not so far from Galatia as we might think. We, too, feel the tug to add something to the simple gospel, a rule that makes us feel safer, a performance that makes us feel worthy, an approval we can earn from the people around us. So this letter is for us. Before Paul says one word about how to live, he plants a flag on what we believe, because a heart anchored in the real gospel is the only heart that can truly be free.

**Group Discussion:** Paul is astonished that the Galatians are abandoning the gospel so quickly after receiving it. What are some of the subtle ways a church or a Christian today can drift away from the true gospel without ever intending to leave it?

**Personal Reflection:** Paul says the gospel is something we receive, not something we improve. Where in your own walk are you tempted to add a human requirement, a performance, or an approval you must earn, to the finished work of Christ?

*Read Galatians 1:1–10*

## Study Questions

1. Paul insists that his apostleship is “not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (1:1). Why does Paul ground both his

authority and his message in the direct call of Christ and the resurrection, and what does this tell us about where the gospel comes from?

2. Paul says that Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age” (1:4). Name one specific way the present evil age still pulls on your heart. What would being delivered from its grip actually look like in your week?
3. Paul is “astonished” that the Galatians are “so quickly deserting him who called you” and “turning to a different gospel” (1:6). Why does Paul describe abandoning the true gospel as deserting God himself, rather than merely changing one’s opinion about doctrine?
4. Paul says the gospel is something the Galatians “received,” a fixed deposit, not a draft to be edited. Where have you been tempted to trim the gospel to make it more comfortable, or to add to it to make it more impressive?
5. Paul warns that some are “troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ” (1:7). What were these teachers adding to the gospel, and why does adding requirements for salvation actually destroy the good news rather than enrich it?
6. Think of a time you felt the pressure to please people more than to please God. How did it shape what you said, what you stayed silent about, or how you lived? What did that cost you?
7. Twice Paul pronounces a curse: “let him be accursed” on anyone, even an angel from heaven, who preaches a gospel contrary to the one they received (1:8–9). Why does Paul use such severe language, and what does this teach us about the authority and finality of the apostolic gospel?
8. The Galatians were drawn to teachers who seemed more advanced and more demanding. What makes a “more, better, deeper” message so attractive to us, and how can you tell the difference between genuine maturity and a counterfeit gospel?
9. Paul asks, “Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? ... If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (1:10). How does this verse expose the heart of the whole crisis in Galatia, and why can the gospel never be revised to suit human preferences, new claims of revelation, or the spirit of the age?
10. Look back across the whole passage. Paul will not let the gospel be touched because he knows it is the only thing that can truly set us free. Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, this week, to treasure and guard the one true gospel in your own heart and home.

## **Now or Later**

Reflect on these passages: 2 Corinthians 11:3–4, the danger of receiving a different gospel and a different spirit; Acts 2:38–42, the apostolic gospel the first Christians received and held to; Jude 3, contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints; 2 Timothy 1:13–14, guarding the pattern of sound words by the Holy Spirit; Romans 1:16, the gospel as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.