

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians

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Chapter One

PAUL'S AUTHORITY AS AN APOSTLE

We find Paul's apostolic greeting in chapter 1, verses 1 through 5: "**Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).**"

There is something unusual in this beginning of A Paul's greeting to the Galatians. You will note his introduction does not follow the custom of his introduction to other Epistles . . . that is, the custom of "**giving thanks.**" Notice the first verses of the other Epistles of Paul, and you will see in almost every one of them that he begins by thanking GOD for the believers in that particular city or area. But how could he give thanks for these Galatians who were turning from the grace of GOD, and returning to dead legalism?

I thank GOD for the statement made in verse 1: "**An apostle (not of men, neither BY man, BUT BY JESUS CHRIST AND GOD THE FATHER, who raised Him from the dead!**"

I do not judge when I make this statement: I am afraid we have too many apostles today (ministers, preachers, evangelists, Bible teachers) who ARE apostles of men, called by men, sent by men, and their message is to please men. I am afraid we have too many "assembly line" preachers today. You and I know that if a young man does not attend the denominational school or the denominational seminary, he does not have much of a chance at a big church in his particular denomination. The big denominations of our day are turning ministers off the assembly line like the automobile manufacturers turn automobiles off the assembly line. I am afraid that is the reason we have "**a famine in the land**" . . . not a famine of bread, not a famine of water, not a famine of crowds, big churches and big programs with bushel baskets of money - but a famine of the preaching of the Word, a famine of the hearing of the Word, because many of our ministers and pastors today are sent by the denomination they represent, rather than being sent by Almighty GOD.

Paul wanted it clearly understood that he was GOD's apostle, sent by GOD and the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and not of men! Paul wanted it clearly understood that he did not receive his apostleship from those who were apostles before him. Later, he proved this fact. He also proved that his commission came from the nail-pierced hand of the risen CHRIST, and from GOD the Father who sent the Son to die for the sin of the world and raised Him from the dead for our justification. Paul left no stone unturned to make it clear that he was GOD's preacher, and that ministry was not for sale.

Paul's message was a new message . . . a mystery not known before. His message, received direct from Heaven, was a new revelation of divine truth. The heart of Paul's message was "**the grace of God**," and that the grace of GOD had been extended to all men everywhere regardless of nationality - Jew or Gentile, Greeks or Barbarians - JESUS CHRIST died for all, and invites all . . . "**whosoever will**," let him come.

The message before the grace of GOD had been limited to the nation Israel, and the Gentiles could be saved only by becoming Jews, by submitting to the Jewish rite of circumcision, thus placing themselves under the laws and the rituals of the Israelites. These were called "Jewish proselytes." When Paul came with this new message of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing, he met with serious opposition from the eleven apostles who were preaching the Kingdom message to the Jews only.

Paul was a Jew . . . he was born in Tarsus. He was the son of a Roman citizen. He received his education in Tarsus, and received his theological training in the seminary in Jerusalem, under the teaching of the great Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling religious body in Israel. He was a very prominent member of the strictest sect of the Pharisees (Acts 26:5). I trust you will read the entire twenty-sixth chapter.

Paul was devoted to Judaism, soul, spirit and body. He was a fanatic in his defense of what he believed to be the only true religion on earth. Paul was present when Stephen was martyred. He became the most bitter enemy Christianity had in his day. He was traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians and persecute the church when he was struck down and blinded by a light from Heaven. He called out, asking who it was speaking to him. The answer recorded in Acts 9:5 was: "**I am Jesus whom thou persecutest**." Through this gigantic experience, Paul became a believer, was baptized, and preached JESUS in the synagogues.

After his conversion he visited Jerusalem, but the believers there were afraid of him because they knew him as an enemy of the church. He soon left Jerusalem and went to his home city of Tarsus. From Tarsus he went into Arabia where he spent three years. It was in Arabia that he received the revelation of this new message . . . the mystery of the church, the body of CHRIST, the age of grace . . . salvation by grace through faith plus nothing.

After spending three years in Arabia, Paul returned to Tarsus where Barnabas joined him. They went to Antioch, where they labored for twelve months. A great number of Gentiles were converted and became believers through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

After the year of ministry in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas made a trip to Jerusalem to bring gifts for relief of the poor suffering Jewish disciples in Jerusalem. When they returned to Antioch, they were sent forth as the first Christian missionaries. The rest of the book of The Acts of the Apostles deals almost entirely with the journeys and the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

After Paul's first missionary journey, he was called upon to give a report concerning his message to the Gentiles, and their conversion. Read the entire fifteenth chapter of Acts carefully, and you will learn much concerning salvation by grace for "**whosoever will**." Of course the enemies of Paul accused him of preaching heresy. They went to Jerusalem and made a report to the apostles there.

During this conference it was decided that the message of grace which Paul preached was truly the message of CHRIST from Heaven. It was decided that the Gentile believers were not under Jewish law, nor under Jewish rituals. It is interesting to note that this is the last time the apostles in the Holy City of Jerusalem are mentioned.

Peter and the rest of the apostles preaching the Kingdom message to Israel, bow out of the picture because Israel as a nation is temporarily set aside, the Kingdom has been temporarily postponed until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in, the grace of GOD is preached, the church is completed and caught up to meet JESUS in the air.

Then, after the anti-Christ has his reign, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached again and all Israel will be saved (Romans, chapter 11).

Notice the sharp and distinct difference between the message of the Apostle Paul and the messages of the other apostles. Peter's message was to Israel . . . Paul's message was to the Gentiles. He was called and commissioned a minister to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). " . . . **When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul) as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter . . .**" (Galatians 2:7).

The apostles, as well as the seventy, were commanded to go to the Jews only. They preached the message of the Kingdom. Only one time did anyone of the apostles preach to a Gentile. This instance was when Peter preached at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). This was the time Peter used the keys of the Kingdom in presenting the Gospel to the Gentiles for the very first time. The apostles established no churches outside of Judaea. They limited their ministry to Jerusalem, and to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. After the stoning of Stephen, the church was scattered everywhere.

The apostles continued in Jerusalem, ministering only to Israel. After Stephen's death, we read, "**They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, EXCEPT THE APOSTLES**" (Acts 8:1). Please note again: "**They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only**" (Acts 11:19).

The apostles never founded any Gentile churches. Paul (GOD's messenger for this dispensation with the message of Grace) was the man who founded Gentile assemblies . . . churches in Antioch, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and many others. If we do not keep in mind that Paul's message was to all men regardless of class or color, we cannot rightly divide the word of truth and reconcile the message of the Apostle Paul with the message of the other apostles.

During the days the apostles and the seventy preached (commissioned by the Lord JESUS), Gentiles were known as unclean dogs outside the covenant of grace. When Paul began to preach to the Gentiles the message of salvation by grace alone through faith in the shed blood of JESUS, bitter opposition arose and Paul suffered much for preaching salvation by grace through faith plus nothing. The apostles refused to accept Paul as an apostle because he did not receive his commission from them in Jerusalem, and he did not preach the same apostolic message they

preached. Therefore, they rejected him as an apostle.

Notice briefly the difference between the Kingdom message and the message given to the Apostle Paul:

In Matthew 10 we have the Kingdom message preached by the apostles: "**And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease**" (Matthew 10:1).

Notice this solemn fact: "**These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matthew 10:5-6).

The message of the apostles was not the message for the church, but for Israel alone. The message announced "**the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**" The message offered the setting up of the Messianic kingdom upon the condition of national repentance in Israel. Paul's message was: "**BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED**" (Acts 16:31).

Signs and wonders were evidences of the Kingdom message given to the apostles: "**Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give**" (Matthew 10:8).

For ministers today to use this verse as authority for healing the sick, and then to ignore the rest of the Scripture, is certainly to wrongly divide the Word of GOD, not "**rightly dividing the word of truth.**" The apostles not only healed "**all manner of sickness,**" but they also RAISED THE DEAD AND CLEANSED THE LEPERS! I believe in divine healing . . . if there IS any healing, it is divine, GOD heals our bodies when we are sick. Thank GOD for doctors, thank GOD for nurses and hospitals; but when all doctors fail, GOD is able to intervene. Nevertheless, it is wrong to use the Kingdom commission to declare that all ministers today should have the gift of healing, should be able to raise the dead and cast out demons.

We should never wrongly divide the Word of GOD and misapply Scripture to prove a religious point. We should face the Bible fact of dispensational truth. The message of the apostles was sanctioned by signs and wonders, but in this marvelous day of grace, "**the just shall live by faith**" (Romans 1:17).

There is another interesting thing about the apostles: "**Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat**" (Matthew 10:9-10).

Certainly that does not sound like modern day ministers and evangelists, does it? Do ministers today refuse gold and silver in their purses, scrip for their journey? Do ministers today refuse two coats, and do they refuse the many things showered upon them by their parishioners? The apostles were a specific group with a singular message to a peculiar people chosen of GOD - the nation Israel.

Many today use the first part of Matthew 10 for their advantage . . . "**Heal the sick,**" but they do not notice the part "**Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.**" I believe we should be consistent in our preaching, consistent in our living, and consistent in our religious practices.

Suppose we compare the apostolic message of the Kingdom with the message of grace given to the Apostle Paul:

The commission today is "**Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.**" But to the apostles the commission was, "**Go NOT into the way of the Gentiles... go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"

Notice these words: "**For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**" (Romans 10:12-13). How can this message be reconciled with the message "**Go not into the way of the Gentiles**"? The only way to understand the Word of GOD is to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Paul's message was concerning "**the dispensation of... grace.**" We MUST face dispensational truth, or we cannot understand the Word of GOD.

Someone may be asking, "Brother Greene, did GOD change His mind?" NO! "Has GOD's law been destroyed?"

NO! But beloved, GOD commanded the adulterers and adulteresses to be stoned under the Law of Moses; but JESUS dealt in mercy with one who was taken in the very act of adultery! The Law commands a rebellious child to be stoned (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), but the father tenderly took the prodigal in his arms and kissed him - hogpen clothes and all! (Luke 15:11-24). Under the Law of Moses, a thief was condemned (Exodus 21:16), but on the cross, in His last moments, JESUS saved a thief (Luke 23:43). The Law cries out, "**Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot!**" (Exodus 21:24); but the grace of GOD preached by Paul thunders out, "**IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM DRINK**" (Romans 12:20). It is absolutely impossible to reconcile such Scriptures, unless we recognize dispensational truth in the Word of GOD.

During the Dispensation of Law, GOD dealt with Israel in a specific way; but in this Dispensation of Grace, there is no such thing as Jew and Gentile. The Lord JESUS CHRIST is rich in mercy unto all that call upon Him. The Law condemns the sinner . . . but the Grace of GOD forgives the sinner and justifies the ungodly in the sight of a holy GOD.

Do not think that GOD has done away with Israel . . . oh, no! Israel is set aside as a chosen nation, but one day GOD will turn again to His people and they will receive their Messiah. They will see the scars in His hands, they will accept Him, and all Israel will be saved. (Read the entire eleventh chapter of Romans.)

Paul's severe persecution was the result of the failure of the people of his day to recognize the difference between Law and Grace . . . the difference between the Dispensation of Law and the Dispensation of Grace. Certainly people have not changed today. Failure on the part of most

church members to study the Bible, to face it as a book of dispensational truth, is still causing much misunderstanding among believers and much division in local assemblies.

I am sure that ninety-five percent of all the difficulty in local churches would end, if church members (believers) would recognize the difference between Law and Grace, and if they would recognize GOD's program for national Israel and GOD's plan for the church (the Bride of CHRIST).

To apply to the church the promises GOD made to Israel can only lead to religious confusion and misunderstanding. It was for the purpose of correcting this error in the church that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians. We need it today just as badly as they needed it then.

My earnest prayer as I send out this message, is that you, dear reader, will recognize that GOD saves us by grace through faith plus nothing. We are kept by the power of GOD because of the grace of GOD in allowing the Lord JESUS to take our place and become accursed for us. Through Him we are "**more than conquerors**" . . . but only through the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Romans 8:35-39). "**Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall**" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Thank GOD, we are more than conquerors through the Lord JESUS CHRIST. What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sent His only begotten Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh that you and I might become the righteousness of GOD in JESUS. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we in JESUS might become righteous (II Corinthians 5:21).

Galatians 1:2: "**And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia.**"

Exactly who these brethren were, we cannot tell, because we do not know for sure whether this Epistle was written at Ephesus or at Corinth. Some outstanding Bible authorities believe it was written at Ephesus, others believe it to have been written at Corinth, but this is unimportant. The important thing is that Paul speaks with the authority of an apostle, and with the full authority of the FATHER and of the Son he writes as he is moved by the HOLY GHOST. His message to the Galatians was from Almighty GOD - not from man.

Paul's statement "**unto the churches**" refers, of course, to believers throughout Galatia. They probably met in homes, or in halls. Again - where they met is not important. Stained glass windows and carpets on the floors will not make a church. A building with a magnificent steeple does not make a church.

It will be a happy day in the lives of some believers when they recognize the building as the meeting place of the church, and not the church itself. The New Testament church is a group of born again believers, fellowshiping and worshipping together in the name of the Lord; and certainly GOD puts His stamp of approval on the local assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

Galatians 1:3: "**Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

To us, that statement is not outstanding. We hear the words: "**grace**" every time we attend church. (If you do not hear it, you should change your place of worship!) But imagine how it must have sounded to those in Galatia who had become believers, who had been rescued from heathenism and idolatry! It was by the grace of GOD that peace had come into their lives, and the peace they enjoyed was made possible through the shed blood of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Paul clearly states to the Colossians that JESUS "**made peace through the blood of His cross.**" May GOD help you and me to not overlook the sacrifice of Calvary when GOD delivered up His Son to pay the sin-debt with His own precious blood! Never forget, beloved, that GOD Almighty purchased the New Testament church at a tremendous price:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He (GOD) HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD" (Acts 20:28).

Weigh this statement before you criticize it. It is a Bible fact. You may not accept it, but it is the truth: In the veins of the Lord JESUS CHRIST ran the Blood of JEHOVAH GOD! JESUS took part of humanity . . . He took flesh from the virgin Mary; but His Blood was the Blood of JEHOVAH GOD. GOD purchased the New Testament church, the Bride of CHRIST, with His own Blood. What a price! No wonder Paul was jealous for the Gospel of Grace!

Verses 4 and 5: "**Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.**"

In John chapter 10, JESUS testified to His people that GOD the Father loved Him because He laid His life down for the sheep. He declared that no man could take His life - He had the power to lay it down, He had the power to take it again (John 10:18); and then He preached that "**This commandment have I received from my Father.**"

GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the HOLY GHOST provided our redemption. GOD the Father so loved the world, that He gave GOD the Son to die on the cross. GOD the Son willingly laid down His life for the ungodly, and conquered death, hell and the grave. After His resurrection He showed Himself openly by many infallible proofs. Five hundred brethren saw Him at one time (I Corinthians 15:1-10).

JESUS, having finished His mission on earth, said, "**Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged"** (John 16:7-11).

JESUS ascended back to the FATHER, and on the day of Pentecost the HOLY GHOST came. He has been in the world since that day, convicting men of sin, drawing men to JESUS, "borning" men into the family of GOD when they put their faith in the finished work of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. "**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His**

mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Because our sins were so thoroughly dealt with, so completely paid for and so righteously disposed of, grace and peace are our possessions when we possess the Lord JESUS by faith.

The reason GOD permitted His SON to suffer such agony of soul, spirit and body . . . the reason GOD permitted Him to become a curse for you and for me . . . the reason GOD permitted Him to die for the ungodly was that through the death of JESUS we might be delivered from this present evil age and made fit for the kingdom of GOD. Surely, we who are believers can happily and heartily join in the Doxology here written by Paul: "**TO HIM BE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN!**"

If I had ten thousand hands, I would raise them all for JESUS! If I had a voice like the thunders of the heavens I would thunder out, "Thank GOD for JESUS!" If I could speak to the whole wide world at one time, I would be compelled to incorporate in my message the words, "**Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!**" Let me sum up the message of these verses:

- First of all, *the channel of GOD's grace* is the Lord JESUS CHRIST who gave Himself willingly on the Cross, for our sins. He died for our sins "**according to the Scriptures.**"
- In the second place, *the purpose of the grace of GOD* is to deliver us . . . poor, lost, hell-deserving sinners . . . from this present evil world. "The whole world lieth In the lap of the wicked one," and were it not for GOD's grace we would all be lost eternally.
- In the third place, *the source of GOD's grace* is the sovereign will and purpose of Jehovah GOD: "**According to the will of God and our Father.**"

According to Hebrews 2:9 it was only because of the grace of GOD that JESUS was permitted to take a body in which He could die. We must face the fact that JESUS was GOD in flesh (II Corinthians 5:19). JESUS wrapped GOD up in flesh and brought Him down to man. It was by the grace of GOD that JESUS was permitted to die; therefore, the source of grace is the sovereign GOD.

In the fourth place, *the reason for GOD's grace* is to bring glory and honor to GOD the Father (and to GOD only) for ever and forever. Never forget that GOD saves us for JESUS' sake (Ephesians 4:30-32).

It is humanly impossible to define the grace of GOD. It is humanly impossible to understand the grace of GOD; but thanks be unto God, it is NOT humanly impossible to ACCEPT the grace of GOD! Grace is GOD's gift - and even a child knows how to come into possession of a gift: Simply receive it (with thanksgiving) from the giver.

Therefore, the message of grace is, "**As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born . . . born of God**" (John 1:12-13).

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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