

## Galatians 1:1-10 ~ “The Only True Message” ~ Discussion Questions

1. In verse 1, Paul refers to himself as an apostle. What does this mean? When was he made an apostle? (Acts 1:21-22, Acts 9:4-6)

2. The greeting in verse 3 is typical of all of Paul’s letters. Why does he always start by saying “Grace and peace?”

3. Paul reminds us (v. 4) that Christ rescued us from the present evil age (2,000 years ago). So why is there still so much evil in the world? (2 Corinthians 4:4)

4. In verse 4, Paul says it was the will of God that Jesus died to save you. Does your life reflect your gratitude for that rescue? In what ways does your life reflect (or not reflect) this?

5. Paul is clearly angry at the Judaizers (v. 6-9). Who were they and what were they doing?

6. What are some of the different or distorted gospels you have heard? How might you refute them?



If anyone should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.

7. What are the requirements for salvation? (John 3:16, James 2:14)

8. Have you ever been told about or heard of additional requirements for salvation from parents, teachers, church leaders, or others?

9. What happens when people set up additional requirements for salvation? How do we know what to believe?

10. In verse 10, we see that Paul has apparently been accused of being a “people pleaser.” Why do you think his enemies would say this about him?

11. What is wrong with trying to win the approval of men?

12. Whose approval do you seek?

## Galatians 1:1-10 ~ Leader's Guide

### **1. In verse 1, Paul refers to himself as an apostle. What does this mean? When was he made an apostle?**

Paul uses the term apostle in all of his letters to mean “an ambassador or one sent on a mission with full authority of representation.” Since he had seen the risen Christ, he was qualified to be an apostle.

Acts 1:21-22 – Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

Acts 9:4-6 – He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

<sup>5</sup> “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. <sup>6</sup> “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

### **2. The greeting in verse 3 is typical of all of Paul’s letters. Why does he always start by saying “Grace and peace?”**

First, grace is a Christian adaptation of a Greek secular form of greeting and peace is a traditional Hebrew greeting. More important, *grace* means unmerited or undeserved favor and is a gift to all of us from God and is the basis for our restoration with the Father. *Peace*, in this context, doesn’t mean peace as opposed to war, but is a state of contentment and quietness of the heart, a sense of well-being and security that only God can provide and that he does provide fully *only* to those who are at peace with him. This peace is not merely a subjective feeling (peace of mind) but actually an objective status.

“Grace and peace” is much the same as the Jewish greeting, “shalom.”

Paul’s salutations typically combine autobiography with theology.

### **3. Paul reminds us (v. 4) that Christ rescued us from the present evil age. So why is there still so much evil in the world? (2 Corinthians 4:4)**

In saying, “the present evil age,” Paul is referring to the present period (2,000 years ago and continuing today) of the world’s history in contrast to the “age to come” (the climax of the Messianic age). This present age is characterized by wickedness but believing in Christ and his dying for our sins can remove us from the demonic forces that control this evil age. Unbelievers, however, continue to live in the evil of this age.

2 Corinthians 4:4 – The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Paul explains further in his letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of the “god of this age” (the devil) who is the unseen power behind unbelief and

ungodliness. Those who follow him have in effect made him their god. By saying, “blinded the minds of unbelievers,” Paul uses the imagery of a veil that covers the divine glory so that those who reject the Gospel fail to see that glory.

**4. In verse 4, Paul says, in effect, that you were saved to live for God. Does your life reflect your gratitude for that rescue? In what ways does your life reflect this?**

**5. Paul is clearly angry at the Judaizers (v. 6-9). Who were they and what were they doing?**

Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed that most of the OT ceremonial practices were still binding on the NT church. Following Paul’s successful missionary campaign in Galatia, they insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide by certain OT rites, especially circumcision. They may have been motivated by a desire to avoid the persecution of the Zealot Jews who objected to their fraternizing with Gentiles. The Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that out of a desire to make the message more appealing to Gentiles he had removed certain legal requirements.

Paul responded by establishing his apostolic authority, thereby substantiating the gospel he preached. By introducing additional requirements for justification (the works of the law), his adversaries had perverted the gospel of grace and, unless prevented, would bring Paul’s converts into the bondage of legalism.

**6. Do you know of any different (or distorted) gospels today? How might you refute them?**

When most Christians think of distorted gospels, they bring up “cults” such as Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses. But there are more disturbing distortions taking place in mainstream Christian churches every day. Here are some ideas of distorted gospels. [Thanks also to James MacDonald]

1. Missing ingredients. We don’t need the message reduced to eliminate elements that people think are unpalatable or make people uncomfortable. How many churches mention “hell” these days? Not many. How about sexual sin or greed? How about repentance? You don’t expect your car to run without all the parts. You don’t expect your body to function without all the organs working properly. You don’t expect a cake to taste right if it’s made without all the right ingredients. Nor can we pick and choose just the scripture we like.

2. Politically correct for our culture. New Bibles such as the Common English Bible or NIV-2011 try to be gender-neutral. God is no longer male; God is now neutral. It’s no longer “mankind” but “humankind.” Slaves have become servants or helpers. And so on. Yes, the blond, blue-eyed Jesus of Thomas Kinkaid and other painters is probably wrong, but how far do we go in the politically correct direction?

3. The cool gospel: shaping Jesus to be more like us so we can feel that we’re

more like Jesus. Marketing Jesus and making him appealing is cheap and powerless. We don't need to 'spin' the message we need to say it. Jesus doesn't need to be like us; we need to be like Him.

4. The prosperity or carnal gospel: What Jesus can do for me: health, wealth, always happy, never hurting? Jesus solves those issues, but not the way we may think. He'll change what you want a lot more than what you have. The selfish gospel that promises things Jesus doesn't promise is a lie and is sentencing the lost who listen to a shocking surprise in eternity.

5. The careful or feel good gospel: Let's not upset anybody, just keep 'em comfortable and coming back, There's lots of time for folks to figure it out. The gospel of "get them to church, and in time everything will come together as long as we don't offend them" is a dangerous gospel. Well intentioned is not enough. The gospel without urgency and without the whole truth is not the gospel.

6. The "love wins" gospel. Does it really make sense that God is a loving, kind, compassionate God who wants to know people in a personal way, but if they reject this relationship with Jesus, they will be sent to hell where God will eternally punish them forever? NO, says Rob Bell and many others. Unfortunately, this misses completely the fall of man, the accomplishment of what Christ did, the "Day of the Lord," and the final judgement.

There are others. What are your examples?

## **7. What are the requirements for salvation? (John 3:16, James 2:14, 17)**

Paul gets into this in depth in Chapter 2:16, 2:21, 3:2, and 5:2, but he gives us a little preview here.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

James 2:14 – What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

<sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

## **8. Have you ever been told or heard of additional requirements for salvation from parents, teachers, church leaders, or others?**

In general, the answer to this is the opposite to Q 6. Above, we saw the ways people were make the gospel easier and more palatable by cutting things out. But sometimes it works the other way around too where people and churches add things for salvation. Paul later will talk of circumcision and obeying the law of Moses but right now can you think of some things that you might have been told were necessary for salvation.

How about baptism? Is it necessary? (Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21)

How about repentance? (Luke 24:46-4, Acts 20:21)

How about forgiving others?

How about loving your neighbor as yourself? (Luke 10:25-28)

How about belief in the Bible?

How about being persecuted for your faith?  
How about being one of God's chosen people?  
How about living a moral life?  
How about loving God? (Luke 10:25-28)  
How about obedience to God's will?  
How about being truly committed? (Matthew 7:21-23)

**9. What happens when people set up additional requirements for salvation?  
How do we know what to believe?**

**10. In verse 10, we see that Paul has apparently been accused of being a  
“people pleaser.” Why do you think his enemies would say this about him?**

Actually, there is good basis for people saying this about Paul. In his first letter to the Corinthians, he said this about himself:

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Paul said he did all this for the sake of sharing the blessings of the gospel, but it's easy to take his words out of context. Why would his enemies say this of Paul? For the same reason you would say it of someone today: to portray him as wishy-washy, as duplicitous (deceitful or two-faced), or as a hypocrite, and to cause him to lose credibility.

**11. What is wrong with trying to win the approval of men?**

**12. Whose approval do you seek?**

## Galatians 1:1-10 ~ Scripture Verses [NIV-1984]

### **The Only True Message**

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

### **No Other Gospel**

<sup>6</sup> 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— <sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> 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! <sup>9</sup> 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! <sup>10</sup> 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.

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Note: this is the NIV-1984 text, which I will use throughout this study unless noted otherwise. In the NIV-2011 edition, 32.2% of the verses in Galatians are different from NIV-1984. This is by far the highest percentage change in any book in either the OT or NT. Many of the changes are aimed at making the text more gender-neutral. The most removed words are: He (1131 fewer occurrences), His (975 fewer), Man (874), Men (752), and Him (605). The most added words are: Their (699 more occurrences), They (648 more), People (493), Them (422), Ancestors (312), You (256 more). You'll find further discussion at:

[http://www.slowley.com/niv2011\\_comparison/](http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/)

and

<http://www.ubfriends.org/2011/03/24/more-thoughts-on-the-updated-niv-of-2011/>

and

<http://www.christianmonthlystandard.com/index.php/looking-at-the-bible-versions-niv-1984/>