

## Sermon Discussion

### 24 April 2022

Read Galatians 1:1-9

#### **Dig Deeper**

##### Author

It is abundantly clear when reading Galatians that it was **written by the apostle Paul**. Throughout the letter, Paul appeals to his experience with the Galatian church (see 3:2-5, 4:8, and 5:15) as well as including a lengthy overview of his own conversion (1:13-17) and call to ministry (1:19-2:14). In addition to the direct references provided within the contents of letter itself, the theological components are both congruent and closely resemblant of his other writings. The emphasis on justification by faith alone and the necessity of the Holy Spirit to empower believers to live righteously in particular, mirrors his letter to the Romans.

##### Date

Many scholars believe that Paul's conversion took place somewhere between 33-34 AD and place his original sojourn with the Galatians between 47-48 AD. Throughout his letter to the Galatians, Paul references his conversion, his missionary journeys, and his previous interactions with the Galatian church, placing this letter decidedly after these events- no earlier than 47 AD.

At the same time, one of the predominant themes of the text was the emergence of false teachers and the resulting debate surrounding adherence to Jewish law- circumcision in particular. This issue would be addressed and ultimately rejected as heresy at the Jerusalem council of 49 AD. As Paul makes no reference to this council, it is likely the letter was penned prior to 49 AD. When taking the known timeline into consideration, we can reasonably conclude that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians **sometime between late 47 AD to early 49 AD**.

##### Message and Purpose

We know from the text that Paul had previously spent time evangelizing and teaching in an area known as Galatia...now modern-day Turkey. The church in Galatia had embraced his teachings and found salvation by faith alone in Jesus. However, sometime after receiving Paul's initial teachings, the church found itself in crisis.

It had been invaded by false teachers who were attempting to distort and destroy what God has done in the lives of the Galatians. These false teachers, or "Judaizers," were teaching that the work of the cross was not enough...that God still required His followers to observe rituals and rules in order to be reconciled to God.

When we consider Paul's investment in the church of Galatia, his concern is unsurprising when he learns of the false teaching that was infiltrating their theology. It provokes Paul to write to

the Galatians and discard his usual jovial style for an almost abrasively direct address. In it, he tackles three primary points of contention:

1. Question of Authority (Ch. 1-2) Who do we believe and how do we know what to believe?
2. Question of Salvation (Ch 3-4) How do we get right with God?
3. Question of Holiness (Ch 5-6) How to please God by living a life of righteousness and wrestling with our fallen nature.

1. The “Gospel” is a term referenced frequently in the church, yet, when pressed, many struggle to articulate what it actually means. What is the message of the gospel based on Paul’s description in verses 3-5 of this week’s passage? Why can it be so uncomfortable or difficult to explain the gospel?
2. How does legalism undermine the gospel? What’s the difference between legalism and zealous obedience?
3. Read verse 6. What is Paul accusing the Galatians of doing to the gospel message? What are the implications of the Galatians abandoning grace? Why might it be appealing to discard grace as our mode of salvation, rather than holding fast to what we have received in Christ?
4. Paul uses extremely condemning language towards those who are teaching a different gospel. Why might Paul take such a strong position against these false teachers? How should his example influence the way we view and interact with those who proclaim a different gospel today?

### **Application & Prayer**

- How does legalism show up in your own thoughts and actions? Confess and repent of these before the Lord.
- At the heart of the Good News is the fact that Jesus alone is enough. When doubts or lies tell you that you are hopeless, useless, or not good enough, how would the following Scripture counter that? *Romans 8:38; 1 John 4:16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13*
- Memorise these verses: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Ephesians 2:8-9