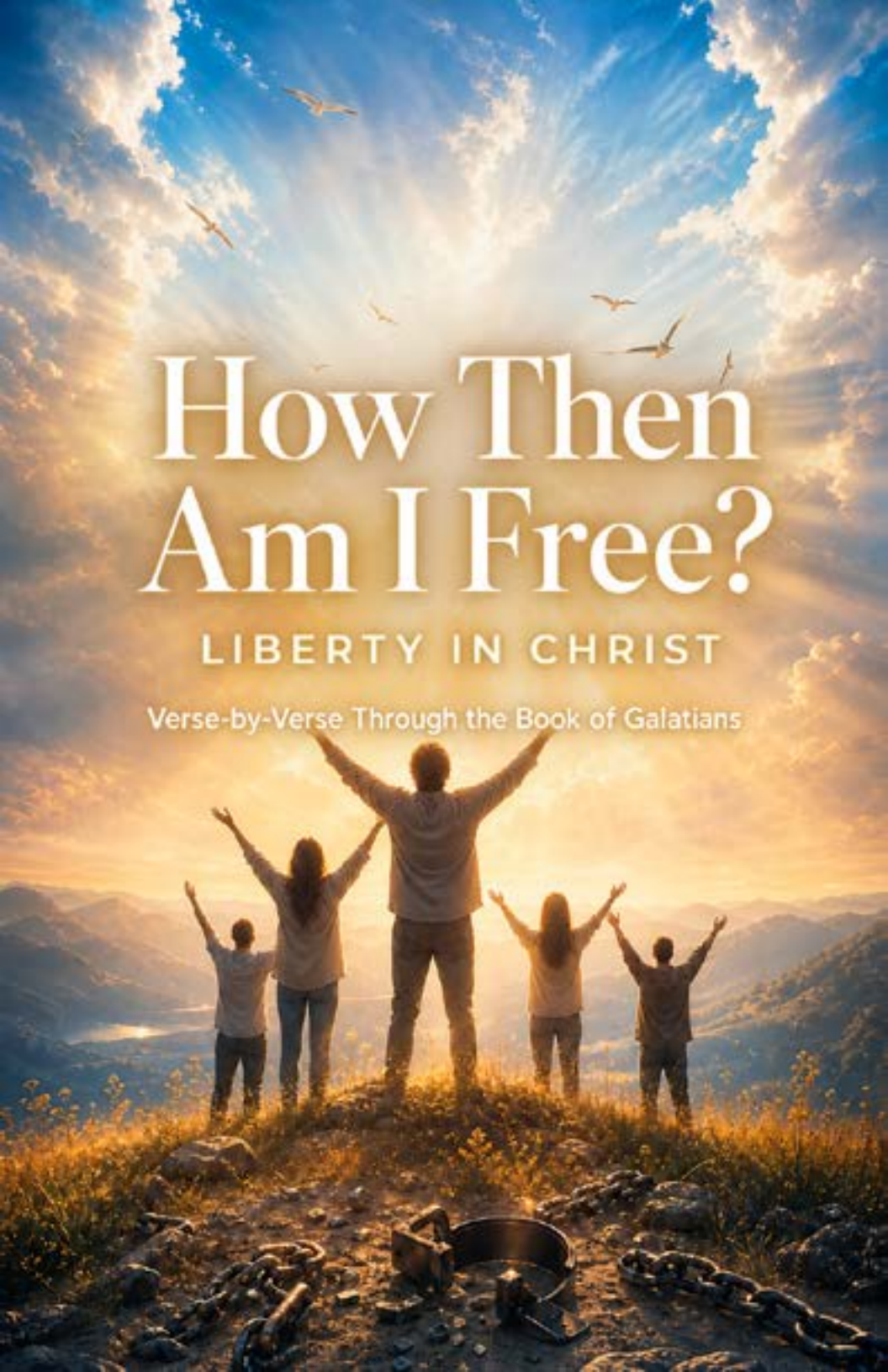




How Then Am I Free?

LIBERTY IN CHRIST

Verse-by-Verse Through the Book of Galatians

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That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. (Psalm 26:7)

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Grace ^{to you} ^{and} peace

FROM GOD THE FATHER
➤ AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ◀

**WHO GAVE HIMSELF
FOR OUR SINS**

✧ that He might *deliver us* ✧
from this present evil age

{ ACCORDING TO THE WILL
OF OUR GOD AND FATHER }

✧ to whom be *glory* ✧
forever AND ever
Amen.

» • Galatians 1:3-5 • «

Galatians Chapter 1

GALATIANS 1:1

Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;

Paul opens Galatians with a tone that is immediately different from Ephesians and Philippians. There is no extended warmth, no thanksgiving, and no gentle lead-in. From the first verse, he moves directly to authority, because authority is under attack. The Judaizers were not only corrupting the gospel Paul preached, but also undermining Paul himself. If they could discredit the messenger, they could more easily replace the message.

So Paul begins by declaring that he is an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father. His apostleship did not originate in human decision, religious appointment, or ecclesiastical promotion. It came directly from the risen Christ. That matters because Galatians is not merely a passionate letter; it is an authoritative correction.

This opening also reminds us that the gospel does not arise from human religious effort. False religion is always man reaching upward. The gospel is God coming downward in grace. Paul's calling, like his message, is rooted in divine initiative, not human invention.

The Father is identified here as the One who raised Christ from the dead. That resurrection note appears at once because

the gospel Paul defends is centered on the crucified and risen Christ. A gospel of law-keeping cannot save, because salvation does not come through human merit but through the finished work of the One whom God raised from the dead.

GALATIANS 1:2

And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

Paul writes not to one congregation, but to the churches of Galatia. This is a regional problem, not an isolated one. Error has spread, and multiple assemblies are being troubled by the same legalistic corruption.

It is also striking that Paul does not address them here as he does believers in Ephesians, Philippians, or Colossians. He does not call them saints in this greeting. The omission fits the tone of the letter. He is writing to believers who have drifted from the purity of grace and need to be called back to doctrinal clarity.

Yet Paul is not alone. He mentions all the brethren who are with him, showing that his message is not a private innovation or a lonely opinion. Though his apostleship came directly from Christ, the truth he proclaims harmonizes with that of faithful believers who know the same gospel of grace.

GALATIANS 1:3–5

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 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 for ever and ever. Amen.

Even in a letter of rebuke, Paul begins with grace and peace. As in Ephesians, grace is the root of the gospel, and peace is the fruit. Grace is God's undeserved favor toward sinners; peace is the settled result of being reconciled to God through Christ.

Peace is not found in the degree of our faithfulness to God, but in the unshakable faithfulness of God to the gracious commitment He has made to us. That is why legalism always robs the soul of peace. The law exposes sin, but grace provides a Savior.

Paul then summarizes the heart of the gospel in a few brief words: *Christ gave Himself for our sins*. This is voluntary, substitutionary, sacrificial language. Jesus was not merely a moral example or religious teacher. He gave Himself in our place, bearing the punishment we deserved so that we might receive what we could never earn.

The purpose of that self-giving was that He might deliver us from this present evil world. Christ did not die merely to improve us, but to rescue us. The age in which we live is marked by sin, deception, rebellion, and bondage, and the cross is God's rescue mission into that darkness.

This was all according to the will of God and our Father. The cross was not an accident, nor merely the triumph of wicked men. Redemption was God's gracious plan. Therefore, Paul ends the greeting with worship: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Right doctrine leads to doxology—that is, to praise and glory given to God.

GALATIANS 1:6–7

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Now the shock of the letter comes into full view. Instead of a thanksgiving section, Paul says, “I marvel,” expressing his astonishment. The Galatians had moved away quickly from the One who called them into the grace of Christ. Their doctrinal drift was not a minor adjustment; it was a spiritual defection.

Notice that Paul says they were removed from Him, not merely from a system of teaching. To abandon grace is not simply to adopt a theological error. It is to move away from the God who called them. False doctrine is never merely academic; it is relational and spiritual in its consequences.

Paul says they were turning to “another gospel,” then immediately adds that it is “not another.” In other words, what the Judaizers called “good news” was not good news at all. A message that says Christ is not enough, and that law-keeping must be added to faith, is not a variation of the gospel. It is a distortion of the gospel.

The word “pervert” is strong. The gospel is not being slightly adjusted. It is being twisted. Pure silver mixed with dross is corrupted and no longer silver. Wine mixed with water is diluted and no longer wine. A gospel mixed with works is no longer the gospel of grace.

This remains a living warning. Any message that adds human effort, ritual performance, religious merit, or ceremonial obedience to the finished work of Christ is another gospel. Jesus is enough. Grace does not need any human supplementation.

GALATIANS 1:8–9

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.

Paul now speaks with startling severity. Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed. The source of a message does not determine its truth. The standard is the truth of the message—the gospel as already given.

That means religious charisma, heavenly claims, dramatic

experiences, and impressive personalities are not the measure of truth. A message must be tested by the revealed gospel of Christ. If it contradicts the gospel of grace, it is under God's judgment, no matter how impressive the messenger may appear.

Paul repeats the warning for emphasis. This is not careless overstatement. It is holy seriousness. When the gospel is corrupted, souls are endangered, Christ is dishonored, and the cross is emptied of its meaning.

The word "accursed" is weighty. Paul is not engaging in personal irritation, but apostolic judgment. Those who would add to Christ as the basis of justification place themselves under condemnation, because they reject the sufficiency of Christ's finished work.

The church must hear this plainly. We are not free to redesign the gospel to make it more acceptable, more religious, or more culturally appealing. The gospel is not ours to edit. It is ours to receive, believe, guard, and proclaim.

GALATIANS 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Paul answers the likely accusation against him. Apparently, his enemies were suggesting that he was preaching an easy message to please people. Paul rejects that outright. The cross-centered gospel of grace is not an easy message, nor is it a message invented to win human approval.

If Paul were trying to please men, he would not be a servant of Christ. The servant of Christ cannot live for the applause of people and remain faithful to the Lord. When truth is spoken, opposition will come.

There is a double slavery in this verse. One is the slavery of living for the approval of man. The other is the bondage of seek-

ing to gain God's approval through self-effort. The gospel frees us from both. In Christ, the believer is no longer a performer before men or a religious laborer trying to earn what grace alone gives.

This is why Paul speaks so directly in Galatians. Faithfulness is not always soft in tone, but it is always loving in purpose. He is not trying to be popular. He is trying to rescue souls from error.

GALATIANS 1:11–12

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul now begins the central defense of his apostolic authority. The gospel he preached is not after man. It did not arise from human philosophy, rabbinic tradition, or secondhand religious instruction. It came by revelation of Jesus Christ.

That does not mean Paul preached a private gospel disconnected from Scripture or from the other apostles. It means the source of his message was divine, not human. Christ Himself revealed it to him.

This is crucial to the whole argument of Galatians. The Judaizers were likely trying to portray Paul as inferior, derivative, and theologically incomplete. Paul answers by going above all human channels. His gospel did not need human authorization because it came from the risen Lord.

The church must always remember that Christianity is not built on man's search for God, but on God's revelation of Himself in His Son. The gospel is received, not invented.

GALATIANS 1:13–14

For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews'

religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Paul appeals to his past life as evidence. Before Christ saved him, he was deeply entrenched in Judaism and advanced beyond many of his peers. He was not a man casually acquainted with the law and traditions of his fathers. He was immersed in them and fully dedicated to them.

His zeal was so intense that he persecuted the church of God and wasted it. He was not moving toward Christianity as the natural next step of his religious development. Before his conversion, Paul was moving in the opposite direction, desiring to stop the spread of Christianity for the sake of the Jews' religion.

That matters because it shows the gospel did not arise from Paul's previous religious system. If righteousness could have been found through the traditions of the Jews, Paul would have found it there. Instead, all his religious zeal only made him a more violent enemy of the truth.

Religion, by itself, cannot save. External observance, inherited tradition, and ceremonial devotion cannot produce life. Paul had all of that in abundance, and yet he was lost until Christ intervened.

This remains a searching warning. It is possible to be sincere, disciplined, devoted, educated, and zealous, and still be wrong. Salvation is not found in religious practices or traditions. It's found in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS 1:15–17

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred

not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

These verses mark one of the great “but God” moments in Scripture. Paul had been a persecutor, but when it pleased God, everything changed. His conversion was not the result of inner discovery, moral improvement, or religious refinement. It was the sovereign intervention of grace.

Paul says God separated him from his mother’s womb and called him by His grace. This does not mean Paul was saved from the time of his birth. God is outside of time and knows the beginning, the end, and all things in between. Paul says that from the moment he was conceived, God set him apart for a purpose. Grace was not an afterthought. God’s hand had been on Paul’s life all along, even before Paul ever understood it.

The heart of the change came when God revealed His Son to Paul. Paul responded and was born again. Christianity always begins with a revelation of Christ. Until Christ is revealed, religion remains external. When Christ is revealed, and one is born again, then the Holy Spirit is received and everything is interpreted in His light.

God has a purpose for the life of every believer, and for Paul, that purpose was a mission: “that I might preach him among the heathen.” Paul was called to proclaim Christ among the Gentiles. His commission was not man-made, and his field of labor was not self-selected. It came from God.

Paul immediately says that he did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to the apostles before him. Instead, he went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. The point is clear: his gospel was not shaped by human consultation. Before he ever sat with apostolic leaders in Jerusalem, he had already been taught by Christ Himself.

God had once given the law at Sinai; now Paul emphasizes

that the gospel of grace was entrusted to him by divine revelation. The messenger of grace was made by grace and the message of grace was received by grace.

GALATIANS 1:18–20

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

After three years, Paul did go to Jerusalem, but that visit confirms rather than weakens his argument. He did not go immediately after conversion, and when he did go, it was a short visit to become acquainted with Peter, not to be instructed in the gospel.

He stayed only fifteen days, and he saw no other apostle except James, the Lord's brother. That limited contact matters. Paul is demonstrating that he could not have derived the substance of his gospel from extended apostolic schooling in Jerusalem.

He then adds a solemn oath: before God, I lie not. Evidently, his opponents had questioned his account. So Paul appeals to God as a witness to the truthfulness of what he is saying.

This combination is important. Paul is independent of the Jerusalem apostles in terms of source, but he is not in contradiction with them in terms of truth. His gospel came directly from Christ, yet stands soundly with apostolic truth.

GALATIANS 1:21–24

Afterward I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.

After Jerusalem, Paul went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. He remained largely unknown by face to the churches of Judaea. Again, that supports his argument: his ministry did not arise from close dependence on the Jerusalem church.

Yet word about him had spread. The churches had heard that the former persecutor was now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. What a testimony to the transforming grace of God. The man who once ravaged the church had become a preacher of the Christ he once opposed.

“And they glorified God in me.” That is the right response to any true testimony of salvation and calling. The focus is not the greatness of the man, but the greatness of the God who changes him.

Galatians 1 therefore lays the foundation for the whole epistle. Paul’s gospel is divine in origin, Christ-centered in content, grace-based in its saving power, and utterly opposed to every form of legalism. The chapter calls believers to reject every false message that adds human works to Christ, and to stand fast in the liberty of a gospel that comes from God and leads back to God’s glory.

CHAPTER EMPHASIS

Galatians 1 is a trumpet blast for the purity of the gospel. It teaches that the gospel of grace is not man-made, cannot be improved by religion, must not be mixed with law, and is worth defending with clarity, courage, and holy boldness.

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