

A Daily Devotional on the Book of Galatians

By Ken Miller



www.devotionary.libsyn.com

www.vesselsofclay.org

English Standard Version (ESV) The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016). Copyright © 2001

New Living Translation (NLT) Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Galatians 1:1-5: Delivered and Determined.....	5
Galatians 1:6-10: A Contrary Gospel	9
Galatians 1:11-24: A Divine Calling	11
Galatians 2:1-10: Protecting the Gospel’s Purity	15
Galatians 2:11-16: Just Faith = Justification	17
Galatians 2:17-21: Motivated by Love	21
Galatians 3:1-6: Life-long Faith.....	23
Galatians 3:7-9: A People of Faith	25
Galatians 3:10-14: Free from the Curse	27
Galatians 3:15-18: God’s Unbreakable Promise	29
Galatians 3:19-22: Salvation by God	31
Galatians 3:23-29: Now That Faith Has Come.....	35
Galatians 4:1-7: In the Fulness of Time	37
Galatians 4:8-11: Known by God	39
Galatians 4:12-20: Christ Formed in You.....	41
Galatians 4:21-31: Children of the Promise	43
Galatians 5:1-6: Losing Our Grip.....	47
Galatians 5:7-12: No Other Gospel.....	49
Galatians 5:13-21: Bad Fruit	53
Galatians 5:22-26: Good Fruit.....	55
Galatians 6:1-5: We Don’t Grow Alone	57
Galatians 6:6-10: The Season for Fruit	59
Galatians 6:11-8: An Unpopular Yet Unwavering Message.....	61

Delivered and Determined

Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. – Galatians 1:1-5 ESV

Paul wrote this letter to believers living in the Roman province of Galatia. The churches there were likely founded by Paul on his first missionary journey, so he had a vested interest in the spiritual well-being of their congregations. It seems that they were under the influence of the Judaizers, a group of Jews who claimed to be Christ-followers but who demanded that all Gentile converts follow the Mosaic law and honor all the Jewish rituals and regulations. These individuals seem to have popped up wherever Paul planted churches and their presence caused much confusion and consternation to the new converts that Paul left behind. And because of Paul's constant travels, he was left no other recourse than to address this issue through the use of letters.

Because of the vital importance of the content of his letter, Paul opens with a brief defense of his apostleship. There seemed to be no shortage of individuals who were willing to question or even deny the validity of his claim to being an apostle. After all, every other apostle had been a disciple of Jesus. They had been personally chosen by Him and spent three years of their lives following and learning from Him. But Paul was a late comer. He claimed to have been appointed to his position as an apostle by the resurrected Lord. Luke records the testimony of Paul as he shared it before King Agrippa:

I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." And I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." – Acts 26:12-18 ESV

Paul's fantastic "Damascus Road experience" was constantly coming under question by those who opposed him. They denied he had the right to speak on behalf of Christ as one of His apostles. I am sure they raised questions such as, "Who can verify your claim?" or "How are we

to know that any of this ever took place?” They most likely denied Paul’s credentials and raised concerns about his former lifestyle as a pawn of the high priest and his personal persecutor of Christians. But Paul vehemently defended his apostleship in virtually every one of his letters. And this one is no exception. He opens by describing himself as “Paul, an apostle.” The title “apostle” meant “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders” (“G652 – *apostolos* (KJV) :: Strong’s Greek Lexicon.” Blue Letter Bible). It was a common Greek word and was not unique to Christianity. Which is why Paul quickly clarified that he was an apostle “not from men nor through men” (Galatians 1:1 ESV). In other words, he had not been sent *by* men or had not received his message *from* men. What he shared he had received directly from the lips of Jesus Himself. Just a few verses later in this letter, Paul will explain, “I did not receive it [the gospel] from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12 ESV).

Luke records that immediately after Paul’s conversion, Jesus had appeared to a disciple names Ananias and told him to go to the house where Paul was and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight. Jesus told Ananias, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15 ESV).

There was no doubt in Paul’s mind that he was a messenger sent from Jesus. Which is why he boldly claimed that he was an apostle “*through* Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (Galatians 1:1 ESV). The Greek preposition Paul used is *dia* and it can mean “by reason of” or “on account of” (“G1223 – *dia* (KJV) :: Strong’s Greek Lexicon.” Blue Letter Bible). Paul was not a self-proclaimed apostle, but a God-ordained one, by virtue of the resurrected Christ. His salvation had been made possible by God and his message came directly from God. He will spend the rest of this letter defending not only his apostleship, but the gospel itself, because that was what was really under attack.

Paul’s desire is that the recipients of his letter enjoy the grace and peace of God. He wants them to comprehend the magnitude of the gift they had received. Jesus Christ had given himself for their sins so that they might be delivered from the present evil age. The world in which these new believers lived was hostile. It was anti-Christian and intolerant of their beliefs. Many of them had already suffered persecution for their beliefs. They had been rejected by family members and ostracized from society. They were under constant pressure to give up their faith or simply compromise it. We face the same threat today. But we must remember that we have been delivered from this age. Yes, we are still here, but our future is secure. We have been promised by God an eternal existence in His presence, free from the effects of sin – no pain, no sorrow, no death. Yet as we wait for that day, we are to live as children of God. The apostle John reminds us, “Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3 NLT).

Paul’s call to his readers will be for them to remain steadfast. He wanted them to remain committed to the truth of the gospel and faithful to the call of Christ on their lives. It would not

be easy, but it would be well worth the effort in the long run. Regardless of what they might be experiencing, they were smack dab in the middle of God's will for their lives.

A Contrary Gospel

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. – Galatians 1:6-10 ESV

Paul is astonished. It had probably only been a few months since he had been to the province of Galatia and helped launch the first house churches. But now he had received word that those who had accepted Christ were beginning to abandon the gospel message they had heard for another one. There is no doubt that Paul had made clear to them the gospel message. He had probably told them the very same thing he had said to the believers in Corinth:

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 ESV***

The heart of the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. That is what Paul believed and that is what he preached. He had had a personal encounter with Jesus *after* His death. He knew the resurrection was true. He knew the gospel to be powerful because it had radically transformed his own life. And so, when he received news that the believers in Galatia were “so quickly deserting” the gospel for a “different” one, he was amazed and appalled. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

The Greek word Paul uses is μετατίθημι (*metatithēmi*) and it can mean “to transfer one’s self or suffer one’s self to be transferred” (“G3346 – *metatithēmi* (KJV) :: Strong’s Greek Lexicon.” Blue Letter Bible). Under the influence of others, the believers in Galatia had begun to transpose or translate their allegiance from the gospel that Paul had preached to another version of the gospel. Paul called it ἕτερος (*heteros*) – another gospel. It was different in nature, form, class, and kind. It wasn’t an expansion of Paul’s gospel, but a different one altogether. It was a distortion or perversion of what Paul and the apostles had preached. Yet those who were preaching this contrary gospel didn’t make that distinction. They were promoting it as the

gospel of Jesus Christ. They were pawning it off as the real thing and that is what made it so dangerous.

Paul was so adamant in his stance against these purveyors of counterfeit gospels, that he desired them to be accursed – *ἀνάθεμα* (*anathema*). In essence, Paul was delivering them over to God's judgment. The Greek word Paul used means "a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed" ("G331 – *anathema* (KJV) :: Strong's Greek Lexicon." Blue Letter Bible). These are strong words from Paul, and they convey how seriously he took the gospel. It was not something to be toyed with, added to, expounded upon, or distorted in any way.

Paul was not out to win friends and influence enemies. He was out to preach the good news of salvation made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was determined to preach a message of life change and transformation. His was a message of faith, not works. It was based on the law of the Spirit of life, not the Mosaic law. The gospel that Paul preached made man completely dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. No one could save themselves. No one was capable of earning favor with God through human effort. And anyone who taught that man could achieve righteousness and earn justification with God apart from faith in Christ alone was preaching a false and deadly gospel.

Paul wasn't out to please men. If he had been, he wouldn't have preached the message he did. No one likes to hear that they are sinners and that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23 ESV). No one enjoys being told that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 ESV). Who wants to be told that they are under God's wrath and totally incapable of doing anything about it? And yet, that is the message Paul preached, over and over again. He was not telling people what they wanted to hear. He was telling them what they needed to hear: the good news of God's grace made available through the death of His Son.

There are many gospels today. Some are slight variations on the real gospel. Others are complete aberrations, distortions of the truth of God masquerading as hope. They tell people what they want to hear. They make false promises. They take salvation out of the hands of God and place it in the hands of men. Religious rule-keeping becomes the means of redemption. Self-effort replaces dying to self. Men become their own saviors and salvation becomes little more than escape from the troubles of this life rather than the promise of eternal life. False gospels almost always show up in the form of either legalism or license. They promote self-salvation or self-gratification. They become all about living up to a set of rules or living as if there are no rules. Both are false. Both are dangerous. And Paul would have us avoid them like the plague.

A Divine Calling

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me. – Galatians 1:11-24 ESV

Paul will spend a great deal of time in this letter defending his apostleship in order to validate his message of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. There were those who were questioning his right to claim apostleship and were attempting to undermine his credibility. But Paul had no doubts about his calling or the commission he had received directly from the lips of Christ. So, he provided his readers with a brief history of his salvation story. More than likely they had heard it story before, but Paul probably provided them with some extra added details. He began by clarifying that the message he preached was not given to him by any man. He hadn't learned it from any human teacher. He had not been led to faith by anybody but had been personally witnessed to by Jesus Himself. On that fateful day on the road leading to Damascus, Paul had had an intimate encounter with Jesus, the resurrected Christ. He had been struck blind by the very one he had been on a rampage to discredit and whose disciples he had been out to destroy.

The truly amazing thing about Paul's testimony was the radical nature of his transformation. One day he had been on his way to the city of Damascus in order to arrest any Christians he found there, and then some days later, after his conversion, he was proclaiming Christ in the synagogues.

And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. – Acts 9:19-22 ESV

Even the Jews who heard him preach in the synagogues of Damascus were shocked at the undeniable transformation that had taken place. Paul, the persecutor, had become a proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The self-appointed exterminator of Christianity had become its divinely commissioned defender and proponent. There was nothing that could explain this radical change in his life other than the power of God. Up until that point, Paul had not met a single apostle. He had received no instruction of any kind. He had simply had a divine encounter with Jesus. And then he had spent three years in Arabia. We are not told exactly where Paul went or what he did while he was there. But it is likely that Paul, a student of the Old Testament Scriptures, spent his time reviewing all that he knew in light of what he had just experienced. His understanding of the Word of God was to be radically changed by the new revelation he had received from Jesus. It could be that Jesus did for Paul what He had done for the two disciples along the road to Emmaus when He had appeared to them immediately after His resurrection.

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. – Luke 24:27 ESV

And after Jesus had left them standing by the roadside, they said to one another,

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” – Luke 24:32 ESV

Whatever happened during those three years in Arabia, Paul was to return a dramatically changed man. He went immediately to Jerusalem, where he met with Peter and James. But he did not go to seek their approval or to get their permission. He was virtually unknown to the believers in Jerusalem, but his conversion had become the talk of the town. “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy” (Galatians 1:23 ESV).

Paul was a changed man. He not only had a new calling, but a new nature. His heart had been transformed. His passions and pursuits had been redeemed by God. Paul confessed that God, “who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me” (Galatians 1:15-16 ESV). Paul’s conversion was God’s doing. His change of heart had been the work of God. And what he preached was the word of God concerning salvation through His Son.

It would seem that Paul’s greatest defense of his gospel message was his gospel transformation. His radically altered life was the greatest testimony to the validity of his message. It seems that far too often, what we proclaim about the gospel is not present in our own lives. We tell others of its transformational power, and yet our lives reveal little of that power at work. We talk of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, but our knowledge of Him has grown little since the day we first met Him. We can easily tell others about the day we came to faith in Christ, but we have a hard time telling them how we are living by faith on a day-by-day basis. Paul’s strongest proof for the authenticity of his message was his personal story of life change. The gospel was believable because his life made it visible.

The transformative work of God in my life should be the greatest proof of the gospel's power and veracity.

