

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**GALATIANS**

**SHARON CRAVENS**

**Gal. 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 starts Galatians by emphasizing who he is—an apostle called by Jesus Christ and God the Father. He also emphasizes that it was the Father who raised the Son from the dead.

I can't help but wonder how many in the ministry today are actually called by God rather than by men. If truly called by God, you would think that they would trust God more for their needs rather than feeling like they have to beg for support all of the time.

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

This verse shows that Paul considered as brothers all those who were of like mind with him concerning the Savior, and some of them were with him. Family should always be concerned about how other family members are doing.

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

In this verse he wills them grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus (God the Son in flesh) Christ (Messiah, the anointed one). You've heard the old definition for grace - God's riches at Christ's expense. I think it is significant that they are listed in that order since we can never have peace without God's grace. I know the Godhead is three in one, but I think it is significant that he gives the preeminence to the position of the Father. The Spirit is always so careful to be consistent with the principles taught in the Word. The difference in verse one is that he is describing who spoke to him when he was called.

**Gal. 1:4 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:**

Verse 4 has many interesting points—

- 1) Jesus **gave** himself for our sins. He did not go to the cross unwillingly.
- 2) He gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world. This also implies to me that the world will be different in the future.
- 3) Jesus' will was in perfect harmony with His Father's will.
- 4) As believers, God the Father is also **our** Father.

**Gal. 1:5 To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

Verse 5 states the truth that no matter what choices we make—God will be glorified forever.

**Gal. 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:**

**Gal. 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.**

The word *marvel* jumped out at me. Paul was so entrenched in God's truth and love that he couldn't believe that these people were even considering the possibility of *another* "gospel" -- and evidently after just a short time. We often hear the preachers talk about the enthusiasm of a new believer and how we should take ourselves back to that time. They don't often talk about how

vulnerable a person is at that time for Satan to be able to attack and try to destroy that foundation, which I think is what was happening here.

Paul is quick to say that there is no another gospel. He recognizes, however, that there are people at work trying to pervert (add to or take away from or change the truth of) the gospel of Christ.

**Gal. 1:8** 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.

**Gal. 1:9** As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

He wants them to understand that there is only one gospel. That if he or an angel from heaven tries to teach them differently from the gospel that they have already been taught, that one should be accursed. I'm not sure what he means by the word "accursed" -- is it hell, or physical affliction, or what -- but I'm sure the wording and emphasis was understood by the Galatians to be as terrible as they could think. (The Greek implies excommunicated.) (5/08) In his word studies K. Wuest defines "accursed" as set apart for spiritual destruction.

Paul emphasizes the fact that **there is only one gospel**--salvation through faith in Jesus by grace.

*1 Corinthians 15:1-4 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...by which also ye are saved...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"*

*Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

*Acts 4:10-12 "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

**Gal. 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 then gets a bit introspective. Who is he trying to please, men or God? You can't be the servant of God and please men (well, maybe some Christians, but not men in general).

It just hit me that maybe he is saying—Am I the one who persuades men or is it God? Am I seeking to please men? He concludes that if he were really pleasing men, he couldn't be a true servant of Christ.

**Gal. 1:11** But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

**Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

"certify" - Paul is letting them know that he is saying what is true. He is not preaching a gospel that was given to him by man.

He didn't receive it from man; he wasn't taught by man. This gospel was revealed to him through Jesus Christ. It was a personal experience with the Savior.

(5/08) Again, I liked the definition given by K. Wuest in his word studies for "revelation"—"The act of God the Holy Spirit uncovering to the Bible writers truth incapable of being discovered by man's unaided reason, this revelation being accompanied by the imparted ability to understand what is uncovered."

**Gal. 1:13 For ye 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:**

**Gal. 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.**

He reminds them of the kind of person he had been in the past as a participant of the Jewish religion. He persecuted believers unmercifully (beyond measure -- to the greatest extent he was able) and tried to destroy the "church" of God." Obviously, the church is a body of believers--not buildings.

Because of his zealousness in this persecution, he attained a higher position than many others of his age and ethnicity. He practiced the traditions of his fathers with "extreme" zealousness (energy, action, speech, etc.).

"Jew's religion" – (1/05) This phrase jumped out at me this time through. Paul, who had attained a high position in this "religion" now realized it for what it was—a religion, not a relationship. It was the carrying on of a tradition, rather than the practicing of a faith. It was a ritual response rather than a practice of the heart. It was a practice that glorified men and not God.

**Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,**

"when it pleased God" - We can be confident that God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. "When" specifies that there is significance to the timing of the things that impact us in our lives. These things please God as they impact us to glorify Him. *God calls us by His grace; it's a choice made on our behalf from the time we are in the womb.* (How can people discard the worth of human life just because it isn't outside the womb? It is still one of the hardest things for me to understand.) Whether we understand it or not—It is God's choice! I am so blessed!!!!

*Romans 8:29-30 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."* (See journal on Romans.)

(7/09) To be “called by His grace” is a reference to responding to His divine influence upon one’s heart.

**Gal. 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:**

**Gal. 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.**

The reason Paul was chosen was to reveal the Son through his life—which is also the reason we are chosen. Obviously, this means to reveal through more than just words—it’s through how we live. Paul’s specific task was to preach Jesus to the “heathen.” Technically, this meant anyone that wasn’t Jewish. I couldn’t resist looking this word up in the dictionary. Besides stating the above, it included those who were irreligious, uncivilized, unenlightened, etc. Again, I think we can consider ourselves, like Paul, called to preach Jesus to the “heathen.”

Beginning with the last part of verse 16, I’m not sure what Paul was thinking. It seems that he was so overwhelmed with the truth that had confronted him regarding his life and the Savior that he had to get away and meditate and prepare his heart. In Acts we are told that Saul immediately began to preach in the synagogue, but as he became more powerful in his preaching, the Jews became more distrustful of him and set out to kill him, but fellow believers helped him escape. This appears to be the time he headed to Arabia. This probably showed him that he wasn’t ready to present himself to the apostles or the people and get them to believe that he could change so dramatically overnight. To me that pictures a very smart new Christian. He wants to get strong in his foundation and prepared with his answers. Being very learned, he wanted to rethink all his teaching concerning the scriptures and reapply it with the truth that had been revealed to him. Why go to Arabia? Maybe because he was so well known that he wanted to go somewhere that was deserted and without distraction so as to devote himself fully to the task of preparation. The time in the desert is usually associated with a time of testing, and I’m sure it was the same for Paul. Returning to Damascus was like returning to his spiritual birthplace and probably to spend some time with Ananias and his first supporters before beginning his ministry.

**Gal. 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.**

**Gal. 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.**

Paul didn’t rush the process of preparation; he took a full three years. Then, he was ready to go to Jerusalem and see Peter. Peter was the recognized leader of the apostles and James, the brother of Jesus and the recognized leader of the budding new church. Spending two weeks with him shows that he was probably interrogated pretty heavily. At this time, the only other apostle he saw was James, the brother of Jesus.

(9/06) The time that Paul and Peter spent together was allowed by God to benefit both these servants to better equip them to minister to the body of believers. It takes time to share and compare personal experiences and revelations.

James was not one of the 12 disciples. This confirms “apostle” as a valid office for other than the 12.

**Gal. 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.** Paul is then careful to assure them that he is telling the truth with God as his witness.

**Gal. 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;**

**Gal. 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:**

**Gal. 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.**

**Gal. 1:24 And they glorified God in me.**

Paul continues with his background and tells them that he went next into Syria and Cilicia where he was unknown by the people of these churches by face, but they did know him by reputation. It is your reputation, how you live your life that is most influential. The fact that he had turned his life around with a very obvious 180 gave his message even greater weight. It was cause for the churches to give God great glory because of the change in Paul's life.

This can often make a person think they have a more powerful testimony if they have had a more ungodly life. That of course is wrong. It does bring God great glory to demonstrate His power through a dramatically changed life. Frankly, in this day and age I think the more powerful testimony is from the one who has been saved at an early age and remained faithful through the years.

The key is that God has a purpose for each one of us (cf. vs 15), and our lives will glorify Him more fully as we submit to His working in our lives in whatever way through the circumstances and environment in which He has placed us.