

Study: Galatians 1:1-10, Shock & Awe—Gospel, Grace, & Peace

I - Salutation (vv. 1-2)

*1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—2 and all the brothers who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia:*

Key Term: Apostle

While the word apostle literally means “messenger” or “one who is sent,” when used to describe the twelve disciples (and Paul), it takes on a much more specific meaning. An apostle was commissioned directly by Christ to proclaim the news of His resurrection. To be an apostle one had to both have seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead and have been chosen by Jesus for that role.

Questions for Discussion:

What significance is there to Paul’s apostleship being “through Jesus Christ and God the Father” and “not from men nor through man?”

II - Blessing (vv. 3-5)

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Key Term: Grace

Grace is often described as “getting what you don’t deserve.” In this context it is receiving favor from God through Jesus Christ - specifically the forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ death on the cross.

Key Term: Peace

When the Bible speaks of peace it not only speaks of a cessation of hostilities but also implies a mended relationship. In this context, peace indicates a restored relationship with God through Jesus death.

Questions for Discussion:

Between verse three and verse four, Paul switches from the second person plural (you) to the first person plural (us) when he moves from blessing the Galatians with “Grace and Peace” to describing Jesus dying for our sins. What significance does this change have for how we understand both Paul’s ministry and, by implication, ours?

We often encounter conflict in our lives. Can you describe a time when you've experienced grace and peace as defined above?

Are there currently areas of conflict in your life where you should seek grace and peace? What steps can you take to do so?

III - Astonishment (vv. 6-10)

6 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—7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 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. 9 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.

10 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 1:1-10, ESV)

Key Term: Accursed (Anathema)

1. a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place
2. a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and if an animal, to be slain; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction
 - a curse
 - a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes

In this context the word literally means “to be damned” with the implication that the individual would be damned to hell.

Questions for Discussion:

In verse six Paul says that he is “astonished” at the Galatians abandoning the good news of salvation in Jesus. Most people don’t use the word “astonished” today. How might someone today describe Paul’s reaction? What do some other translations use?

In verse seven Paul is careful to say that there is only one Gospel. What does this say about the uniqueness of Jesus?

- How does Paul’s statement fit with and/or conflict with our pluralistic culture?

In verse one Paul describes himself as an Apostle of Christ and then again in verse ten calls himself a servant of Christ. What does this beginning and ending with this indicate?

Read verse three, then read verses six through ten, then read verse three again. How can Paul's harsh words in verses six through ten inform our understanding of what grace and peace truly mean?

Wrap Up

In verses eight and nine Paul twice says that he should be accursed (damned to hell) if he preached anything other than the Gospel of Christ. What does this say about the importance of the Gospel?

- How can we allow Paul's zeal for the Gospel to impact our approach to the Gospel?

What is our community application of this passage?