

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

*Leaders' Note: The first ten verses of Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia falls into three distinct subsections (salutation, blessing, and words of astonishment) each of which has its own tone and tenor.*

*The salutation of verses one and two serve not only to identify the author (Paul) and the intended audience (the churches in Galatia) but also to provide a reminder of Paul's authority as an apostle.*

*The second subsection is the blessing (found in verses three through five.) While this section is very similar to the blessings that Paul writes in other letters, when juxtaposed against the harsh words of astonishment in verses six through ten, this section highlights the hope that Christians possess in Christ (even those who may have strayed from a right understanding of salvation).*

*The final section in these verses is the words of astonishment in verses six through ten. Nowhere else in the corpus of Paul's writing do we see such emotion (though he does come close in both Romans and in Second Corinthians).*

*In this study we will work through the passage from beginning to end looking at each section in turn before circling back with Paul as he returns to talking about his ministry in verse ten. As you lead your group through this study, pay attention to both the doctrinal statements that Paul makes about his role and the Gospel as well as how he makes those statements. Together the content and presentation inform our understanding of Paul's apostleship, the Gospel, and Paul's care for the Galatian Christians.*

**Pray for your time together in God's Word.**

*If you need an icebreaker question, here are two ideas:*

- The word "Gospel" is often translated "Good News." What is an example of good news that someone might get today? (Alternate Wording: If someone says "I've got some good news," what would you hope that they say?)  
*Possible Answers: New job, engaged, raise, cancer free*
- Can you think of a time that you received good news? What was it that made the news good?

### **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:

**Ask the Group:** What significance is there to Paul's apostleship being "through Jesus Christ and God the Father" and "not from men nor through man?"

*Possible Answers: Paul has the authority and power of God behind him as displayed in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.*

## 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:

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: No one is above needing God. Paul, even though he was an apostle, still needed his sins forgiven and so do we.*

**Ask the Group:** We often encounter conflict in our lives. Can you describe a time when you experienced grace and peace as it's 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.

*Thayer and Smith. "Greek Lexicon entry for Anathema". "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon".. 1999.*

**Questions for Discussion:**

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: Dumbfounded, amazed, shocked, “what the heck are you doing?”*

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: There is no one else like Jesus. He is the only example of God incarnate. His exclusive claim to redeem us from our sins stands in contrast to our culture where anything goes and everyone can claim to own truth.*

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: All church leadership is servant leadership. No true church leader will laud their position over another but will use it to bring others closer to God.*

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: Grace and peace are about bringing others back into relationship with God. Appeasement of others or settling for a lack of confrontation is not a substitute for true peace. It may get messy!*

## Wrap Up

**Ask the Group:** 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?

*Possible Answers: The Gospel is very important - more important than any individual. We should be concerned with the truth of God more than appeasing others.*

**Ask the Group:** What is our community application of this passage?

*Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.*