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Galatians Introduction, 1:1 - 1:10



Galatians - Steve Gregg

In this commentary on Galatians, Steve Gregg offers insights into the context and timeline of Paul's writing. He discusses Paul's qualifications as an apostle and his relationship with the other apostles, as well as the controversy surrounding circumcision and the requirements for salvation. He suggests that internal evidence points to an early date for the writing of Galatians, before the Jerusalem Council, and highlights Paul's powerful arguments against circumcision and the "weak beggarly elements" of the world. Throughout his commentary, Gregg offers a nuanced understanding of Paul's theology and teachings.

Transcript

...class on the book of Galatians, and I want to take as little time as I can really get by with on an introduction, because we have, I think, one class scheduled per chapter, which is very simple. Running the numbers real quickly with your calculator, you realize that gives us approximately one session per chapter. And that means we have to cover one chapter per session.

Everyone understand the math of that? Okay. The problem that creates is that it's very, very difficult to cover a whole chapter of Galatians in only 90 minutes, at least for me. And in addition to that, as with every book of the Bible, we have to have some introductory things brought out.

With Galatians, as with all the books of the Bible, or maybe I shouldn't say all of them, but most of them, a lot of the historical setting and considerations like that are necessary to know something about before we can really understand what's being discussed. You'll find that Galatians is probably Paul's most hot-headed epistle. I mean, he wrote this thing when he was mad.

Some people have considered it to be a sort of a rough draft of the Romans. I think that's a fair enough assumption. I'm not saying that when he wrote Galatians, he was thinking, later I'll write the book of Romans and this will serve as a rough draft.

But you'll find that as we study through Galatians and as you're already studying through

Romans, you'll notice that the main themes of Romans are the main themes of Galatians. And not only are the main themes, but many of the same illustrations, the same thoughts. I mean, it's very clear that Galatians is sort of like a shorter version of Romans, but Romans is a very calm epistle.

It's very cool-headed. It's very logical. It's very rational and reasoned.

Galatians is an angry epistle. And there's a good reason for that difference. For one thing, Paul didn't have as much emotion at stake with the Romans, and he didn't have any reason to believe the Romans were in as bad a shape as the Galatians.

But Paul had never even met the Roman church. He'd never been there when he wrote Romans. But the Galatian churches were the first churches he had founded.

They were like his babies. And he apparently wrote this epistle, we'll talk about the theories about this, almost immediately after he had founded them. And what is very clear from what he says to them is that after he left these churches, there were Jewish people professing to be Christians.

They may have even been from the Jerusalem church, Jewish Christians, who came into those churches and taught the Gentiles that Paul had converted that they must submit to the Jewish law and be circumcised. Now, let me let me talk about some of the things that are debatable here. The date of the epistle is very debatable.

It is either the earliest epistle Paul wrote, or it may be one of the later ones that Paul wrote. The reason I say it is either earliest is because if in fact he is writing to those churches that he started in his first missionary journey, which happened to be in Galatia, and if he is writing them before the Jerusalem council, which is what I believe to be the case, that would be between the first and second missionary journey. Well, he had not yet written any of his epistles at that time, and if this one came to be in existence at that time, then it predates the others by a good bit, because all of his other epistles were written either during or after his second missionary journey.

I am of the opinion that these Galatian churches, to whom he wrote, are the churches that he and Barnabas founded in their first missionary journey. Now, this is debatable because the word Galatia can be applied to more than one geographical region. There was ethnic Galatia, which was actually much further north than those regions that Paul and Barnabas had evangelized.

The ethnic Galatians were the people of Gaul, and they were much further north than those churches that Paul and Barnabas started. There is a theory held by many scholars that Paul, when he wrote to the Galatians, was writing to those people who were ethnically Galatians and were therefore much further north than the first missionary journey took Paul. In fact, further north than we ever read of Paul going.

And if Paul ever went there, it must have been on his second or third or later missionary journey, and as such, this would shove this epistle back late into his ministry because he didn't start churches up in ethnic Galatia up in the north on his first missionary journey. On the other hand, if Galatia here doesn't mean the ethnic region of the ethnic Galatians, but the Roman province called Galatia. The Romans, of course, remapped things from the conquered territories, and they, in the Roman reckoning, Galatia extended not only to the northern region where the ethnic Galatians were, but down south all the way down to the Mediterranean Sea and included the churches that Paul and Barnabas founded in the first missionary journey.

Now, here's what it is. If this is written to northern Galatia, then we don't have any record of the founding of those churches in northern Galatia. And if Paul founded churches up there, it must have been later in his missionary efforts, and that would mean this letter must have been written quite a bit later.

If, however, Paul is using the word Galatia to mean the Roman province of Galatia, which would be southern Galatia, that is the region where he had planted those churches, and he does speak to these Christians as if they are brand new Christians. He says, I'm amazed that you so soon turned away from him who called you to another gospel, implying that they had not been saved for very long before the conditions came upon them that he was writing to correct. So if he was talking to the churches that we read of in the book of Acts in chapters 13 and 14, we find Paul going to Iconium and Lystra and Derby and Pisidia and Antioch, and all of these churches were in what was the Roman province of Galatia, but these people were not ethnic Galatians.

OK, so the argument for the later date and for him writing to the ethnic Galatians is that from time to time you'll find him calling them Galatians. He speaks to his readers as Galatians, and while, like in chapter 3, verse 1, foolish Galatians. The argument of those who take the later date approach is that, well, even though the Roman province of Galatia included these people that Paul evangelized in his first journey, they were not ethnically Galatians, and they would probably not call themselves Galatians, even if they lived in a region called Galatia, they would probably not speak of themselves as Galatians.

But that's a probability that different people would assess differently. I mean, would I call myself an Oregonian? You know, it took me a long time to admit that I'm an Oregonian, because I really feel like a Californian. I've lived 30 of my years in California before I ever came to Oregon.

I've been in Oregon for 14 now, or 13 plus, and, you know, I'm an Oregonian. I'm not a native-born Oregonian. I'm not ethnic Oregonian, whatever that might be.

I'm a Californian by birth, but I live in the region of Oregon, and I suppose that by all legal standards, that makes me an Oregonian. And for me to speak to people who say

I'm an Oregonian, it doesn't speak of what I consider my birth origins. It just speaks of where I live.

And there's probably no serious reason to deny that persons who were not ethnic Galatians, but now lived in a region that was called Galatia, that they would call themselves Galatians. But this is a principal reason that many people think it is not the ethnic, that it is the ethnic Galatians, because he calls them Galatians. To me, that's a very weak argument, and there are much stronger arguments to make this a letter to the churches of southern Galatia, the southern region which Paul had evangelized, not the least of which is that we know he did plant churches there.

And we don't know that he planted any in northern Galatia. But even more importantly is the question, and the date of the book hinges most significantly on the question, had the Jerusalem Council yet occurred when Paul wrote this letter? Now, you know the Jerusalem Council, that was in Acts chapter 15. There had been some disputes in Antioch, which is the home church of Paul and Barnabas up in Syria.

Some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had come to Antioch and been telling the Gentiles they had to be circumcised to be saved. And they did not agree. Paul and Barnabas did not agree.

There was no small dissension between them, we read. And for this reason, it was decided that Paul and Barnabas would go down to Jerusalem and have it out with the Christians down there and decide finally and officially whether Paul and Barnabas' Gentile converts would in fact need to be circumcised. This had never been officially decided before that, and so they had an official council.

The apostles were there, the elders of Jerusalem church were there, and Paul and Barnabas were there. And we read in Acts chapter 15 that there was much discussion. It may have gone on for days.

It might have been a long conference. But at the end of it, James, who was the official spokesman for the Jerusalem church, decided, and it was put in writing, and everyone agreed, that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or keep the Jewish law. They were asked to avoid doing certain behaviors which might offend the Jews in their regions where they lived.

And the Jerusalem church asked them to please be mindful of that. But they made it clear, the church of the Gentiles is not in any sense obligated to keep the Jewish law or be circumcised. Now, once that was decided, that would become official Christianity.

Once the apostles and elders had decided that this council was like the Nicene Council, after the Nicene Council, it's a given, Trinitarianism is Orthodoxy. Before that, it wasn't sure. I mean, there were the Arians and the Trinitarians who were debating for a few

decades or centuries or whatever before the Nicene Council.

And the Nicene Council decided, Orthodoxy means we believe in the Trinity. And that settled it. Anyone else was a cultist.

Now, that's what the Jerusalem Council did for the issue of circumcision. Once the Jerusalem Council made their decision, then circumcision was no longer a disputed point in the church. Now, the question of the timing of the writing of this epistle hinges very largely upon the question, did Paul write this before or after the Jerusalem Council? The reason this is definitive is because in Acts, we read that Paul and Byrus returned from their first missionary journey where they planted some churches in southern Galatian region.

They came back from their first missionary journey back to the church in Antioch that had first sent them out. And after they'd been there no long time, this dispute arose over circumcision. So they went down to Jerusalem, seemingly weeks or months after they'd come home from their first missionary journey, and sometime later they went down to the Jerusalem Council.

Now, if Paul wrote this before the Jerusalem Council happened, then it was very, very early. It was right in those months, probably, maybe weeks after he'd returned from his first missionary journey and before he went to Jerusalem for the Council. If that is in fact when it happened, then these would have to be the churches of southern Galatia that Paul had established at that time.

Now, on the other hand, if someone wanted to argue that, no, this is a later epistle, this was written after the Jerusalem Council, and that it was written to the northern churches of Galatia that we don't read of in the book of Acts, but were later established, which is what actually the earliest views of the church were those. But I don't hold to them. And there's one thing that makes that almost impossible, is that Paul never refers in this letter to the Jerusalem Council in its decision.

And yet he is debating the same issue that was decided there. After it was decided, there would be no more debate necessary. I mean, if Paul evangelized a bunch of Gentile churches up in northern Galatia after the Jerusalem Council had made their decision, and some Jews came in and said, some Jewish Christians came in and said, well, you guys have to be circumcised also.

In addition to being Christians, you have to be circumcised and keep the law. Paul wouldn't have to write an impassioned argument like this. He'd just say, hey, here's a copy of the letter from the Jerusalem Council.

Read it and weep, you heretics. You know, I mean, basically the idea is that when the Jerusalem Council made their decision, that ended the dispute. And Paul writes as if the

dispute is not at all ended.

He's disputing hotly with many arguments, many reasonings. See, when Paul's writing to Corinth or Thessalonica, they're not discussing the issue of circumcision so much. It might be mentioned in passing, but that wasn't the hot issue.

But that's different with this epistle, because really the whole issue that Paul's concerned about here is that somebody professing to be Christian and Jewish is telling his Gentile converts that they have to become Jewish to be Christians. They have to do this thing. And he could have settled that easily by saying, well, listen, you guys, I realize some people come in and told you some goofy stuff, that you have to be circumcised and stuff.

But listen, that was already discussed a long time ago. The apostles in Jerusalem put out an official declaration in writing. I've got a copy of it right here.

That's settled. It's sort of like after the Nicene Council, someone coming around teaching Arianism. That's what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach, but we call them occult, because they have gone contrary to the official decision of the leadership of the church.

Of course, the final authority of the leadership of the Nicene Council might be questioned more than the final authority of the apostles in Jerusalem. So I'm saying that really, if there had been a Jerusalem Council prior to his meeting, writing this, I should say, then he wouldn't have had to write it in the first place. Or at least if he did write it, he would have mentioned it.

I mean, instead of having to argue for all these theological propositions, his argument against the need for them to have to circumcise, he would at least mention. And in addition to this, all the apostles agree with me on this. They said so themselves.

And the absence of even a hint of that in this suggests strongly an earlier date. And it is talking about the southern Galatian churches that Paul founded with Barnabas. Another consideration that moves in this direction is that in the early parts of Galatians, the first two chapters, it's largely autobiographical.

This is different than most of Paul's epistles. He doesn't spend time in any of his other epistles giving two chapters practically to his autobiography. We find brief autobiographical sections in Philippians 3 and in 2 Corinthians in a few places.

But to really lay out his whole testament from what he got saved on for a while, for 14 or 17 years, we don't find anything like that in the other epistles. And the reason that he gives his autobiography here apparently is to answer false charges that were made about him by his critics that his converts were now hearing. These Jewish people are coming into the Gentile churches and they were saying stuff against Paul's doctrine and apparently against Paul.

And we have to kind of read between the lines to decide what it is they were apparently saying by, for one thing, the way that he argued his autobiography. He's very selective in what he gives and what he gives apparently was chosen to his purpose. And what it does show in chapters 1 and 2 is how seldom he had contact with the apostles.

Now, I mean, he affirms this with oaths and everything. I've seen the apostles no more than this and so forth. And it has been deduced from this fact by almost all commentators that one of the things that Paul is being accused of among other things, one of the things was that Paul got his gospel second hand.

That he's not even as authoritative as the apostles in Jerusalem because they saw Jesus, but Paul got it just from them. And he may have even got it wrong, twisted it himself. But it's not like he has the same authority as the other apostles.

He's just a second generation apostle. He's just got derived authority from the others. Sure, the other apostles say they've approved of Paul, but they may not know what he's teaching.

And he's not really a firsthand witness of what Jesus said and so forth. And basically, there seems to have been, as you will see, a criticism of him that he was not as close to the original source, namely to Jesus, as the apostles in Jerusalem were. And he was dependent upon them for everything he knew, even though he may have gotten it wrong in the way he applied what they said.

But they were arguing that the apostles in Jerusalem would favor circumcision of the Gentiles. But Paul, who doesn't even know Jesus firsthand like the others do, he says you don't have to be circumcised, but he's not as authoritative because it would appear that one of the arguments was Paul must have gotten what he knows secondhand since he wasn't around when Jesus was here. Now, I say that because from the very beginning, Paul indicates in verse one that he's an apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

He didn't derive his apostleship from other people. He got it directly from Jesus, just like the other apostles did. And other places, a number of times, he makes reference to this, that he didn't get it from man.

He says in chapter one, verse 11, But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, for I neither received it from man nor got it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. He's protesting he didn't get it from other people. He got it from Jesus.

He emphasizes this. And the rest of his testimony from about verse 17 on or verse 15 on, he's giving his testimony. He says, Now, when I got saved, I didn't go see the apostles right away, which is his way of saying I didn't learn what I preached in my early years

from them.

He indicates he saw them for the first time three years after his conversion. Well, we know from the book of Acts, he's been preaching for those three years. And so he was preaching for three years before I ever met the apostles.

He no doubt stresses this in order to make the point. I obviously didn't get my understanding or derive my awareness of the gospel from them. First time I laid eyes on him was three years after I'd been preaching already.

Now, but then in chapter two, he records a second visit with the apostles. In chapter two verse one, Then after 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. I took Titus with me.

I went up by revelation, et cetera, et cetera. And he says that he really only saw Peter and James. And he only stayed with them for 15 days, is what he tells us.

And well, actually, it says for the first time, first time he only saw Peter and James. That's in verse 19 of chapter one. The second time it appears that he only saw James, Peter and John, or at least get a private meeting with them.

There's no mention, for example, of a Jerusalem council happening on that second visit. Now, the point Paul's trying to make is to establish by his own personal history that he has had but limited contact with the apostles. And he's trying to show that, among other things, by showing how seldom he had any opportunity to even see them three years after his conversion for the first time.

14 years later, he went back again and saw them again. Now, here's the point. The Jerusalem council, according to the book of Acts, was the third time after his conversion that Paul went to Jerusalem.

He records only two times in Galatians. He records only two times in Galatians. But in Acts, there are three.

It is the third time that the Jerusalem council. Let me real quickly show you this in Acts. In Acts, chapter nine, which records Saul's conversion, it tells us in verse 26, after his conversion, which would be the three years after his conversion, Acts 9, 26, And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and did not believe his disciples.

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. So that is the first time the apostles laid eyes on him after his conversion. Paul tells us in Galatians that it was three years after his conversion.

OK, Acts 9, 26. Then, in Acts 11, Paul has spent some time out of Jerusalem now, but in

Acts 11, we have at the end of that chapter, the prophet Agabus coming to the church of Antioch, which was Paul's church by this time. Paul and Barnabas were in this church in Antioch.

Agabus comes, he prophesies that there will be a big famine, and everyone realizes that the Christians in Jerusalem will be hit hardest by this because of the famines they were already having and the persecution. So the Gentile Christians in Antioch decided to take a collection financially and send it to the Jerusalem church. And it says in verse 30, the last verse of Acts 11, This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

They sent this gift to Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. So this would be the second time Paul went to Jerusalem. That's Acts 11, 30.

OK. So this gift was taken to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul. That's Paul's second trip to Jerusalem after his conversion.

Then in chapter 15, verse 1, it says, And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and others about this question. So they did.

And that resulted in the Jerusalem Council. Now, what you can see is we have Paul going to Jerusalem after his conversion in chapter 9, in chapter 11, and in chapter 15. The third one of these was the Jerusalem Council.

Now, in Galatians, Paul mentions only two times having been to Jerusalem. He does not mention the third time. And therefore, it is likely there had not been a third time because what he's trying to do is to show every instance where he's had contact with the apostles to show how seldom that's been.

Now, some people have thought back to Galatians, now chapter two. When he says in Galatians two, After 14 years, I want to begin to Jerusalem. Those who take the later date view of Galatians feel like he is now talking about the Jerusalem Council.

They believe that Acts chapter two, the second recorded visit is the Jerusalem Council. There are arguments for that. They say, well, first of all, Paul could leave out any reference to the visit in chapter 11 of Acts because it was just a short visit to take money.

He may not have even seen the apostles on that occasion, and there's no indication in Acts that while they were down there and took the money to Jerusalem that they had the exposure to the apostles that we read up here in Galatians two. Therefore, they say this Galatians two is not the same one that you read of in Acts 11, the second one. He skips

over that because of its relative insignificance.

The Acts 11 visit was so insignificant that he doesn't mention that he skipped immediately to the Jerusalem Council visit, and they point out that the decision that was made of the Jerusalem Council was essentially a decision that is made in Galatians chapter two, namely that Paul's companions and his comrades were uncircumcised. We read that in chapter two. They even took Titus along with him, an uncircumcised Gentile, and the apostles did not require him to circumcise him.

So they say that Galatians two visit is the Jerusalem Council visit of Acts 15. Now, I do not accept this for a number of reasons. One, the visit he describes in Acts two does not have any of the characteristics of the Jerusalem Council.

True, Barnabas and Saul went to Jerusalem in Acts chapter 11. So Barnabas and Paul traveled together to Jerusalem in both the second and third visits that Paul made to Jerusalem, and this could be either one of them. However, just because Acts 11, where it tells of Paul and Barnabas taking the money down to Jerusalem, it does not mention this meeting with the apostles.

That doesn't mean it didn't happen. You will find as you compare Paul's autobiography in Galatians and Paul's life that there is very little overlapping material. It's actually a very interesting challenge to try to harmonize the two because he gives different details in Galatians than he does elsewhere, and it would be in keeping with the regular character of the narrative that he would include things here that are not mentioned in Acts 11, but that doesn't mean this didn't happen as recorded in Acts 11 and being of that visit.

He mentions no written decision. He mentions no official decision. He mentions a meeting with three men only, Peter, James and John, and they shook hands with him, he says, and acknowledged that he and Barnabas were apostles to the Gentiles and that they, the twelve, were apostles to the Jews.

Now, this is a very different kind of thing than was decided at the Jerusalem Council, and we do not read in Galatians two that there was no need to be circumcised. All Paul says is, I took an uncircumcised Gentile with me and they didn't require him to be circumcised. That's very different than saying they had a council to discuss this issue and made a formal decision for all the churches.

You see, there is not that much in Galatians 2 that corresponds with what happened at the Jerusalem Council, and even though perhaps he could talk about the Jerusalem Council this way, he omits those things that would be most powerfully convincing to his readers that did happen at the Jerusalem Council. He doesn't mention any of them. Furthermore, I do not think that Paul would take the liberty of skipping over the Acts 11 visit.

That is, while he's given his brief narrative of his early visits, because his point is to show how few times he's been to Jerusalem, how few times since his conversion he's seen the Jerusalem Council, and if someone knew that he had made a trip there that he's not mentioning that he's skipping over the right thing. Paul, you're trying to pull a fast one. We happen to know you've been there more times than you're telling us, and if his whole point is to express the fact that I've seldom seen these in.

I've seldom been in Jerusalem, seldom had any opportunity to derive anything from them. Then the very fact of him skipping over a visit, which we know to have occurred in Acts 11 could be used against him as trying to conceal something on the very point that he's trying to establish. So it is much more, in my mind, likely that we have in Galatians 1, his visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, which is the first one mentioned in Acts chapter 9. And in Galatians 2, we have, as he certainly implies, his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, which would have to be the famine relief visit, when he sent famine relief from the Antioch church in Acts 11.

And that would mean that he does not mention at all the Jerusalem Council, which, if that had also occurred, he should mention three visits and emphasize that third one more than the others, because it would be the most definitive. So my, I mean, certainly scholars disagree with one another on this matter, but it seems to me very, very difficult, if not impossible, to identify the visit in Galatians 2 with the Jerusalem Council. It is not spoken of as if it was the Jerusalem Council, and it would be leaving out one of the visits, which I don't think Paul is intending to do.

And therefore, if he wrote it before the Jerusalem Council, it would be the only explanation for why he doesn't mention it, because it hadn't happened yet, and it would make this the earliest of Paul's visits. Yes. Right.

Exactly. I was going to say that, but I forgot. Thank you.

In Galatians 2, 10, we're talking about this second visit he made. He said the apostles did not require him to change anything, but they did urge him to remember the poor, and he says, the very thing which I was also eager to do. Now, if you remember that the second time Paul went to Jerusalem was to bring relief to the poor, and that latter line in Galatians 2, 10, the very thing I was also eager to do, I mean, in a sense, it could mean the very thing that we were already doing.

The very thing that we already had shown an inclination to do, they asked us to continue to do, and that would agree very well with the circumstances of the famine relief visit, which is in Acts 11, 30. So I think all the only thing that surprises me about this thing is that for the longest time, I think the commentators on Galatians going back centuries understood this, that they had what we call the northern Galatian theory, the idea that the Galatians are the northern ethnic Galatians and could not be the churches Paul started in the first missionary journey, so they had a later date on Galatians. But to me,

the internal evidence is so strong that this is his own churches that he established in his first missionary journey before the Jerusalem Council that I've just got to go with the early date, and I think most evangelicals today do.

But it was not the majority opinion among Christians for a long time, and I'm not sure why it wasn't. Anyway, I mentioned that Paul's critics had made some accusations against him. We can only deduce what they were, but from Paul's emphatic assertions about himself, we can sort of deduce what they were to clear up false information that had been given to them about him, and from such we can probably deduce that there were probably at least three things that his critics were saying about him after he'd gone, trying to mislead Paul's converts about the nature of his authority and so forth.

The first of all being what I mentioned, that he was not an apostle who'd ever seen Jesus like the others. Therefore, at best, he knew what he knew second hand, not by direct exposure to Jesus. And I pointed out that Paul made several protestations to the contrary, that everything he knows he knew before he met the apostles, and once he met them, he didn't change anything about what he was saying.

He emphasized that, too. So it would appear that he's trying to establish beyond question that he did not derive what he's preaching from any man, even the other apostles. So it sounds like that's what they were accusing him of, perhaps.

Now, the second thing is that he would apparently have been accused of being a man pleaser, and this would probably be in the connection of the Galatians were, you know, here come the Judaizers into Galatia, and they're saying, oh, you Christians got to be circumcised. And they say, well, Paul told us we don't have to be circumcised. And it sounds as if perhaps what was said was in response to that, oh, well, Paul, you got to take what he says with a grain of salt.

He knows you guys don't want to be circumcised. Who would want to be if they didn't have to be? And so he just says what you want to hear. He's just a popularity seeker.

When he's around the Jews, oh, he supports circumcision. But when he's with you, he just says what you want to hear. You can't take what he says that seriously, because he just wants to build big churches, just in church growth.

He doesn't care about being faithful to the truth. He says what he what will please people at the time. This apparently is what was being said about him.

And it's and really, although at this early day, it'd be hard to tell, but one could almost get this opinion about Paul based upon his own policy, which he himself admits in First Corinthians nine. Remember, he said, when I'm with the Jews, I live like a Jew. When I'm with those who are under the law, I can live as one under the law.

When I'm with the Gentiles, those who are not under the law, I live as one who's not

under the law. I mean, Paul himself did admit and without shame that for the sake of evangelistic access to people and to avoid turning them off and so forth so they could might hear the gospel. There were concessions he made to people along some of these lines, some of these lines, not all of them, but around Jews.

Yes, he wouldn't make an issue of circumcision of law. He'd actually play along. He's a Jew himself, so he could.

You know, he could go and pay the fees for four men who had a Nazarite vows. You know, it was a very Jewish thing to do. He could do that among the Jews.

He could live like a Jew to win the Jews, he said among the Gentiles. There's in measure he could live like a Gentile, not entirely. And he makes that clear, by the way, in First Corinthians nine, because when I'm with those who are without the law, I live as one without law.

But then he hastens to put it in a place, not being without law toward God, but under the law of Christ, he says. In other words, when I'm with the Gentiles who don't eat kosher food, I don't have to eat kosher food. When I'm with the Gentiles who don't keep festivals, I don't have to keep the festivals.

I'm not under the law of Moses. But if the Gentiles and would go out and sleep with temple prostitutes, I can't do that because I am under the law of Christ and he won't let me do such things as that. There are things I can do when I'm with Gentiles, but there's a limit to what I can do.

Now, in fact, it may have been observed by some of these Jews that Paul does seem to support the law when he's with them and he doesn't seem to support it when it's the Gentiles. And they may have felt like they were even telling the truth when they say, Oh, Paul, you know, he says one thing means another. It depends on who he's with.

You know, the gospel he preaches depends on, you know, whoever he's with that day, you know. So don't take him too seriously. He's not giving you anything that he would that he would say to everybody anyway.

He just said you want to hear. Now, of course, if they did apply Paul's policy that way, they are they were taking it further than Paul would. Paul would change his lifestyle when with Jews or with Gentiles in order to avoid offending them and women for Christ.

But he would not change his gospel. He would not change his message. And he's emphatic about that.

And at one point in chapter one, verse ten, after he makes him very emphatic, he invokes curses on anyone who preaches any other gospel than the one he's now affirming. He says in verse ten of chapter one, Do I now persuade men or God, or do I

seek to please men? For if I still please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Now, he says, Do I still please men? It sounds as if he's answering an objection, perhaps that people said he does try to please men.

And yet he's just said, if I don't even an angel from heaven preaches any other gospel than the one you're hearing me preach right now, let him be a curse. Does that sound like I'm flexible on this? That sound like I just say what people want to hear. So it sounds like he's answering that that possible objection.

And in chapter five, verse eleven, chapter five, verse eleven, he says, It's kind of turned over to Ephesians. Paul says, And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Now, what he says, I'm suffering persecution from the Jews because I don't teach circumcision. But why do you say if I'm still teaching circumcision, why am I suffering persecution? It seems clear that someone has accused him somewhere of preaching circumcision, perhaps in other circumstances than in Galatia, that maybe when he's with Jewish people, he preaches circumcision.

When he's with the Galatians, he doesn't preach it. He says, Well, if I do that, why am I being persecuted so much by these people? I mean, if I really tell people what they want to hear all the time, why do they hate me so much? He's implying that no, I never preach circumcision, even among the Jews who would like me to. That's why I'm persecuted.

And it seems to be answering again the objection that the accusation that perhaps he does preach circumcision in some settings and non circumcision in others. And in Chapter two, verse eleven through fourteen, Paul points out we won't read this, or I will read it later. He points out that even when he was with Peter, he would rebuke Peter for being inconsistent about the gospel.

He gives an example in Chapter two, verse eleven and fourteen of Paul's own inflexibility on this point, even where Peter was a little more flexible than he was. I mean, Peter was willing to eat with Gentiles when only Gentiles were around. But when Jewish Christians came, Peter kind of withdrew to avoid offending the Jews.

Well, that was perhaps in one sense commendable on Peter's part. Paul might have done that in some circumstances, too. But what the reason this is so bad to do is because it's set at risk the integrity of the gospel, because everyone looked at Peter and say, well, this is the Jerusalem Council could not have yet happened, because this is at a time when people are showing is it or isn't is it or is it not necessary to circumcise these people? And Peter, by being there and withdrawing from them in the presence of the Jews from the uncircumcised, was as it were saying it's they're not clean because they're not circumcised.

And he was affirming that element in the church that thought the Gentiles, uncircumcised Gentile Christians are not clean until they're circumcised. So Paul points

out that though Peter may have waffled on this a bit, Paul didn't. Paul even took risks big time and rebuked Peter publicly for that and told Peter that the gospel is not negotiable on this point.

So in recording these things, Paul seems to be emphasizing, I don't shift on this. I don't say one thing where it'll be convenient for me to say it and say something opposite where it'll be convenient for me to say that. I'm not trying to please man.

I'm trying to please God. If I were trying to please man, I couldn't be the servant of Christ, and I wouldn't be persecuted as I am if I was doing what people say I'm doing. So those are two things I think we can deduce from the way he argues that people were saying against him.

One is that he had only a second hand message, which he was getting wrong, and also that he didn't always say it the same, just depending on what people wanted to hear. He'd say one thing to one person and something else to another. Now, the other thing that might have been being said about him, this is not quite as strongly attested, but it is possible that some of his critics were saying that Paul didn't even have the full endorsement of the other apostles, that he had, in fact, derived everything he knew from them, but he'd changed it and the apostles didn't approve of what he was saying.

Number three, number three would be that the other apostles in Jerusalem probably didn't even approve of what Paul preached, and so he does point out, especially in chapter two, when he gives that second visit to Jerusalem, he points out that he told them everything. He told the apostles in Jerusalem everything he preached. He showed them the fruits of his labor, and they said, good enough for us, and shook hands and said, you're apparently called to be an apostle of the Gentiles, and we're called to be to the circumcision, and so Paul points out that he does have the full approval.

He was not made an apostle by man, and he didn't derive his gospel from man, but the apostles, nonetheless, had become aware of what he was preaching and approved it. He had their endorsement, and by saying that, especially after he so vehemently said, and I didn't get it from them, I didn't get it from them, but they endorsed it, which seemed to mean that he was trying to also counter another objection that maybe he didn't have the full endorsement of the apostles in Jerusalem. So my assumption, it's not mine alone, I think scholars have mostly reached this conclusion, is that Paul was being charged falsely on so many things that made him angry.

I mean, he was very angry. He said some very, very severe things. He called people fools, which is not generally speaking a nice thing to do.

He also said later on that he wished that those who were troubling him would be utterly cut off, and by the way, cut off is an idiom, the commentators will tell you, but it refers to castrating. He's making sort of a cool, caustic joke. These people who want to circumcise

everybody.

Well, why not go all the way? Tell them, I wish, actually the Jerusalem Bible, which is sort of like the NIV, it's sort of a paraphrase more than anything, but the New Jerusalem Bible actually tries to say, tell those who are troubling you about this, I wish the knife would slip, meaning that they would castrate themselves. Now this perhaps is not just some kind of a childish, rude, mean-spirited remark on his part. He possibly is saying, I hope they don't have any more offspring.

It would be much better for everyone if they were castrated and they couldn't produce any more of the likes of them, you know, because they are bad people doing a lot of damage to the body of Christ. But nonetheless, it's a harsh remark. Likewise, when he says, if anyone preaches any of God, let it be anathema, is how it reads in the Greek.

Twice he says it. That's pretty sharp. We don't find anything close to that in Romans, which covers the same subject matter.

And again, as I said, the reason principally seems to be that A, Paul wasn't as intimately, emotionally involved with the Romans as he was with the Galatians, who were his own children in the faith. And also, by the time he wrote Romans, there was not, at least not in Rome, this dispute over circumcision that had to be settled in this way. And it would appear, therefore, that Galatians was written in that little window of time when Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey and had not yet gone to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Council.

But there wasn't very much time there. But the letter looks like it may have been hurriedly written. In fact, he may have written it as a sort of a preparation for going to the council.

He may have been putting his thoughts down on paper, partly to send these people in Galatia who needed to hear it right away and partly to get his thoughts on paper. But some of his arguments he'd use at the council since he was going down there to participate in a conference to debate this issue. Anyway, that's my assumption as far as the date, and that puts it earlier than all of his other epistles.

The time frame then of his writing, it would be that recorded in Acts chapter 14 verses 27 and 28. 27 says, And when they come and gather the church, this is when Paul and Barnabas just got home to Antioch from their first missionary journey. When they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them and that he had opened the door of faith to Gentiles, so they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

I don't know what a long time is, but it's then says in chapter 15 and certain men came down from Judea and troubled the brethren that began that precipitated the Jerusalem

Council. So probably right there, that long time in Acts 14:28, which is probably measured in months rather than years because of Paul's the need to fit everything in Paul's life. And I don't think we can afford it for a few years there.

That long time is probably when he wrote Galatians. Paul is a very, very powerful debater in this. I love the way he debates.

I mean, he made some pretty wild, radical, what many Jewish people probably think were far-fetched arguments, but they're great. I mean, and because we know he was an apostle inspired by the Holy Spirit and so forth, that these he saw meanings in some of the Old Testament scriptures that others did not see. Now, remember, Paul had been raised a Pharisee, and as such, he would be inclined by nature and upbringing by nature and nurture.

He would have been inclined to support the need to circumcise everybody because the Pharisees were more legalistic than anyone else in the Jewish religion. And therefore, it was very against what Paul would naturally think for him to take this strong position that the Gentiles do not have to be circumcised. They don't have to keep the law.

The law is passe. It's no more needed. For Paul to take that would be something that would require a radical shift from what he had believed before he was a Christian.

And for him to have such strong and interesting arguments based on Old Testament, which he brings up here, and he brings up in Romans also, against circumcision as a requirement, would require that he would have had to rethink after his conversion. He would have had to rethink a lot of those Old Testament scriptures and their implications. But he had had time to do that.

By the time he wrote Galatians, he'd been saved for at least 14 and possibly 17 years or more, because he mentions three years after his conversion, his first visit, and then after 14 years. Some think that's 14 years from his conversion. Others, I think, more take it to mean 14 years after his first visit to Jerusalem.

So that'd be 17 years after his conversion. This man had been almost a couple of decades a Christian and had much time to meditate on the scriptures and come up with his arguments that he presents here. They're not the kind of arguments he would have had instantaneously once he got converted, because it'd be a totally different way of thinking about the Old Testament scripture than he would have as a Pharisee previously.

OK, let's let's get into chapter one, then. 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 brethren who are with me to the churches of Galatia. 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. This is obviously the typical opening of the epistle identifies himself and his readers. Now, I mentioned already in our introduction that that long parenthesis in verse one.

I mean, if that parenthesis were not there, it'd be much more like an ordinary epistle. Paul, an apostle and all the brethren who are with me to the churches of Galatia. I mean, that would be very much more typical.

But that long parenthesis is therefore a reason he doesn't have that in most of his epistles. And we must assume that what he is affirming there is something those people in particular needed to be informed of or reminded of. That his apostleship was not of human origin.

The apostles in Jerusalem didn't apostolize him. Remember, a word apostle means one who is sent. It was not they who sent him, it's Jesus who sent him.

It's God who sent him. God who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God who appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and made him an apostle to the Gentiles. And he's emphatic and jealous over that fact.

Now, he does mention in verse two, all the brethren who are with me, which would be his way of saying, this is not me, you know, some loose cannon, a flute like a float, like some lone ranger out there with some weird views. But the whole church that I represent, I'm in the church of Antioch writing this letter and all the brethren here see. I mean, they they amen what I'm saying.

I'm writing basically on behalf of all of us here. This is not just one man speaking. This is me writing with a company.

There's a company of people brethren with me, and we are all putting our names to this. This is what we all stand for, not just me. To the churches of Galatia.

Again, I mentioned that Galatia could be northern or southern Galatia. If ethnic Galatia, then it's the northern, but that makes this that presents my mind too many problems in the dating of the epistle. If the Roman province of Galatia, which seems more likely than this, these are the churches of the city in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derby, which we read of Paul founding those churches in Acts 13 and 14.

Now, verses three through five are very much like what we might expect to find at the beginning of any epistle. Grace to you in peace is basically how Paul opens all of his epistles, wishing grace and peace for them. It might have more meaning in this particular case than in some.

It might not just be a cliché. They need to know the grace of God because they are tending to fall into legalism and they need peace because there are people troubling them, as we shall find. There are people troubling them with another gospel.

They need to be comforted. They need to be calmed. They need to be secured.

They need peace and they need grace as all people do. But in this particular epistle, those things, as he wrote, grace and peace as he customarily would, he might have had more feeling in those particular words and thinking of the particular circumstances of this church than usual from God, the father and Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of God, the father to whom be all glory. Now these things are said about Jesus and God, the father.

They may or may not be particular to the needs of this church. It's always a possibility that Paul just kind of whacked eloquent whenever he mentioned Jesus, he had to say something more than just his name. And when he ever mentioned the father, he just couldn't mention the father.

He had to say the father who saved us or Jesus who gave himself for us or whatever. I mean, Paul always whacked eloquent about what Jesus has done for us and what the father has done for us. And if this were some other church, he might have said the same thing.

Now he didn't say these same exact things in his greetings to other churches, but I'm not sure whether such things came rather arbitrarily as they came to his mind about just he wanted to say something lofty and positive and true about Jesus, about God, or whether he selected the things that he said here in order to sort of remind them of the things about Jesus and God that present the premise for what he was going to argue in the rest of his letter. Now, the reason I suggest that is a possibility is, for one thing, one might expect a person to do this, and for another, we certainly see Jesus doing that in Revelation, the seven letters to the seven churches. He describes himself to each church in a certain way.

He gives a certain description. He that has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze, or he holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven land stands or whatever. I mean, each church in Revelation, Jesus says from Jesus, and it tells who he is and gives some of this description of him, and it would appear in most cases, perhaps all cases, the specifics of the description he gives himself is suited to the conditions of that church and to what he has to say to them.

We won't go into Revelation right now to illustrate that, but that may be what Paul's doing here, too. Jesus died for our sins. That's why we don't need to be circumcised or offer sacrifice or do anything else for our sins.

Our sins are not covered by that means. They're covered by Jesus who died for our sins, he says in verse four, and further that he might deliver us from this present evil age. Now, the Jews and their religion was the present evil age of which he speaks.

Not so much that Judaism as God had ordained it was an evil thing, certainly not, but the legalism of Judaism was every bit as much a work of the flesh and of human corruption as the sins of the Gentiles were. And Paul later in Galatians in verse chapter four makes this point. He says in verse nine, Galatians four, nine.

But now, after you have known God or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to which you desire again to be in bondage? Now, the weak and beggarly elements that they're turning back to is Judaism. The weak and beggarly elements. Now, if you look back to verse three in that chapter, Galatians four, three, he says, Even so, when we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Now, we who are children is referring to us before before Christ came. That's the context of the previous verses. When man was kept under the law before Christ came, they were kept in bondage under the elements of the world.

And now we've been delivered from that. But in verse nine, they're turning back to those weak and beggarly elements. Now, Paul uses this idea that elements sometimes they say the rudiments, rudiments of the world to speak of legalistic Jewish practices.

He does so again in Colossians chapter two. If you turn that briefly, I'd like to demonstrate this in Colossians chapter two, verse twenty and twenty one. Colossians two.

Verses twenty and twenty one causes, therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, by the way, that expression basic principles of the world, the word principles there is the same Greek word as his elements over in Galatians, the elements of the world principles. For some reason, these are translated differently here. But in the Greek, they're the same expression, the elements of the world.

If you've died with Christ from the basic elements of the world, why is the living in the world? Do you subject yourself to regulations? Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle. Now, notice, if I asked you what are the basic elements of a worldly life, you might think drink and smoke and womanizing. That's worldliness.

But when Paul talks about the elements of worldliness of the world, he doesn't identify them as profligate self-indulgence. He talks about regulations, touch not taste, not health, asceticism, self-denial of a religious sort, not of a spiritual sort, but of religious sort. It's a man who doesn't know God trying to be good enough without God through keeping rules and regulations.

That's worldly. That's evil. That's what we've been delivered from.

Now that we've died with Christ, he says in Colossians, if you've died with Christ, why do you still keep these worldly principles, these worldly regulations? And that's what he's saying to the Galatians. In chapter four of Galatians, he says, we were under such bondage before Jesus came, but now we're not. And why are you turning back to these basic elements of the world? Now, I say that because in Galatians one and verse four, he says that Jesus died so he might deliver us from this present evil age.

King James says this present evil world. But the idea could be that what Jesus delivered us from is not just, well, he certainly isn't saying that he raptured us out of the world because he hasn't done that. We're still in this present evil age.

We have not been delivered from it in the sense of physically removed, but he has delivered us from the obligations of those regulations and rules and so forth, which are the elements of the world. Of this age, which this evil age, of course, it's nebulous and it could mean more than one thing. I myself am equating the evil age with the age which they were approaching the end of.

Paul frequently spoke of himself and so did the other writers of Scripture as living at the end of the age. And that meant, I think, the Jewish age, the age of the old covenant, the age of the Sinaitic law. That was that had in a sense come to an end by the crucifixion of Christ.

What was going to come finally crashing down completely, of course, with the destruction of the Commonwealth and of the Jewish order in 70. So they were living, as Paul and others in the church in the New Testament said, at the end of this age. And Christ can deliver us from that present evil age, from that Judaistic legalism.

Now, you and I can't really relate to that because we've never been under Judaism. It's been gone for a long time before we were born. And you might say, well, the Galatians be more like us than than like Jews, because the Galatians are Gentiles.

So they hadn't lived under legalism. Sure, they hadn't. But that's just the point.

Those who would come in after Paul had gone, we're trying to put them under that. They were trying to bring them under that Jewish legalism. And Paul says, no, Jesus died to cover that.

He delivered us out of that stuff. We're delivered from those obligations, from those regulations. We are now we have a new walk, which he describes in chapter five as a walk in the spirit.

Get there eventually. Let's go on. Verse six.

Paul says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon. From him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel. Which is not another, but there are some who trouble you who want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than that, what we have preached to you, let him be a curse. As I have said before. So now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than that which you have received.

Let him be a curse for do I now persuade men or God or do I seek to please men? If I still please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. At verse six, we have a tremendous departure here from what Paul usually does in the beginning of his letters. You can check the other letters in your own time.

You may not need to, because you may be able to remember the speech that I'm about to mention. But after having given his basic greetings, which is we have in the first five verses of Galatians, Paul generally says, I thank God because he might say it as he does with the Philipines. I thank God upon every remembrance of you.

Or he might say, I thank God for your election, as he says to the Thessalonians. Or I thank God for you in some other sense. Typically, at this point, Paul thanks God for his readers.

This is an unusual letter in that respect. He does not thank God for them. Rather, he marvels at them and how badly they're doing and how soon after their conversion they've turned around.

It's been observed that Paul could bring himself to rejoice and thank God for many hard situations. And even for churches that were not doing well in some respects. The Corinthian church, for example, is one of those to which he did say, I thank God for you.

You find that, for example, in First Corinthians chapter one and verse four. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God, which was given to you by Jesus Christ. Even the Corinthian church, you thank God for what was the condition of the Corinthian church when he wrote First Corinthians.

Well, they were tolerating incest. There was a man living with his father's wife in the church, undisciplined, unaddressed. The church was even boasting about it, how gracious they were to this situation.

And it was an embarrassment to the church and a shame to the gospel. And it was even a reproach among the Gentiles, Paul said. What else are you getting drunk at communion? I've been in some pretty carnal churches.

I've never been at one where people got drunk at communion. What else are they doing? Well, they had a seemingly very disorderly meetings where if a stranger would walk in,

they'd think they were mad. The chaos that was going on there.

What else? There were members of the church taking each other to court, suing each other, which Paul was absolutely aghast to hear about. There was divisions, which Paul was aghast to hear about. Some were saying, I'm a Paul, I'm a Paulus, I'm a Cephas.

That church had big time trouble. In fact, there were even some in the church saying there is no resurrection of the dead. I mean, that's almost a denial of the gospel.

And Paul pointed out to him that that's kind of inconsistent, because you do agree that Jesus rose from the dead. But then you say that the dead don't rise. That's not consistent.

That's how he argues in First Corinthians 15. But what I'm saying is that church was riddled with serious problems. A denial of the resurrection, people getting drunk at communion.

A notable case of incest that brought reproach locally on the whole church in the eyes of the Gentiles. Divisions, including some who were, you know, associating themselves with parties contrary to Paul's. Lawsuits between Christians.

This was, you know, this was a church in chaos. And yet Paul says to Corinthians, I thank God always concerning you. My goodness, the man was an eternal optimist.

No matter how bad the situation was in the church, he seems still able to find something about it to thank God for, but not Galatians. He doesn't have anything he can thank God for about them. Now, what is their problem? Well, they got mass murders going on around in the church.

You know, homosexuality run rampant. No Jewish legalism. Paul seemed much more able to stomach Gentiles who love the Lord, struggling with carnal things that they had not yet overcome.

Then to stomach them, denying the gospel by going back to a false religion like Judaism or a religion that was no longer valid. And he thought his denial of the gospel. This is a situation for which I will not thank God.

I mean, he didn't say it so many words. He just that's what he did. He didn't thank God for them as he always typically did.

David, your hand was up. Maybe, maybe. I mean, if it was his earliest letter, maybe he had not yet formed the habit of thanking God for them all.

But let's let's just put it this way. When he wrote Corinthians, he was very concerned, but he still thank God for them. I mean, he must have been extremely concerned here, but he didn't naturally find something to thank God for.

After all, God should be thanked even if people are doing badly. You know, I mean, God deserves his thanks and his praise. But even this, Paul apparently was so upset that rather than saying, I thank God for you, he says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel.

Now, turning away so soon strongly implies that they had not been Christians so very long, that this was written very shortly after their conversion. So if these were the churches of Southern Galatia, this would have to be very shortly after Paul had finished his first missionary journey. And it had not taken long for Jewish critics to fall in behind him.

Remember, by the way, that when Paul traveled throughout that region, it was the Jews of those towns that they even stoned him in Lystra. I mean, they they ran him out of town every time and they even stoned him in Lystra. The Jews did all this or stood up the Gentiles to do it.

So Paul became controversial among the Jews on his first missionary journey. And and so maybe some of the Jewish people of those regions that had called in some reinforcements from Jerusalem, maybe even some sympathetic Jewish Christians who also didn't agree with Paul's ideas. Anyway, it didn't take long for opposition to rise in the church after Paul was gone of a Jewish sort.

And he says they turn from the grace of Christ. Why? Well, he doesn't say it specifically. He says they they turn from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel.

Then he seems to contradict himself in verse seven, which is not another, he says. Now, the word another and different are not the same word. And in fact, I don't remember how the King James is, whether it's another in both places, but they're basically they're similar words in the Greek, but they're different.

That's no pun intended, but they do mean different or other. And the word in the first case in verse six, that's translated different, is the word heteron. Heterosexual obviously has that root as opposed to homosexual homosexual.

Homo means same. Heteron means different. A heterosexual is someone who's attracted to a different sex than their own.

A homosexual is attracted to someone of the same sex themselves. So heteron is the Greek word translated different in verse six, a different gospel, heteron. But heteron means different of a different sort, another of a different sort.

Whereas in verse seven, the word it is not another. The word another another there in the Greek is hollow, which means another of the same sort. You might have heard someone say before his preachers often say this, that when Jesus in the upper room in

John chapter 14 said to his disciples, I will send you another comforter.

The word another was Allah. Allah actually. And it means another of the same kind specifically.

There are two Greek words. One means another of the same kind. The other means another of a different kind.

And when Paul uses these two words, he uses, he makes that distinction. They have turned to a different gospel, another gospel that is of a different kind. It is not another of the same kind in verse seven, but it is a perversion of the real one.

There are some who trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. It's the perversion. It's not good news.

The word gospel means good times, good news. They got they bring you different good news. It's not good news.

What they have is not good news. It may just seem like some more good news, a different good news. There is no different good news.

The real gospel is the only good news. Everything else is just a perversion. But even if we or an angel from heaven now notice, Paul includes himself.

If I come to you and preach a different gospel than you heard me preach before, don't listen to me Now, that makes it very clear that he doesn't teach one thing one time and one thing another time. If I, we, or even an angel from heaven were to preach to you any other gospel than what you have heard us preach to you, let it be accursed. Now, the word accursed, the Greek word there is anathema.

It is a Greek word that was used in the Old Testament Septuagint, which was, of course, the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew into Greek. This Greek word anathema was found in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, in those places in the law where it said that certain things were to be devoted or under the ban. For example, in the law, if a city had a murderer in it and they would not surrender to judgment, they would be put under the ban.

And what that would mean is that they'd be devoted to God for destruction. They'd destroy the city, not one person would be allowed to live. A city that was under the ban, there would be no hope of redemption for it.

Jericho was the first city of Canaan that the Jews conquered, and it was, of all the cities they conquered, the only one that God really put under the ban. The idea was that they were not to take anything from Jericho alive, they were not to take any gold or anything, it was all devoted to God for destruction, not for them to take and confiscate. Now, the

idea of putting something under the ban or devoting it to God in this way was that it could never be redeemed from that condition.

There were, as we read in the law, times when you might devote an animal to God and you said, oh, not that one, I want to devote another one. So you had to exchange it with like 20 percent interest or something, you had to pay a penalty, but you redeemed it. You decide, I don't want to sacrifice that one, I'll sacrifice this one.

So you redeemed it back and it wouldn't be destroyed. But what was under the ban or devoted in that sense could not be redeemed back. So when Paul says, let such a person be under the ban, which is what anathema means, it means beyond redemption, devoted for destruction without the possibility of redemption.

Now, who is to be under such a ban? Anyone who preaches another gospel, even if it's Paul himself, other than the one that Paul had earlier preached, even an angel from heaven. Now, the reference to an angel here, we have in our modern times probably been inclined to apply it to things like Muhammad or Joseph Smith, the founders of false religions who claimed that they had visitors who were angels. Muhammad got the Koran, allegedly, from the angel Gabriel.

Problem is, it's got a different gospel in it. So even if he did see an angel, that angel is not an angel of God. That angel is to be anathema.

Joseph Smith claimed that he got the Book of Mormon from an angel or from an exalted being that's equivalent to an angel. And we don't know if he was lying outright or if he was just deceived. But if he did see an angel, it was an angel that's under the ban.

It's an angel that is doomed to destruction beyond redemption, according to Paul, because it preached another gospel. The Book of Mormon has a different gospel in it than that in the Bible. So we have actual instances since Paul's time where we could actually apply his words.

But why did he use the words here? Was he thinking of some situation where someone preached some false gospel that was preached by an angel? No, I doubt it. If so, we're not aware of any such gospel from any other sources, and we know that what he was really concerned about is legalism of the Jewish sort. So possibly what he is saying is this.

There was a tradition among the Jews, and it's reflected many times in the New Testament, that when God gave the law at Sinai, the angels were mediators there. We read, for example, in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 2, where the writer of Hebrews is referring to the law given at Sinai. He said, If the word spoken through angels proved to be steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received just recompense of reward.

Now, he's referring to the law of Moses there, but he refers to it as the law spoken through angels. Likewise, in Acts chapter 7, Stephen is preaching, and in Acts chapter 7, in verse 53, Stephen rebukes the Sanhedrin, saying, You who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it. End of sentence that started earlier, but he said they received the law by the direction of angels.

The angels were associated with the giving of the law of Moses. In some sense, it was the law word spoken by angels in Hebrews to do. It was the law given by the direction of angels in Acts 7, 53 and even later on in Galatians 3 Galatians 3 19.

Paul says, What purpose then does the law serve Galatians 3 19? What purpose then does the law serve? It is added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. And it, that is the law, was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. So Paul, even in Galatians, mentions the role of angels in the giving of the law.

Now, it's possible that those who are trying to impose the law on the Christians, the Jewish law, were saying, Hey, listen, the law, that's divine. We know it's divine. Not only did it come through the hand of a prophet, Moses even came through angels.

And the Jews, speaking to these Gentiles, might have had to use an argument like that, since the Gentiles would not be overly impressed with Moses. He's just another Jewish guy. But the angels, the Gentiles, were all big into angels and spirits and things like that.

So I mean, for these Judaizers to come to say, Listen, listen to us. We're imposing on you a rule that we didn't make up. Moses didn't make it up.

It was given by angels. And in such a situation, Paul might say, Well, listen, if another gospel preached even by angels, let them be accursed. And that is very possibly why Paul mentions angels here.

He doesn't do anything like this ever again. But that's very possibly what he has in mind. By the way, of course, many people, when they hear this, think immediately of something that occurs about a page earlier in your Bible.

In 2 Corinthians 11, 14, 2 Corinthians 11, 14 says, And no wonder, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light, which means he can disguise himself as an angel of light. And he says, Therefore, it's no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. They are not, but they can transform themselves to appear as though they are, whose ends will be according to their works.

Now, Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Many times people have felt that Muhammad did see an angel. And Joseph Smith did see an angel, but it was not a real angel.

It was Satan appearing in the form of an angel. And that is not impossible. But in any case, someone asked me just today, what I thought about the book *Angels on Assignment*.

This book is not talked about much anymore. The author who wrote it probably 20 or 25 years ago is now dead. And it was big.

Two decades ago, it was real big in some Christian circles, this book. Some of you weren't even born when it came out. But this pastor claimed that angels visited him in his pastor's study on a regular basis and gave him insights, revelations and things like that.

Most of what they gave was not outright heresy, but much of it could not be confirmed biblically. And some critics and people who have reviewed it have said that there are things in it that are against the Bible. I never read it because I never was interested in it.

I have a Bible that was given by angels. I don't need Roland Buck to tell me what angels told him. You know, I mean, I'm not saying I don't believe in angels, but I'm just saying, well, if they said something that agrees with scripture, I'll just get it from the scripture.

If it doesn't agree with scripture, I don't want to hear them anyway. You know, so I don't know. And if it's something extra biblical that the scripture neither affirms nor disaffirms, it must not be necessary because the scripture has all things necessary for life and godliness.

So I just don't go into these angel books and read them and stuff. But there are many reviewers, Christian reviewers of that book who felt that these were not real angels, that they were perhaps demons, because some of the things they said were not entirely scriptural. I can't give you examples, not having read the book myself.

Other Christians feel like they were angels. But the point is, there are some people who think it really marvelous to have an angel appear and give you a message. I've never had one do that, nor does it matter to me if ever it happens.

I have no interest in getting messages from angels unless God wants them to come. And if he does, I'm going to hold their feet to the fire and make sure that they can affirm all the things the Bible says already anyway. Because if they speak differently, let them be anathema.

Now, by the way, this also has interesting ramifications with reference to some of the teachings of dispensationalism, which is a doctrinal system that you should know something about by now. We've mentioned it before. Among other things, the dispensationalist teaching, at least the original and pure dispensationalist teaching, is that there are essentially two Gospels.

There's the Gospel Jesus preached, which was the Gospel of the Kingdom. And there's the Gospel that Paul preached, which was the Gospel of Grace. On this view, the Gospel of the Kingdom was offered only to the Jews.

And Jesus came offering himself as a political messiah to the Jews. And that was the Gospel that he was going to set up the kingdom in Israel, just like they wanted him to, the political kingdom and so forth. And that was the good news to them.

But they didn't receive him as king, and therefore he took that gospel away. And another gospel was substituted for it for the time being. And that is the Gospel of Grace, mainly preached to the Gentiles, which Paul preached.

Now, on this view, when the church is raptured, the Gospel of Grace will be no more. And there will now be the re-imposition of the Gospel of the Kingdom, as God, during the to what Jesus first tried to preach to them. They might be made more receptive and softened through the tribulation.

And therefore, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached again in the tribulation. But now, between the day of Pentecost and the rapture, it's a different gospel, the Gospel of Grace. Now, there are some very serious objections that I think should be raised to that doctrine, although it's standard fare for dispensationalism.

It's just part of it. It's just part of the dispensationalist system. There's two Gospels.

Both of them write, but for different time periods. Two objections I have. One is what Paul says right here.

If anyone ever comes to him and preaches any other gospel than that which I have preached, according to dispensationalism, that would be the Gospel of Grace that Paul preached. Let him be accursed. That means that if anyone ever preaches a different gospel, let's call it the Gospel of the Kingdom, if that's what dispensationalists want to call it.

If it's a different gospel, and they would say it is, then whoever may preach it is accursed, unless the Bible ceases to be relevant after the rapture. If after the rapture, the supposed rapture before the tribulation, if people in the tribulation are still reading the Bible, as we would hope that those who wish to follow Christ would, to learn of Him, then they would come across a verse like this, and they would hear people preaching. In fact, according to some people's interpretation, angels from Revelation 14, angels of heaven preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world during the tribulation time.

So here's an angel from heaven preaching another gospel than what Paul preached. According to Paul, if they read their Bibles, that angel should be accursed. But of course, that's all a very fabricated system, because after all, if you look back at Acts, I can settle the question once for all whether Paul believed there was a Gospel of the Kingdom and

another Gospel of Grace.

It's easy to settle. In Acts chapter 20, when Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders, in verses 24 and 25, Paul is giving his final speech to the elders of the churches in Ephesus. Acts 20, verses 24 and 25, he says, But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

So they got that right. Paul preached the gospel of grace. He says that he testifies to the gospel of the grace of God.

Read further, verse 25, And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Now, what did he preach among them? The gospel of the grace of God or the gospel of the kingdom of God? Well, it sounds like both. He didn't seem to see any contradiction there.

He preached the kingdom of God. He preached the grace of God, both of which are good news. The gospel of grace and the gospel of the kingdom are one gospel, and you'd expect that from a man who said, If anyone ever preaches another gospel than the one I preached, let him be anathema, even if it's an angel.

Paul apparently did not think that a time is coming at which his gospel would be obsolete and some other gospel will be shoved in to replace it. Or else he was just a hothead who spoke without thinking and hadn't reconsidered the implications of his own dispensationalism. Now, I don't believe Paul was dispensationalist.

I think these verses prove that he wasn't, but some people think he was, in which case he's apparently out of touch with himself in his own theology here. Now, after saying all this, he says in verse 10, For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Well, this may be as far as we're going to get today, this verse, because he then turns to his autobiographical material, which begins at verse 11 and goes through chapter two.

But in verse 10, he makes it clear that the way he is now speaking very harshly, anyone who preaches a different gospel, let him be a curse. Let him be beyond redemption. That's pretty heavy stuff.

He says, Is that does that sound like the voice of one who changes his message to please people from time to time? I'm allowing myself no flexibility when I say if we are an angel of God, an angel of heaven preaching of the gospel, I'm not even allowing flexibility in my own self. Does that jive with the accusation that I think is going on around me that I please men and I change my mind and I'm just saying what I need to do to persuade people? And then he makes it very clear. If if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

This is a good verse for you to memorize, because it actually can mean one of two things. It would truly mean both. I'm not sure exactly which way Paul meant.

He might have meant it both ways. One would be that if I'm addicted to pleasing men, then I could never serve Christ because Christ calls me to do things that would not please him. There's no way I could do it.

There's no way I could perform the service to Christ if I am a man pleaser. A person who wishes to please men cannot be a servant of Christ. That's one way of looking at it.

Another way would be saying. And it's sort of the flip side of the same concept. If I am, in fact, pleasing men.

I must not be pleasing God because men and Christ have different opinions. And if I'm pleasing men, that would be evidence enough. I'm not serving Christ.

Now, these things are both true. And if you can't quite see the subtle difference in them, I'll put it this way. On one view, on one possible meaning, he's saying the fact that I'm serving Christ proves that I don't care about pleasing men because men are not pleased at me serving Christ.

So, the fact that I'm serving Christ proves to you that I don't care about pleasing men. The other point could be the fact I'm not pleasing men. Or let's say the fact that I would be pleasing men in a different situation would prove I wasn't a servant of Christ.

I'd be doing what man wants, not what Christ wants. There are both. I mean, one proves the other.

Is it the fact that I'm a servant of Christ? Is it the fact that I'm pleasing men that proves I'm not a servant of Christ? Or is it the fact that I'm not a servant of Christ that proves that I'm pleasing men? I guess I made that more confusing than it needs to be. What is at root of both suggestions is that pleasing men and pleasing Christ are not going to coincide in the same lifestyle. And to be a servant of Christ, you just have to make a decision.

Am I interested in pleasing people or not? When I was in Hawaii last week, I had an experience I'd never had in all my years teaching for a while. I've never had this happen before. There was a girl in the audience, a huge DTS, the biggest one they've ever had on that island.

And I was teaching on foundations. I was teaching faith toward God. And I always start by defining my terms.

I mean, my faith. I said, well, I don't mean by faith the same thing that the word of faith people do. You may have heard about them.

I'm talking about people like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Marilyn Hinckley, Fred Price, these people. These people teach what we call the word of faith teaching, and they have a different view of what faith is than what I do. And they believe that faith is a force, a law, something to manipulate.

But I believe the Bible teaches faith is just a response to God and believing God. It's not some mystical power out there. It's just believing God and then realizing that there might be some word of faith people in the audience and being mealy mouthed as I am and not wishing to offend people too much.

I said, by the way, I'm not trying to say that those people I just named are bad people or that they can't be Christians or anything like that. I just disagree with what they say about faith. And then I went on to talk about faith.

Well, when I took the break in the middle of the class, this one girl came up. I was not impressed with her from the start. Her tongue was pierced and had a spike through it.

And which far be it for me to judge people by appearances, but she also had kind of a cocky, rebellious attitude, it seemed to me. But anyway, she sat down right in front of me and got right in my face. She said, I've never been so offended in all my life by anything as when you said, when you named the names of Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, and Marilyn Hinckley, she said, these are personal friends of mine.

My mother is a word of faith preacher, very well known, very famous. She told me her name. I hadn't heard of her.

But anyway, she said, we've had Marilyn Hinckley in our home regularly. These were friends of mine. You've insulted them.

She says, you didn't have to. I said, well, listen, I didn't say anything that's untrue about them. I didn't even say anything that was unkind about them.

What I said was neither unkind or untrue. I simply identified what they believe. And so I don't believe that.

And she said, but you didn't have to name names. You could have just mentioned the doctrine and not named names. I said, well, I felt that if they if I just mentioned the doctrine and not the names, some people might not know what I'm talking about.

Most people who watch Christian television will know their names and will know what I mean when I'm talking about the word of faith if I give their names. But they might not know the term word of faith. So I gave their names to identify it.

She said, well, that was rude. And I said, well, I said the apostle Paul named the names of people that he disagreed with in first Timothy and second Timothy mentioned

Alexander Coppersmith, Hymenaeus and others that he said were heretics. And he warned people that she said, well, that was Paul.

That wasn't God. And so I knew we were on different wavelengths. I said, well, I think we're probably going to get along like a slow waiter and a poor tipper because we don't agree at the outset that what Paul wrote is normative.

You know, I mean, you think that's Paul, not God. Well, we're not going to get anywhere in this discussion. Well, she was offended.

She never came back to another class the whole week. She was that was Tuesday. She didn't show up in any more classes.

She was offended the whole week. Never saw her again. But someone came up to me after and said, do you know who her mother is? You know, you've offended this girl.

And her mother is David. The name I wasn't sure. She's a very prophetic voice in the charismatic movement.

She's a very well-known preacher. I said, I don't care who she is. I don't care.

She's the Virgin Mary. I mean, if she's wrong, I'll say she's wrong. You know, I mean, I'm not here to please men.

And I wonder whether it would get my way into trouble with this woman eventually. You know, I mean, that this woman might say her daughter can play her mom. You know, the woman might try to bring pressure to bear on the Wyland base to recant or something.

I don't know. I hope they hope they're like me. Don't care.

You know, I don't care what anyone says. I mean, I want to be teachable. If someone says they think I'm biblically wrong, but I'll listen to them.

But I mean, I don't care the names or the reputations of people that I'm up against. I may be nobody. I mean, when Dave Hunt wrote his book, *Seduction of Christianity*, some people criticized him because he was a nobody and he was taken on big boys.

You know, he's taken on Robert Shuler and Paul Jung and so forth. And he's and they often said, and who's this Dave Hunt? He's a nobody. Who decides who's a nobody? You know, whoever has the truth and stands by the truth is somebody to me.

Jesus said, I thank you, Father, you've hidden these things from the wise and prudent revealed them.