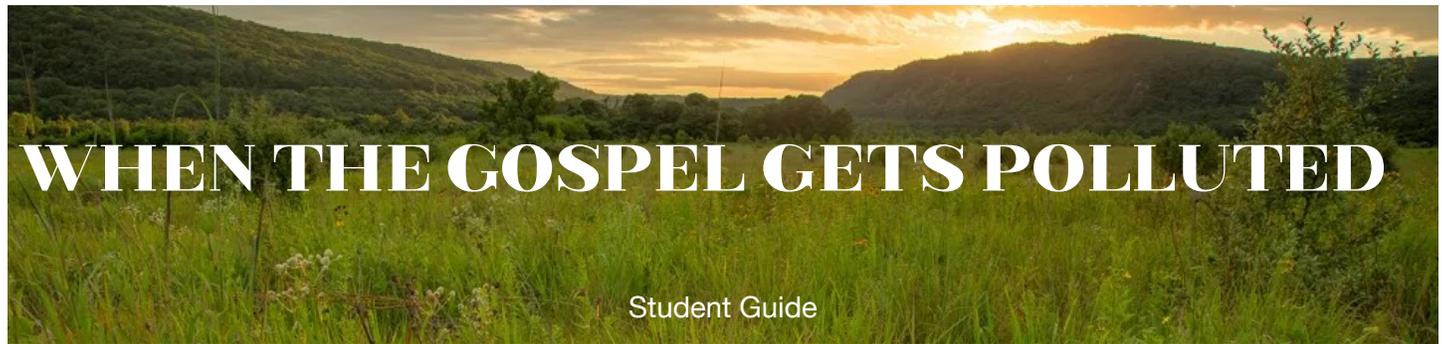


Galatians 1



WHEN THE GOSPEL GETS POLLUTED

Student Guide

Daily Bible Reading

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The great A.W. Tozer once said, "The Holy Spirit came to carry the evidence of Christianity from the book of apologetics into the human heart." While Tozer was writing in another era on a slightly different subject, he nevertheless captured Paul's purpose in the book of Galatians. In only a very short time, the Judaizer's managed to corrupt the Gospel of Christ by transforming it from the good news of God's grace to the bad news of human works. The Apostle was set for the defense of the Gospel, the Gospel which was revealed to him by the Lord of the Gospel, Jesus Christ (v.12).

1. GOSPEL POLLUTION (vv. 1-10)

The letter to the Galatians is different from all the other letters Paul wrote. From the outset of the Galatians letter, something is wrong. Paul seems agitated, deeply moved to get quickly to the point (v.6). Paul is writing to combat the problem of Gospel pollution, the pollution of a message which tells a person how he or she can go to heaven.

First, Let's note the *defensive salutation* (vv. 1-5). The Apostle Paul was under attack. His apostolic credentials were being questioned (v.1). Paul's claim to apostleship came under fire in Galatia. With that in mind, Paul's opening is perfectly understandable. He starts by expounding on his *ministry*, insisting his appointment stood "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father".

In addition, Paul mentions his *message* (vv. 3-5). Paul founded the churches in Galatia at great personal risk to his own life. And, even if he deals strongly with the Galatians, Paul is careful to mention the twin spiritual necessities of "grace" and "peace." No one can have peace with God without grace from God anymore than an apple can be possessed apart from the apple tree!

Second, after Paul offers a *defensive salutation*, he deals with the *dangerous situation* (vv. 6-10). Unlike his other letters, there is no long thanksgiving to the recipients. Nor is there a prayer to God recorded for them. Rather, a thunderbolt descends from the sky (vv. 6-7).

The first danger is *deserting* the grace of Christ (v.6a). The verb is the present tense, so the Galatian believers were only in the process of turning. The turning was not yet final.

The second danger Paul issues is *perverting* the Gospel of Christ (vv. 6b-10). He stated not only were the Galatians apparently settling for another message, but it was "another gospel," not that there can actually exist another Gospel. In fact, this cannot be. What was the perversion? While we will examine this more as we progress through the letter, the change was a fundamental shift from a salvation by grace to a salvation by works (vv. 8-9).

Changing the message God gives is no light matter. Deceiving people into following a lie seals a person's fate to God's eternal displeasure. No one should attempt to change the good news of the Gospel.

2. GOD'S SOLUTION (vv. 11-24)

The pollution to God's Gospel called for an immediate solution. Paul was not about to give up on the Galatians as quickly as they were giving up on the Gospel he taught them. What then is the solution?

Notice what Paul did. He simply took the Galatians through three routes of his pilgrimage with Jesus. The first route was his past *conduct* (vv. 13-14). What was it about Paul's conduct he wanted the Galatians to consider? First his conduct toward the church: he *persecuted* it (Acts 26:11; cp. Acts 9:21).

In addition, Paul reveals his conduct toward religion: he *pursued* it. The very road about which Paul warned the Galatians, he himself had travelled many miles.

The second route on which Paul takes the Galatians is the *powerful change* in his life (vv. 15-16). A defining moment came. A radical change occurred. The radical change was a *supernatural* change. God "separated" him and "called" him to apostolic ministry. He was "set apart" to reach the Gentiles with the Gospel (Rom. 1:1; Acts 13:2).

The third route Paul takes us on in his *contacts* (vv. 16b-24). Note again as Paul affirms what happened when Christ invaded his life to commission him an apostle (vv. 17-19).

In Arabia, Paul experienced *isolation* (v. 16); in Damascus, he experienced *preparation* (v. 17); and in Jerusalem, Paul gathered *information* (vv. 18-20). Even more significant to the Galatians, in Syria and Cilicia, others experienced the Gospel's *proclamation* as Paul journeyed about (vv. 21-24). Though relatively unknown at the time, he preached the message he once renounced and saw souls changed because of the powerful change in his own life.

Wrap Up

Paul faced his most formidable opposition in Galatia. The Judaizers preached a message which sounded good but ended up sabotaging the Gospel of grace. Their message was polluted. And, the only sure remedy was the pure, unadulterated Gospel which Paul preached to them at the beginning. No one is exempt from error. We must always be on the watch for false doctrines which taint the Gospel and undermine the Biblical message of grace.