

How Can You Fall Away From Christ So Quickly?

Galatians 1:1-10 (vv. 6-7)

Bible Teacher In Training: Stephanie Wyche

I. Historical Background & Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

Apostle Paul was sanctified and uniquely commissioned by God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 15, Gal. 1:16). During his missionaries, he proclaimed the truth about Jesus and the meaning of the resurrection. Through the truth, many believed, many were converted, many were introduced to Christ, and many received their salvation. In addition, many churches were founded and established in many nations because of the gospel of Jesus Christ shared through Apostle Paul.

Apostle Paul sent epistles to believers and disciples to strengthen, encourage, and enrich the Body of Christ. Letters were sent and received by many of the churches that he frequently traveled to and visited on his missionaries: churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. This letter in Galatians is addressed to multiple churches in Galatia (Gal 1:2). It is also an inspirational message to the church, and us even today, as believers in Christ so that we may hold on to our belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1 commences with Paul's identity and credibility in Christ as an apostle, encompassing that of a disciple, believer, and teacher. Apostle Paul received his message, appointment, revelation and truth from God, not from men (Gal 1:1). After receiving the Call (Acts 9, Gal 1), Paul devoted his life to pursuing God's will, advancing God's kingdom on earth, and bringing salvation to all people through the gospel of Jesus Christ. An impact of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was that all man would be rescued and freed from the present evil age (Gal. 1:3-5). In other words, we are saved and given hope by Jesus Christ so that we can mature and grow as God's children in the midst of a wicked world.

B. Biblical Context

Some churches in Galatia encountered a major conflict with believing in Jesus Christ and following old Jewish laws, systems, traditions, and customs to attain salvation. Paul's letter, in full congruence with God, served as guidance to all believers. Salvation is justified by personal faith - believing and accepting – that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Salvation cannot be gained only through good works or obedience to laws and customs (Gal. 2:16).

II. The Lesson: How Can You Fall Away from Christ So Quickly? (Galatians 1:1-10)

Apostle Paul preached in the region of Galatia for some time and left (Acts 16:6). The Galatians were considered Gentiles (non-Jewish). They accepted and believed in their redemption and salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Churches were formed for the people to gather, worship, and fellowship with one another in harmony and unity under the grace of the gospel.

1. vv. 6-7: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ, turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all.” (NIV)

In this letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul opens with a major concern that truly amazed him. The churches were abandoning their core foundation of salvation: what it witnessed and believed (Gal. 3:1). The churches, who had just received their salvation and rejoiced about it, were now falling away from Christ, who is the only way to salvation.

Apostle Paul was surprised at how easily influenced the Galatians were to forget and give up their freedom and salvation as they listening to a different gospel. A different gospel that told them that salvation comes also from obedience to laws and good works. A different gospel that stemmed from the old system of beliefs and traditions that pointed to the coming of

Christ and was fulfilled by Him (Gal. 3:24-25). A different gospel that is not based on faith (Gal. 3:12). A different gospel that enslaves and alienates people with laws, traditions, and customs (Gal. 5:1-4). This is why Apostle Paul directly refers to this *different* gospel as *no* gospel at all.

Apostle Paul was also amazed that the churches forgot how they received their salvation. Their salvation came through the grace of God and through personal faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:2-5). Salvation cannot be earned by man: it does not come just by doing good and obeying the laws only (Gal 2:21). Rather, salvation is a gift given by God and our personal faith is what counts! (Gal 5:6).

2. vv. 7: “... Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ” (NIV)

This further explained how the church came to be mixed up and led astray. The church began to listen to false teachings of *agitators* as Paul called them (Gal 5:12). The church was infiltrated by people who questioned and believed that the Gentiles should believe in Christ and also follow old laws to attain salvation. The agitators persuaded the Galatians to practice old customs and traditions like circumcision (Gal. 6:12) and observing special days (Gal. 4:10). The agitators were teaching a message that promoted slavery, instead of freedom in Christ (Gal 5:1). The agitators had claims that conflicted with the truth and added unnecessary requirements, and therefore *perverted* the gospel of Christ.

Due to this, the church became confused about the beliefs, foundations, and principles to salvation. The irony about this is that the people were stirred up in the church, a place which is supposed to be in harmony under Christ. It shows just how easy it was for “a little yeast works through a whole batch of dough” (Gal 5:9 NIV) or a more modern phrase - “a few bad apples can spoil the bunch”. In other words, it shows how quickly false teaching can damage the church.

3. vv. 8-9: Let anyone who tell you a different gospel be under God's curse.

Apostle Paul repeatedly denounced the agitators who preach that there are additional requirements to salvation, along with any and all gospels preached against the gospel of truth in Christ. Any other gospel than the gospel of Jesus Christ is not truth nor life. He furthers his warning and instructions to the people through the example of *an angel from heaven* in verse 8. No matter how convincing a messenger can be or how closely the messenger may seem to God (i.e., an angel), do not trust the message if it deviates totally from the gospel of Christ and what you have already accepted as truth.

Then, he emphasized this warning again in verse 9 to show the severity of this. He makes it clear that to those who teach false, distorted, and altered messages about the gospel of Christ: *"Let them be under God's curse"*. In other words, do not follow them and be cursed too. Let God handle and deal with them in His own way.

Finally in verse 10, Paul takes a stand on the attacks that the agitators brought up against his character, authority, and servitude. The agitators suggested that Paul was seeking approval from the people and the church with his message. Paul reconfirms that he is a servant of God, which was also stated in verse 1. He furthers his credibility and authority in the following scriptures and chapters (vs. 11-24; Gal. 2, 3).

III. Conclusion

Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia addressed a major problem with people receiving the truth and gospel of Jesus Christ and then turning on it to believe in something else. This same problem is still relevant and prevalent in people and churches today. Today, people are being easily

influenced and led astray to teachings that deviate and/or have nothing in common with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's impactful message is for all believers in Christ, so that we may hold on to our belief and faith in Jesus Christ. His instruction is clear – **run away from any and all gospels that do not align with the gospel of Christ.** Life and death are in the power of what you believe.

We must know the truth and hold on to it with every fiber of our being, so that we do not fall away from Christ so quickly.