

Journey Into Liberated Living



LESSON 1 . . . Experiencing Real Liberation (Galatians 1:1-10)

NOTES

The word “liberation” means the result of being delivered from confinement or slavery. Apart from Christ, every human being needs liberation. Some need liberation from materialism, some from pornography, some from addiction, and others from sexual immorality. Still others need liberation from legalism, and the list goes on. **Real** liberation can only be experienced in Christ. In John 8:32, what does Jesus say about those who abide in His Word?

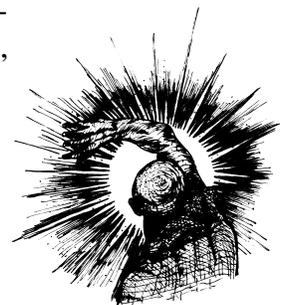
Paul wrote this letter to churches in Galatia, a province in the Roman Empire, located in the center of what today is Turkey (see map on page 11). Paul established several churches in Galatia, but after he left, false teachers, called Judaizers, invaded them. The Judaizers required Christians to submit to Jewish law in addition to believing in Christ. In response to this false teaching, Paul writes what we call the “book of Galatians.” The key verse is Galatians 5:1. In the space below, personalize this verse:

In this passage, Paul explains that **experiencing real liberation** requires at least **four** actions . . .

1. Believe God’s authors (1:1-2).

At the beginning of this letter, Paul informs the Galatians he is a divinely appointed, inspired apostle. He writes: *Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead* (1:1). Paul was a converted Pharisee, or legalist. Before becoming a Christian, he was known as Saul of Tarsus. As a young Pharisee, Saul had no use for Jesus of Nazareth and persecuted the early church, as he explains in more detail in the next section.

While on his way to Damascus to arrest more Christians, Saul encounters Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-19). As a result, he becomes a believer and later *an apostle* (APOSTOLOS, uh-pos´-tol-os), which means “one sent forth with a message.” Therefore, Paul declares himself *an apostle . . . through*



Jesus Christ and God the Father (1:1a, c). He was not one of the original Twelve but was called later to be *an apostle* (2 Cor. 1:1a-b).

Next, Paul writes: *and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia* (Gal. 1:2). *All the brothers* refers to Barnabas, who helped Paul establish the Galatian churches on their first missionary journey, and the other Christians at Antioch, from where Paul is writing this letter.

Real liberation requires accepting the authors of the Bible as the Thessalonians did. How did they receive Paul's words, according to 1 Thessalonians 2:13d-e?

To experience real liberation, **believe God's authors** and . . .

2. Receive God's atonement (1:3-5).

Paul greets the Galatian believers: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:3). *Grace* and *peace* are the foundation for real liberation. *Grace* reveals the source of our salvation. The word translated *grace* (CHARIS, car'-us) means favor or kindness given without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it. God's *grace* produces *peace* in our lives. There is *peace with God* (Rom. 5:1, emphasis added), which means we are no longer in rebellion against Him. However, there is also *the peace of God*, which exceeds our understanding and guards our *hearts* (emotions) and *minds* (thoughts) in Christ Jesus (Philip. 4:7, emphasis added).

However, before we can have God's *peace*, we must experience His *grace*. Because of God's *grace*, Jesus came to earth and *gave himself for our sins* (1:4a). Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is totally sufficient for our salvation. He gave his life *to redeem us from all lawlessness* (Tit. 2:14a). Why, according to Titus 2:14b-c?

The purpose for Christ's death was not only to forgive our sins but also *to deliver us from the present evil age* (1:4b). In Christ, we have been rescued from the power of this *present evil age*, which refers to the satanic influence dominating our world. Jesus didn't die so God could immediately remove us from this world. Instead, He prayed God would keep us "*from the evil one*" (Jn 17:15).

Paul concludes his greeting with an expression of praise and worship: *to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen* (1:5). God deserves this *glory* because our salvation is a grace gift, not a “do-it-yourself kit” or something we pay for on the installment plan with daily good works.

To experience real liberation, **believe God’s authors, receive God’s atonement**, and . . .

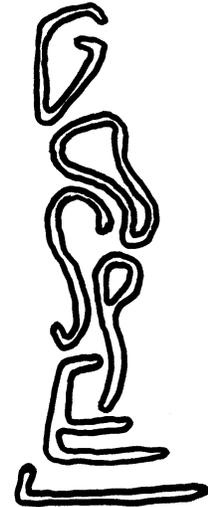
3. Perceive God’s admonishment (1:6-9).

Paul continues: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ* (1:6a). Believers were offering little resistance and were *turning to a different gospel* (1:6b). The word translated *different* (HETEROS, het'-er-ros) means another type, or completely contrary. That’s why Paul adds, *not that there is another one* (1:7a). Any so-called “gospel” that teaches salvation comes by grace plus works—or grace plus **anything**—is not a gospel at all. Why, according to Romans 11:6?

Adding anything to God’s *grace* perverts the Gospel and takes away from what Jesus Christ did on the cross. The message of the Judaizers was “faith and grace, plus works.” This infuriated Paul because the good news of the Gospel is a gift, not payment for good works, even in part. The Evil One uses false teachers and cults who add to the Gospel to *trouble* us and *distort the gospel of Christ* (1:7b).

Some cults today say, “We believe in Jesus Christ, and we believe the Bible, but we want to give you another gospel of Jesus Christ.” However, Paul writes that if even *an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary* to what he was preaching, *let him be accursed* (1:8b-c). Paul repeats this condemnation in verse 9. *Accursed* means “doomed to destruction.” It conveys the most severe of spiritual penalties. It is extremely serious to alter or pervert the Gospel in any way.

Paul is writing about legalism, but liberalism is just as bad. Under the guise of love and freedom in Christ, many so-called Christians advocate deserting what the Bible teaches about sexual morality. Many such teachings are very attractive because they advocate love, unity, tolerance, and acceptance. Jude warns that some teachers *have crept in unnoticed* who are *ungodly people* (4a-b). Then, what does he write in Jude 4c?

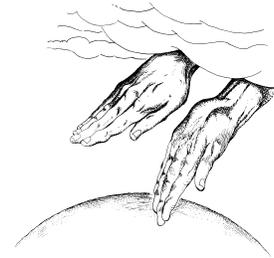


Concerning someone who teaches legalism, liberalism, or any other kind of “ism” perverting the Gospel that Paul preached, Paul writes *let him be accursed*.

To experience real liberation, **believe God’s authors, receive God’s atonement, perceive God’s admonishment, and . . .**

4. Achieve God’s approval (1:10).

Apparently, the Judaizers are accusing Paul of teaching freedom from the Law to please people, or the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul asks: *For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man?* (1:10a-b). Paul is suggesting that what he has just written be objectively read again. Since he is writing so bluntly, it should be clear he is not seeking *the approval of man*. How does Paul affirm his purpose in 1 Thessalonians 2:4b-c?



Paul continues, *If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ* (1:10c-d). The word *still* refers to Paul’s past life as a Pharisee. As a strict, judgmental, salvation-by-works Pharisee, Paul had lived his early life *to please man*. However, he knows we cannot please people and God at the same time. How does Jesus explain this in Matthew 6:24a-c?

Paul was willing to meet people where they were, whether Jew or Gentile. When Paul was with Gentiles, he would eat what Jews considered unclean food. When with the Jews, he would carefully observe Jewish dietary customs. Paul was not being a hypocrite or trying to gain man’s *approval*; he merely wanted the opportunity to share Christ with people of all backgrounds. To **achieve God’s approval**, we must be like Paul and be willing to meet people where they are if we are to gain a listening ear.

Requirements for experiencing real liberation include: **believe God’s authors, receive God’s atonement, perceive God’s admonishment, and achieve God’s approval.**