

# EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 2:21 – A Summary of Galatians 1-2

## Introduction

Read Galatians 2:20-21

Galatians 1-2 is unique in regard to Paul's letters. Paul provides both the doctrinal foundation and a defense about why he is an authority on the matter.

Galatians 3 begins the body of the letter. Therefore, we have 2 chapters of the re-establishment of a core doctrine. This is why this letter is unique, the "introduction" is two chapters long.

But if we cannot summarize these two chapters, then the rest of the letter becomes difficult. Let us first look at what we have learned.

## Galatians Chapters 1-2 Summary

### Paul the Apostle

The first major part is Paul establishing that he is an apostle with authority from Jesus Christ. This does not place Paul above the other apostles, especially Peter, but he is on par with them.

In Galatians 1-2, Paul goes through his timeline of being chosen by God and detailing that, insisting, that all his knowledge about the gospel of Jesus Christ came from Jesus Christ alone. This is a vital piece of information that places Paul's letters on par with any other content in the Greek New Testament.

### The Gospel

If someone presents a different gospel than what has been presented, you are to remove them from yourselves and give them up to God. You are not to trust them; you are not to listen to them; they are to be dismissed until they present a clear gospel. It is important to distinguish those who are trying to influence the believer from those who are discussing the gospel.

The threat is against the gospel.

- The gospel begins with the good news of God for reconciliation to Him through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ.
- The gospel also includes all that we have due to simply believing in Jesus Christ.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ also includes all our promises that will be fulfilled to believers in the life to come.
- The gospel also includes that our life is governed by grace and not by law, by faith and not works.

The threat in Galatians is a perversion of the last point, that our lives are governed by grace and not law, by faith and not works.

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## Justification before God

The question of justification is both initial and perpetual.

Initial Justification – Becoming reconciled to God, being transferred from death into life.

Perpetual Justification – Living in a state of justification before God. God does not evaluate us to determine if we are right based on what we do.

The activity of the believer deals with honoring or pleasing the Lord, not being right in His evaluation. Our rightness before God is only through believing in God, that is, believing in Jesus Christ.

## Under Grace

Law was never, is not, and will never be used to justify someone in the sight of God (Romans 3:20).

The Law was a system that guided people into right behavior, a system that is used for rewards or to be issued punishment in this life.

Being under grace means that God has provided all blessings as a free gift, and we incur no punishment, no curse, for violations.

Being under grace means that we live our lives as a reflection. We live based upon who we are and what we have by the grace of God and use the grace of God to motivate us to honor and please the Lord.

“Under grace” and “under law” are two different systems that guide us into right behavior. Law is the “carrot and stick” model. Grace is the “gratitude/thankful” model.

## Live by Faith

What does “live by faith” mean?

We begin with a very general statement. Do we live our lives with Jesus always on our minds?

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 – We live understanding that God saved us based upon the sacrificial atonement of Jesus on the cross. The foundation of who we are must be learned, understood, believed, and secure.

1 Peter 1:17-19 – Believers are to live with respect to the Father who will evaluate believers for eternal rewards, knowing that we have been redeemed by the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ.

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What does “living by faith” look like?

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:7 – Walking (living) by faith is understanding that the eternal is real, and this life is temporary. Living by faith is to live with the knowledge and truth of what is real according to the doctrines that are contained in Scripture.

What is the world's system vs. the biblical doctrine?

Death – The world says death is final, and there is nothing else after this life. The Bible says that believers who have experienced physical death are alive and will live forever in the life to come, and we with them (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Money – The world says that wealth, possessions, prosperity, legacy, and inheritance make up the purpose of this life – that your security, comfort, and peace come from what you have accumulated. The Bible teaches that the pursuit of money and riches brings nothing but pain, discontentment, and evil (1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19).

Marriage – Is it a cohabitation of capitulation, taking turns with who wins? Scripture shows us that marriage is designed by God so that two become one. It is coming to a consensus on everything, being submissive to one another (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Do we live by faith or by sight?

Life Under Law and by Works – the standard that God gave to Israel is harsh, and when we, as sinful men and women, are measured against it, it can only bring death; it does not bring life. Law demonstrates our failures; it cannot make anyone right before God.

Living by works (living by sight) means that we are under constant evaluation for blessings and curses (rewards and punishments). It is a yoke that is hard, and for a society, it has never been followed for very long.

Life Under Grace and by Faith – Living under grace means that we have every spiritual blessing already granted to us. As we live our lives, the blessings we enjoy, if supernaturally provided by God, are not distributed based upon good works or sin avoidance; they are a matter of grace.

Living by faith means that we use the Word of God to see past the temporary nature of this world and understand the truth of God's program and will. When we make decisions, we are supposed to consider God, believe His doctrines that he tells us, and live in conformity to our eternal reality.

## **Nullifying Grace**

Paul is telling Peter that, through his actions, he is in effect nullifying the grace of God in regard to being right before the Lord.

If we were to say, “You must do good and avoid evil to be right before God,” we would be treating grace as having no effect or reality.

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If we, by our actions, indicate believers must live by law or the Law in order to be right before God, then we are treating the grace of God as having no effect or reality.

Paul concludes with a very easy truth statement. If being right before God could come through law, then Christ would not have needed to die (Galatians 3:21).

## **Foolish Galatians**

Galatians 3:1-3 – Here is where we will stop for this week. The question we must ask ourselves: are we foolish Galatians?

Are we living under works, under law? Are we trying to score points with God? Are we thinking that God says I am right based upon what we do? Are we using the carrot and stick to rule our lives?