

Hanging on to God's Good News

Key Verse: *"I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man."*
—Galatians 1:11

Selected Scripture: *Galatians 1*
to the Galatian brethren with three elements: two direct statements concerning who he is and to whom he is writing, and a brief greeting. First, Paul declares his identity, "Paul, an apostle," his primary distinction. He will defend this claim throughout the letter. The basic definition of 'apostle' is 'one who is sent.' He then makes clear who sent him: neither by human commission nor authority, but through "Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."—vs. 1

After establishing his identity and authority, Paul addresses his letter, "unto the churches of Galatia." (vs. 2) These churches are close to the Mediterranean Sea, in the southern half of Galatia, or further north in what is now central Turkey.

In verse three, Paul says, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." What a wonderful way to start a letter. This should always be our greeting in writing to, or when meeting with, others. Peace should go wherever we travel. (Matt. 10:12,13; Col. 3:15) Speaking on behalf of his body members, the apostle says Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world."

(vs. 4) This is good news, that God sent his only begotten Son to be man's Redeemer.—John 3:16

In verses six through nine, Paul gets to the reason for his writing, saying that some in their number were being called away from Christ unto another gospel. Paul says there is no other gospel which he was preaching than Jesus Christ, his sacrifice, and him raised from the dead. Some were found as troublemakers, perverting the Gospel of Christ. Some were still holding on to the law of circumcision saying, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."—Acts 15:1

The apostle made it clear that those teaching any other gospel than that of Christ, and him crucified, should be accursed, (*anathema*, considered very bad), not considered part of the body of Christ.

Paul continues to defend his position in Galatians 1:10-13, saying that he was only seeking to bring honor to God's name, taking none for himself. It was Jesus, by revelation, who brought him into the Truth and gave him the privilege of preaching the good news to others. Paul points back to the times he was a zealous Jew and "persecuted the church of God."—vs. 13; Acts 8:3

In Galatians 1:14-16, *American Standard Version*, Paul says, "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, [even] from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood."

In verse fifteen, Paul speaks of being separated from his mother's womb and called by his grace, meaning that through his earthly mother he inherited certain traits of character which would prepare him for his later work as a minister. Paul later went on into many areas, visiting and preaching the good news. Those who heard him glorified God. ■