

Galatians In A Nutshell

Two major topics occupy Paul's attention in Galatians: his apostleship and man's justification apart from the works of the law. The first two chapters are perhaps his most extensive defense of his apostolic call; the second two chapters deal almost exclusively with showing that no one can be justified by the law; that the law has been removed. In fact, Paul never strays far from this latter theme once he embarks upon it. He does deal with other matters in chapters five and six, yet he consistently returns to hammer home his theme: circumcision is of no value in redemption.

Still, he literally stated both points when he said, "*Paul, an apostle not from men, neither through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father ... Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father*" (Gal. 1:1, 3, 4). These verses are Galatians in a nutshell!

A summary of Paul's defense of his apostleship was presented in a previous article. Yet (as was shown there) Paul stated his premise: "*Paul an apostle (not from men, neither through men but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father)*" (1:12), then he offered strong proof to sustain that proposition. In the same way he states his second aim to show that justification is not of the law, cannot come through the law but rather is freely made available to man through the grace of God through Jesus Christ. In each chapter the apostle urges this point, but whatever he writes, it will only be defensive material submitted to sustain this truth he states in Galatians 1:3-4: "GRACE THROUGH CHRIST."

The words, "*Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" was a common greeting from the apostle. In fact, the greeting in varied forms is found in every epistle which came from the apostle's pen! In this letter, it takes on a special significance! It is by the grace of God, evidenced in Christ that redemption comes; not through the keeping of the law, not acceptance of circumcision. It was Christ who gave himself for our sins that made possible our release from the guilt and penalty of sin -- these two items could never have come through the law! It was the grace of Christ that made possible our deliverance from this present evil world; that was the expression and intent of God's will -- not justification through the law! Someone has said, "A proposition well defined is half argued." We hardly see how any could improve upon Paul's definition of his apostleship and the means by which redemption comes than is found in these opening verses of Galatians 1!

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