Galatians chap. 1

I persecuted the church of God

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

Controversy in Galatia. This epistle is not directed to a single church but the entire province of Galatia. Not long after Paul had left them some Judaizing teachers whether from inside the church or outside is not made known had perverted the great doctrine of Justification by faith

alone or by faith only and corrupted the gospel with law observance. There is some debate today as to which Galatians Paul was addressing with the traditional view that Paul was addressing the Galatians in the northern region and the more modern view that he was addressing the Galatians in the south. The Galatians in the north were Celts or Gauls who had settled in the region several centuries before. The Gallic race where characterized as being fickle and fond of change and vanity which describes the Galatian Christians to a tee where they had first accepted Paul and his gospel with open arms but now were just as accepting of those who came with a different gospel. Southern Galatia which included Lystra, Iconium and Derbe contained many of the hellenized Jews and Gentiles. In the 1st century there were 'Hebraic Jews' who spoke Hebrew and 'Hellenized Jews' who often spoke and adopted the culture of the Greeks. Peter, James and John were of the Hebraic Jews while Paul was from the hellenized Jews and the main reason why his apostleship was often called into question. I tend to go with the traditional and more time honored view but either way the message of Galatians is applicable to Christians of all ages and all time.

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) Paul here very boldly states he was a true apostle who had received his gospel from Christ himself not man. An apostle differed from a minister or evangelist in that they were taught directly by Christ where the minister or evangelist received their calling and education from men. Now this doesn't mean that the minister or evangelist is deficient but the apostles were the highest authority in the church. Peter, James, John and the other eleven had walked and talked with Christ on earth, witnessed his crucifixion and received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Paul on the other hand had grown up in Tarsus which was not far from Galatia, been present at the stoning of Stephen even condoning it and received his calling in Christ by vision and revelation. Paul was a genuine apostle but he was always the odd man out so he had to labor more and travel farther and preach the gospel bolder to establish his place among the twelve. Those who try to make the claim that Matthias was the true replacement for Judas are left with the daunting task of showing where he is even mentioned after the first chapter of Acts whereas Paul wrote half of the new testament by himself.

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Not long after Paul had left, Judaizing teachers had crept in among the churches and perverted the gospel and even persuaded some to undergo circumcision. These Judaizers taught that the full privileges of the gospel could only be obtained by following the law of Moses. They even insinuated that Paul kept the law among the Jews but taught the Gentiles to renounce it. Paul on several occasions did keep the law among the Jews especially

at the behest of James so this was a mystery that few could unravel. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Paul here supersedes the authority of the apostles by saying even if an angel from heaven preached a different gospel then let him be accursed. It seems a small matter to mingle law with grace or faith and works together but it does more harm to the believer than one can imagine. By blending the two it takes away all the benefits and blessings that are found in Christ alone. There is a constant trend in the life of the believer to trust in the flesh or the works of the law so the gospel of grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone has to be preached over and over and over.

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's important to understand that the character of the Judaizers were that of men pleasers. They despised Paul and saw Peter and James as the highest authority and so sought to please them. Paul was a man of a different temper and spirit and was not so eager to please the Jews or pacify their rage against all those who dared go against the law of Moses or the Torah. All twelve of the apostles understood that Salvation is only to be found by the free grace of Christ (Acts 15:11) but they did cater to the weakness of the Jews. I gained an understanding of this from my years as an SDA when I witnessed this same spirit in Adventists. The Adventist character is similar to that of the Jews, the main difference being that to the Jew of the 1st century circumcision was the highest commandment whereas to the Adventist the seventh-day sabbath is the highest commandment. Adventists really and truly believe they will be lost if they give up the sabbath day as they have been taught their whole lives that Sunday is the mark of the beast which is similar to the Jewish mindset of circumcision versus uncircumcision.

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: Many believe that the church of God is to be found in the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches which we see in the world today but this is false. The true church of God is hidden away in the shadows and can only be seen by those who are truly converted or born again. Jesus said - Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, John 3:3. I have actually seen this kingdom and unfortunately for me I ended up persecuting it just like Paul. After my conversion I fell into a Judaizing-type religion where I truly believed that Salvation was based on my performance or what I did and slowly began to fall away from grace. Christians do not fall away from grace in a moment or by a single act as God will bring the gospel around to us

time after time until we come to repentance or are finally hardened in sin. I can remember meeting person after person who preached the gospel to me and in my state of mind at that time it just seemed like what they were teaching was cheap grace or easy believism. When the gospel is truly preached this is what it will appear as to the carnal minded who trust in their works.

First off grace is not cheap because it cost the shed blood of the Son of God which is beyond price. Secondly, belief is not easy because the whole world is filled with unbelievers. Belief is difficult because our whole lives we have been taught to believe in everything except the gospel especially the concept of merit where if we want something we have to 'earn it' which is the exact opposite of grace. The real sin of the churches of Galatia and many Christians today is that of believing we have to work for or earn God's favor. For either Christ must remain and the law perish or the law must remain and Christ perish. Christ and the law can never agree and reign together in the heart. So an understanding of the gospel is actually higher than conversion and the reason why the apostles were the highest authority in the church as they were converted men but were also taught the gospel by Christ himself. But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. Some might ask - how could you persecute God's true church? Well, God's true church doesn't look like any church you've ever seen in your whole life. When Jesus walked the earth the adulterers, thieves, liars and blasphemers were the ones who constantly thronged about him and it seems he still has an affinity for these character types. Jesus really and truly does not like law keepers.