

“Grace to You and Peace”

November 7, 2010

Text: Galatians 1:1-5

This morning we’ll begin a study of the NT book of Galatians.

As I was waiting on the Lord for guidance as to the next book our church should study, I kept coming across references to Galatians, & found myself being repeatedly drawn to it. I’m going to assume that was God’s leading in answer to my prayers.

In our study of Acts, we learned that Paul established churches in 4 Galatian cities during his first missionary journey—Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

[map—Pauls 1st Journey]

Then he traveled back to his home church in Syrian Antioch.

Paul would revisit these churches on both his 2nd/3rd journeys, but in A.D. 49 he discovered that some Jewish false teachers were teaching heresy to the believers there, who were new in their faith.

They had told them that faith in Jesus alone is not enough for salvation, that a person must 1st become Jewish thru circumcision before his faith will save him.

I.e., salvation by a combination of God’s grace + good works.

This undermined the true doctrine of justification by faith alone and endangered the souls of those being taught this.

To counter the false teachers' influence, Paul wrote the very first of his 13 inspired letters—his Epistle to the Galatians.

He warned his readers of the dire consequences of abandoning this essential doctrine of salvation by God's grace through faith alone.

He didn't even offer them any commendation in his letter, making *Galatians* different from all his other letters, in this respect.

You sense the urgency with which Paul wrote in Gal 1:6, where, after a brief greeting, he abruptly gets down to business and plunges into the issues=>

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel."

Accusing people of desertion/abandonment, might not seem like a good way to start a letter;

But Paul doesn't want to waste time on needless amenities, because he's so fervent in his concern for the Galatians' spiritual well-being.

According to ancient writing customs, letters began with an identification of the writer/recipients, & then a greeting.

Paul follows this custom, but he bolsters the 1st/3rd elements of his salutation with strong/meaningful statements that lay the groundwork to support his basic arguments later in the letter.

* **The Writer**

[Galatians 1:1-2a]=> *“Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), / and all the brethren who are with me,”*

Mention of his *“brethren”* (his fellow missionaries)

implies their support for what he will say about the doctrinal issues later on.

Paul begins by claiming to be an apostle—the highest office in the Church.

Eph 2:20 says the Church was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, because those 2 groups of men gave us the inspired writings on which our faith is based.

Their words in the canon of Scripture are God’s words

verbatim, and they carry all of God’s own authority.

No one’s free to disregard/disobey/disbelieve/disagree-with them at all.

God doesn’t make suggestions or state hypotheses that need to be proven empirically.

* He states facts that are absolutely/unarguably true.

* He states commands that are absolutely mandatory and non-negotiable.

When Paul said he was an apostle, he was telling the Galatians that anyone who disagreed w/ his words, disagreed w/ God. You read the Bible differently once you understand that it’s God Himself speaking to you.

That is such a powerful claim on Paul's part, that anyone making it had better be able to back it up with proof.

A true apostle had to have seen Jesus in His resurrected state, and he had to have been commissioned to apostleship by X Himself.

Paul argued that he qualified on both counts, because Jesus had appeared to Him near Damascus, after His resurrection, an event we studied in the 9th chapter of Acts.

Paul again appealed to this event in 1 Cor 9:1, as proof of his apostleship, writing=> *“Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”*

Why did Paul insist so strongly, that men recognize his apostleship?

Because the false teachers who were telling the Galatians that faith in X alone is insufficient for salvation, had argued that Paul's teaching was invalid, because he wasn't really an apostle.

Paul initially refutes their claim in the opening words of his letter, saying “I am an apostle (a “sent one”), God Himself having sent me through His resurrected Son, so you Galatians need to accept my teachings as God's own teachings.”

He argued that God—not mere men—was both the Source of his apostolic authority, and the channel through which that authority was conveyed to him.

*** The Recipients**

[Verse 2b]=> “...to the churches of Galatia:”

That’s so short/to-the-point, it would sound curt, almost rude, in the context of 1st century letter-writing etiquette.

In every one of Paul’s other letters, he included a commendation

at this point, such as the one in 1 Thes 1:2-3=> “*We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; / constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.*”

But Paul is so alarmed/disappointed with the Galatians, he doesn’t commend them at all.

He just says=> “...to the churches of Galatia,” (meaning the churches in Antioch/Iconium/Lystra/Derbe).

Paul had poured his soul into these people’s lives.

In Lystra they’d even seen him being stoned/left-for-dead.

Yet here they were, deserting the true gospel, & giving credence to those who attacked Paul’s apostleship.

It was a shameful display of disloyalty and fickle-mindedness.

* **The Greeting**

[Verse 3]=> “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,*”

This is a wonderful/meaningful form of greeting.

Paul wishes for the recipients of his letter, that they might be the objects of God’s kind/unmerited favor—His “*grace.*”

Man can receive no greater gift than that during his lifetime.

Paul also wishes them “*peace*”—a Jewish form of greeting that referred in a general way to happiness.

So Paul is saying by implication=> “May you receive grace and happiness from the same God, & the same Jesus, who commissioned me to be an apostle.”

For the believer, “*grace/peace*” convey deep theological truths.

“*Grace*” reminds us that every blessing we have from God comes as a result of His unearned favor.

By its very nature, it’s something we don’t deserve.

False teachers had told the Galatians they needed to earn His favor by becoming circumcised and obeying the Mosaic Law.

As long as they went along w/ that, they could never receive God’s grace, because it can’t be earned.

Any attempt to do so disqualifies the potential recipient as a faithless ingrate.

“*Peace*” speaks of the joy/happiness/security that comes with being reconciled to God, so that we are no longer objects of His wrath due to our sin.

Having found peace *with* God, the believer can then begin to enjoy the wonderful peace *of* God, w/i himself.

With Paul's mention of "*the Lord Jesus Christ,*" he launches into a concise summary of salvation through X's substitutionary atoning death.

This morning we will consider 4 aspects of that essential doctrine of our faith...

First, we see *how* Jesus Christ gives us grace and peace

[Verse 4a]=> "*who gave Himself for our sins,*"

In coming to earth, X gave Himself for our sins as He set aside His heavenly glory and His crown, humbling Himself to become a man like us.

Then He gave Himself for our sins in the ultimate sense by giving His back to the scourge and His brow to the thorns; Giving His cheeks to those who plucked out His beard, His hands/feet to the nails, and His side to the spear.

Men could not be delivered from the Law's condemnation unless a man who was uncondemned/guiltless before the Law took its curse on Himself, for His fellow men's sins, and died as their Substitute.

By dying in our place, X bore God's wrath, intended for us. It was purely an act of divine grace that we never deserved and never will deserve.

Through X's sacrifice on our behalf, we are reconciled to God, and thus we find peace with Him.

Rom 5:10=> "*While we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son.*"

So we who were once God's enemies, now have peace with Him, because X has taken our sins out of the way, which once alienated us from God.

Second, we see Christ's *purpose* in giving Himself for our sins

[Verse 4b]=> "*that He might deliver us out of this present evil age,*"

When Jesus gave Himself for us, it was indeed His purpose to keep us out of Hell, & take us to Heaven, to be w/ Him, forever.

But far beyond that, His purpose was to deliver us out of this present evil age.

Paul viewed the world of his day as an evil age, & it still is today.

The age *before* this age (before Adam sinned) wasn't evil.

God had created the world & pronounced it "very good."

The age *after* this, when Jesus rules over a redeemed people in a new heavens/earth, will also be good, filled with righteousness, free from unrighteousness.

But we live in between those 2 good ages, in an evil age, which is under a curse, and is doomed to judgment/destruction.

The word "*age*" is "*aion*," & refers to an era of time.

More importantly, it refers to man's moral state/nature during any particular era of time.

It has less to do with the dating of an era, and more to do with the moral and spiritual character of man during that period.

In this era, man & his world are under a divine curse because of his rebellion against God.

* Gal 3:10 says anyone who doesn't obey everything in God's Law is under a divine curse (which includes us all).

* II Cor 4:4 says Satan is the god of choice among men in this present, evil age.

* Gen 3:17 adds that even the ground is cursed because of sin.

* Rom 8:20 says all of creation was subjected to futility.

* I Cor 2:6 says this age is totally ignorant of true wisdom.

Due to sin, the world as we know it is morally/spiritually corrupt, and all its values are calculated to make men even worse than he already is.

1 Jn 2:16=> *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

The next verse adds=> *“And the world is passing away, and also its lusts”* (I Jn 2:17).

The corrupt system we see at work in this world all around us is on its way out.

God will soon bring it to an end.

**This is a temporary era in a temporary/condemned world
that will soon pass away in a fireball of God's judgment.**

2 Pet 3:7=> *“But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*

You've prob. heard of the “big bang.”

Well that will be the “big burn.”

**Jesus gave Himself for our sins to deliver us out of this age of
divine condemnation, before it is incinerated.**

He gave Himself for men's salvation, and calls them to flee
from the wrath to come, by believing on Him.

**But not only did X die to deliver us from this age's
condemnation, but also its corruption.**

He came to gather out a holy people for Himself;

People who had rejected the defilement of this evil age.

The whole moral/spiritual tone of their lives and the things
they cared about would be different—purer/nobler,
centered on God not self, kinder, more generous and
forgiving, and obedient to God out of a compelling
love for Him.

X came to lift men/women out of this world's filth and raise them
to new life in a new kind of world during a truly new age.

He came to separate unto Himself a people who would
surrender to Him in faith, to become like Himself.

Jesus also died to deliver us from the fear of this world.

The world gives us its version of what's right/wrong, and it is almost always perverted/backward.

Isa 5:20 says=> *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

But that's exactly what the world in this age does=>

E.g. it calls sexual-promiscuity/homosexuality good, but a woman's becoming a homemaker to create a good life for her family, it calls evil/bad—restrictive/repressive exploitation of her womanhood.

It calls good evil, light darkness, & bitterness sweet.

Woe to the Xn who stands up and tells the world, “God's Word says that's wrong!”

Or the Xn who says “God created the universe in 6 days.”

A lot of Xns are afraid of that kind of rejection from the world.

But X came to deliver us from such fear.

X came to gather out a people who didn't fear anyone but God.

Who, after His Spirit had renewed them, were fearless.

Roman soldiers would bring them before proconsuls, who ordered them to offer incense on the altar of Jupiter.

They would refuse, answering simply, “I am a Christian.”

“Put a pinch of incense on that altar this minute, or I will have you torn apart with red hot pincers!”

Again they'd answer, "I am a Xn," and just stand there,
silently waiting to bear the world's wrath for Jesus'
sake.

**Shall we repudiate that legacy by yielding to the foolish rules
of this condemned age, fearing its hostility if we don't?**

Should we let it pressure/seduce us into embracing its
values, hoping God won't notice or won't condemn
us as worldly/cowardly compromisers?

May the Lord separate/divide/alienate us more/more from this
world/age, so that those who are perishing along with it,
will see by our lives that X delivers people out of its
corruption/condemnation.

That He has delivered us, by making sin hateful to us, and
delivering us from it.

How can we love a world that has hated/abused/murdered our
Savior, and nailed Him to a cross?

By His death He has crucified the world to us, and us to it.

Third, we see *why* Jesus gave Himself for our sins

[Verse 4c]=> "*according to the will of our God and Father,*"

It was God's eternal desire that we become a holy people.

That's why Jesus gave Himself for our sins.

In Rom 8, Paul lists a series of divine actions that stretch from
eternity past to eternity future, by which God creates such a
holy, Christ-like people=>

*“Whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; / and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30).*

No one could be delivered out of this present evil age, were it not for the purpose/predestination of our God/Father.

Its grip is just too strong/tenacious for any man/woman to escape from it, on his own, by his own moral strength.

And it takes the power of God to keep such a man/woman from living in this world, w/o once again being of its present evil age.

But in eternity past, God decreed=>

- * That an elect people should be delivered out of the masses headed for hell in this evil age;
- * That Jesus should give Himself, to atone for the sins of this favored group;
- * That they should be called and drawn with supernatural, irresistible power to believe in Him unto eternal life;
- * That they should be cleansed of their sin by X's blood;
- * And that they should be sanctified, living lives of ever increasing holiness/righteousness, goodness/godliness.

God has willed that His people come out from the world, become separate-from/dissimilar-to it, and reflect His own likeness, His righteousness.

As Paul puts it in 1 Thes 4:3=> *“This is the will of God, your sanctification.”*

If this is God’s will, and if this is why Jesus died, then we as believers should fulfill that purpose in our daily lives.

Our goal should not be simply salvation from the penalties and consequences of sin.

It should be salvation from sin itself.

That’s what being a real Xn is all about=>

Living a X-like life—not living like the present evil age that’s passing away around us, from which we have been delivered.

If we did that, there would prob. be a lot more persecution of Xns than there is, because the world would hate us and wouldn’t put up with us.

Unfortunately, much of the Church has become so worldly itself, the world doesn’t hate us as they once did, because they no longer even notice any difference.

The Church was once filled with so many such holy men/women that the hounds of hell never let it rest in peace.

Pray God that it will be again in our lifetime.

Fourth, we see how we should *respond* to our deliverance

[Verse 5]=> *“to whom [the Father] be the glory forevermore.
Amen.”*

**If Jesus gave Himself for you, and has delivered you from this
present evil age, your response should be to glorify God.**

In that way, God is glorified by His Son’s death.

* God’s justice is glorified, which demanded punishment for
every sinful violation of God’s Law.

It wouldn’t simply ignore all those violations, pretending
they hadn’t happened, because that would make
God’s justice less than just (even by our standards).

When Jesus died for our sins, justice was done.

X said, “It is finished!”

God’s gavel came down.

And the Law’s case against us was closed.

* But in that way too, God’s grace is glorified.

He willed that His own sinless Son become one of us, so
that He could give Himself, on our behalf.

God graciously sacrificed His own Son sending Him to pay
the death-penalty, demanded by the Law, for our sin.

**The Galatians had forgotten these truths, and underestimated
the infinite value of Jesus’ death.**

They had allowed themselves to be deceived/persuaded that by
obeying the Law, they could supplement what Jesus had
already achieved on the cross, helping Him make them
acceptable to God.

They had succumbed to human pride, desperately wanting to believe Jesus needed them to add the last little bit to their own salvation.

Pride hates the thought of standing helplessly before Jesus, having nothing to offer, begging for salvation that it knows it doesn't deserve.

It wants to buy/barter its own way into divine forgiveness and acceptance before God, with its own human goodness=>

- * Refraining from sinful deeds and doing good deeds to others.

- * Doing religious deeds such as confessing sins, or attending worship services, or praying, or burning incense, genuflecting, or making offerings to a god, or making a pilgrimage.

The one thing human pride screams in protest against doing, is the one thing it must do=> acknowledge its own worthlessness, and humble itself before God, asking for His pardon based on the death of someone who didn't deserve to die, and surrendering in humble submission to Him.

But having met God on His own non-negotiable terms of grace, a person receives greater blessings than he could ever imagine=>

- * Deliverance from this present evil age's condemnation.
- * Deliverance from the slavery to its corruption.
- * Relief/release from guilt, & the joy of forgiveness.

- * New life in Jesus X, and the anticipation of that life
blossoming into fullness, in the presence of God.
- * The indwelling H.S., who guides/teaches/sanctifies us.
- * And countless other blessings, which the believer
continues to discover throughout his Xn life.

**Because of the magnitude of God's blessings, a real believer
cannot restrain his gratitude but must glorify Him.**

Take Paul, for example=>

- * In Rom 7:24 he asked=> *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”*

Knowing that only God could/would set him free, he
immediately

shouted (vs 25)=> *“Thanks be to God through
Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

- * In Eph 3:20-21, he was thinking about what God does in
a Xn's life, when he again burst forth in spontaneous
praise=> *“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding
abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us, / to Him
be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all
generations forever and ever. Amen.”*

“Amen!” means “That's right!” “It shall be!” “O that it
were already!” “Dear Lord, let it be now!”

**If Jesus hasn't delivered you out of this present evil age, pray
that He will do so, that you too may rejoice/praise Him.**

Apart from His saving you as you seek His forgiveness, I'm sorry
to have to say this, but you are lost, and you share in the

divine condemnation of this present evil age, and will share in its destruction.

But if God enables you to repent of your sin & believe in Jesus, you'll want to glorify Him from your heart.

In our own text, Paul says God the Father, and (by implication) Jesus the Son, will be glorified “evermore.”

In eternity the glory of our Savior will constantly be the subject of every man's thoughts/feelings.

In Rev 5:11-13, John sees a countless future multitude of men/angels around God's throne in heaven, saying=>

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Then John hears all of creation, in heaven, on earth, under the earth, & even in the sea, chiming-in and saying to our beloved, crucified Savior=>

“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

And all of God's redeemed who hear that, will add=>

“Amen!”

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Text: Galatians 1:1-5

1. This morning we will begin a study of the NT book of [20 Galatians].

Gal 1:6

2. According to ancient writing customs, letters began with an identification of the [14 writer] the recipients, and then a greeting.

*** The Writer**

Galatians 1:1-2a—*“Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), / and all the brethren who are with me,”*

Eph 2:20; I Cor 9:1

3. Why did Paul insist so, that men recognize his apostleship? Because false teachers had argued that Paul’s teaching was invalid because he [14 wasn’t] really an apostle.

*** The Recipients**

Verse 2b—*“...to the churches of Galatia:”*

I Thes 1:2-3

4. Paul had poured his soul into these people’s lives; yet they were deserting the true gospel and giving credence to those who attacked [14 Paul’s] apostleship.

*** The Greeting**

Verse 3—*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,”*

5. “Peace” speaks of the joy, happiness and security that comes with being [24 reconciled] to God.

With Paul’s mention of “*the Lord Jesus Christ,*” he launches into a concise summary of justification by faith through Christ’s atoning death...

First, we see how Jesus Christ gives us grace and peace

Verse 4a—“*who gave Himself for our sins,*”

6. By dying in our place, Christ bore God’s wrath, intended for us; it was purely an act of divine [12 grace] that we never deserved.

Rom 5:10

Second, we see Christ’s purpose in giving Himself for our sins

Verse 4b—“*that He might deliver us out of this present evil age,*”

7. When Jesus gave Himself for us, His purpose was to [16 deliver] us out of this present evil age.

Gal 3:10; II Cor 4:4; Gen 3:17; Rom 8:20; I Cor 2:6; I Jn 2:16-17; II Pet 3:7

8. Not only did Christ die to deliver us from this age’s condemnation, but also its [24 corruption].

Isa 5:20

Third, we see why Jesus gave Himself for our sins

Verse 4c—“*according to the will of our God and Father,*”

9. It was God’s eternal desire that we become a [10 holy] people.

Rom 8:29-30

10. God has willed that His people come out from the world, become separate from and dissimilar to it, and reflect [8 His] own likeness.

I Thes 4:3

Fourth, we see how we should respond to our deliverance

Verse 5—“*to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*”

11. If Jesus gave Himself for you, and has delivered you from this present evil age, your response should be to [16 glorify] God.

12. The one thing human pride screams in protest against doing is the one thing it must do: acknowledge its own worthlessness and humble itself before God, asking for His pardon based on the death of Someone who [14 didn’t] deserve to die.

Rom 7:24-25; Eph 3:20-21

13. In eternity the glory of our Savior will constantly be the subject of [12 every]
man's thoughts and feelings.

Rev 5:11-13