

The Epistle to the Galatians – The Gospel of Grace

Lesson 2: The Salutation (1:1-5)

“Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—²and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The salutation to the Galatians is unlike any other salutation we see Paul give in his other epistles. The five verses of our text seem pretty standard for Paul: He gives his name and title, glorifies God by proclaiming of the grace that he has been given, that He might be called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And greets them with ‘Grace’ and ‘Peace’, the greeting that only Christians could give and receive, since grace and peace can only come from the God who saves.

But following that, Paul gets right down to business. In his other letters, Paul typically gives this salutation and then praises God in thanksgiving and prayer for the faith of his readers. Look at [Philippians 1:3-11](#), [Colossians 1:3-8](#), and [1 Corinthians 1:4-9](#). Paul gives no outburst of praise in this epistle, instead, in what can be read as nothing short of angry or frustrated, he says, **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him...”** I wanted to set the tone of this letter by showing us how quickly the letter gets to Paul’s astonishment, which we will discuss next lesson. For the rest of this lesson, let’s break down these opening remarks.

An Apostle (1:1): There seems to be some confusion these days as to the definition of what an Apostle is. There are modern day people who claim themselves to be Apostles and travel to teach from various pulpits “revelation” from God. But the scriptures are quite clear as to the qualifications of Apostleship, and as we’ll soon conclude, no one after the close of the Bible reaches those qualification any longer.

In Acts chapter 1, the eleven remaining Apostles returned to Jerusalem for the purpose of prayer, and to see whom God would appoint to replace Judas as the twelfth Apostle. Pay close attention to the qualification in verses [21-26](#). One of the qualification was to have witnessed the risen Christ, a qualification that no one today meets. So, with that qualification mind, let’s read [1 Corinthians 15:3-10](#). Saul was met by the risen Christ Himself on the Damascus road in Acts 9, and was chosen by Christ (9:15) to bring the gospel to **“the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”**

The word Apostle comes from the Greek *apostolos* and means to be “sent”. So our next question needs to be, if Paul was “sent”, who sent him? Paul answers that question in the first verse of Galatians, **“Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.”** I want to make a distinction regarding being ‘sent out’, because men are still being ‘sent’ today. We know that the Spirit is the one who regenerates all whom the Father has called, those whom the Son redeemed. But there are some who are particularly empowered by the Spirit and called by God to serve as ministers of His grace, they are sent out, but they are not Apostles. The calling of all believers today is fleshed out by being a hearer of the word of God. All believers today are matured in the faith through the vehicle of mature believers in the faith. And every Pastor is commissioned to serve in the church by the vote of a membership, they are “sent” to minister in this way. Paul was not sent by his

contemporaries, in fact, he was on a mission to wipe out those future contemporaries when the Lord called him, and sent him out.

While it's important to understand that Paul met the qualifications for apostleship, and it's also important to realize that this meant that he was called by God, our next question should be: Why did he include his title of apostle at the beginning of this letter? We must remember that Paul was writing to combat false teaching in the church, so he is at the outset asserting his words as the authority from God over and above those false teachers who were appointed as teachers by men.

One God, Three Persons (1:1): Paul was called, "**not from men...but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...**" While the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this verse, there is Trinitarian intent to Paul mentioning both Christ AND the Father this way. For the sake of one in the room who may be a new Christian, and unfamiliar with the titles of the Godhead, the Father and Son are titles given to show relation, but this does not mean that the Father (and therefore a Mother) bore this Son. God has given us the family as a picture of the reality of relationship in Heaven. Marriage for example is not a man-made institution, but rather it serves as a picture to the one-day eternal union that Jesus Christ will share with His bride, the Church. Likewise, the relationship of a father and son point to the perfect reality of Son who obeys the will, and submits to the wisdom and plan of His Father.

Paul is stressing the equality of the Father and the Son in verse 1. In the same manner that a wife is no less human, no less important, no less intelligent when she submits to the authority of her husband (by God's good design), so Jesus Christ is no less God, no less powerful, no less deserving of worship, since his title is Son and He submits to the Father. Submission is designed by God's good wisdom to provide order through the complex. The very Trinity of God operates this way. The Father and the Son are unified, they are of the same essence, the same nature. In a unified way, the Father had planned the salvation of Paul, the Son sacrificed Himself for Paul, and the Spirit was alive in Paul, empowering him to minister the gospel. Together, they appointed Paul and sent him into ministry.

The Brothers with Paul (1:2): Paul not only sends his personal greeting, he also sends greetings from "**all the brothers who are with**" him. One conclusion that would be wrong to reach is that this letter was co-written by Paul and these brothers (whoever they are, we're not told). Paul is the sole writer of this letter. And the Galatians most likely would have known who those brothers were. But why include their greeting in this letter? I think it has a little more to do than a simple "Tell the Galatians we said Hi!"

Paul has already asserted his role as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is the ambassador between Christ and the Church. He was speaking for God, he wrote the inspired Word of God, he knew it, and so did many others. I believe that Paul included the brothers in this opening remark of the letter as a public confirmation of the matters that he was about to address. Paul wasn't about to give the Galatians a custom gospel message, he was about to share with them same gospel that he received from God, had previously given to the Galatians, and shared with many others throughout the land. These brothers he sends greetings from knew the message of this letter, understood and believed it. These brothers knew Paul and fully supported him as an apostle of God.

The Receiving Churches (1:2): In case you were absent for the introductory lesson, the churches receiving this letter were located in the Roman Province of South Galatia, the central Asia Minor Cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

The Message of the Gospel (1:3-4): **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Paul loves the grace [Gr. *charis*] of God! He uses the word seven times in Galatians, and one-hundred times in total in his NT writings. It is a very similar word to ‘joy’ [Gr. *chara*]. This makes sense to us because what brings the Christian ultimate and unwavering comfort and joy is what God has accomplished for us in salvation of His own grace. Sometimes Paul links grace with the Father, **“I do not nullify the grace of God”** (Gal. 2:21), and sometimes he links grace to Christ, **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”** (Gal 6:18) This serves us as even further evidence that the Father and Son are distinct persons, yet unified together in one Godhead, and possessing and distributing the same grace.

Paul links grace (*charis*) with peace [Gr. *eirene*]. This type of greeting was customary for the Jews, but we all know that Paul doesn’t cheap out on words, they serve a greater purpose. Paul used this expression to one degree or another forty-three times in the NT, nearly half of the times it is written in total. ‘Peace’ is a word that we tend to skip over too often. We know what ‘peace’ means, the vast majority of us, if not all of us, have never experienced anything but peace where we live. ‘Peace’ is opposite to ‘War’. I can only imagine what the news of ‘peace’ must sound like to someone who has lived through a prolonged experience of war. This isn’t the peace that Paul is talking about, but the principle remains the same. Paul is writing about a peace with God that Christians now share. But if there is peace now, it can only be that there was once war! Here, only three verses into the letter, Paul is reminding the Galatians of the gospel news (the Great news!) that God has made peace with them who were once His enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10, James 4:4). The Galatians were troubled by those who were perverting the gospel and super-imposing a high priority on law-keeping in order to be right with God, and Paul begins the letter by proclaiming that God has already shown grace and obtained peace with us!!!

The Nature of the Gospel (1:4a): **“who gave Himself for our sins”** This is the central message of the gospel. For a long time, most thought that the center of the universe was the Sun, and now it is widely believed that our entire universe is actually in orbit, so it is no longer the center. I can tell you that the center of the universe isn’t the Sun, it’s the Son. The book of Colossians tells us that **“He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”** (Col. 1:15-17) Christ is the center of everything, He is never out of the picture. He is the author, perfecter, accomplisher, and sustainer of our salvation. The free gift of our salvation (gospel) is not of our works, lest we should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9) Paul begins Galatians with the gospel. The Galatians (like all the rest) had a sin condition that separated them from God, but rejoice, Christ has given Himself up (in His sacrifice on the cross) to pay for our sins! It was indeed a Good Friday! It is the reason why sinner can have peace with God.

The Object of the Gospel – To deliver the Elect (1:4b): Paul speaks of the gospel as being that which delivers, or saves us from the danger of this present evil age. The Jews used to reference two ages: the present age, and the age to come, Paul is borrowing that reference here. We need to note that Paul isn’t referring to his time in the first century as ‘evil’, and perhaps some future time designation (now in our past) as a time of lesser evil. When Paul speaks of the present evil age, he is speaking of his present day, which we can read and understand in the context of our present evil age. The time to come is

when we are glorified with Christ in Heaven. Christ is the one who has justified the ungodly, brought peace to man with God, and therefore saved them from the wrath of God that is to come.

The Source of the Gospel—The Will of God (1:4c): “...**according to the will of our God and Father,**”

Sometime before the world began, scripture records for us in Ephesians 1:3-4, that God planned to save a people for Himself. In fact, God was so detailed in exactly whom He would save, that He recorded every name in the Lamb's book of life, as we're told in Revelation 17:8. We get more insight into God's pre-determined will to save certain sinners from Romans 9:22-23, “**What if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of His glory for vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory.**” There are some people who will (by God's choice) be a recipient of His grace, and who will pay the due penalty for their sin. The recipients according to verse 23 has been determined beforehand (the foundation of the world). Salvation is purely of grace, just a few verses prior in Romans 9:16, Paul wrote, “**So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.**”

Salvation was planned by the Father, and executed by the Son. It was the Father's will to send Christ to die for us. (John 3:16) It was Christ who prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane with drops of blood on His brow, “**Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**” (Mark 14:36) It was God's will that the cup not be removed, and that Christ drink the cup of His wrath, and the Son of God willingly did so. It is God who wills salvation, it is never the sinner's will, scripture couldn't be clearer, “**But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**” (John 1:12-13)

Paul's Motive: “**to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**” (1:5)

Paul finishes this opening remark of five verses with this doxology, the only time in all of his writings that he does so. When we think of the glory of God, we typically think of God's divine beauty, His holiness and majesty, and that is true, but I don't believe Paul is speaking in general terms here. Taken within the context of verse 3-5 (all one sentence) we ought to conclude that Paul is specifically glorifying the Triune God for their unified work in the salvation of Christians. Paul has explained the planned provision of salvation and now is ascribing glory to God for it. And since the salvation of the Christian is bought and secured by the blood of Christ, it is an eternally secure salvation, which will bring about our praise and glory to God “**forever and ever**”.

“**Amen**” is a word that we are all too familiar with. We end every prayer with it. We speak it audibly perhaps during a sermon, or when we are in agreement with something that is said during a prayer. It is a word of affirmation, a “let it come to pass” statement. When Paul pondered the worthiness of God to receive glory for our wonderful salvation, all he can say is “Amen.”