

**Galatians 1: 3-5; “Christ Giving Himself for Us”, A Communion Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall during the Afternoon
Worship Service on April 7th, 2019.**

The Apostle Paul is here in verses 1-5 greeting the churches of Galatia and giving them a short introduction for his purpose in writing to them. His letter was written to remind them of the purpose which God had, in saving them from their sins. “Christ gave Himself for our sins,” he says, “that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” This is the statement that we want to examine more closely. I want you to notice how graciously Paul introduces himself to them. He wishes them grace and peace, even though in verse 6 he is going to make a very strong statement to them. There he is going to say that he was marveling that they were guilty of turning away from God the Father who had called them in the grace of Christ. They were actually believing in another gospel than the true one which he had preached to them. He was going to warn them in the severest terms not to believe in that false gospel.

At this hour I want to show you some of the reasons why people sometimes believe in a false gospel. Basically, it is because they do not hold fast the true one which they might have heard before, and even said that they had believed. It is essential for all those persons who say that they are Christians to believe and to hold to these 3 foundational truths of the gospel. 1st – It is essential to believe that Christ gave Himself for our sins. 2nd – It is essential to believe that Christ gave himself to deliver us from this present evil age. And that 3rd – It is essential to believe that Christ gave Himself in order that all the glory for our salvation would go to God and not to us. We will be partaking of the communion in a few minutes and so I pray that these truths will feed and strengthen your souls, and cause you to have a thankful heart for all of what the Lord Jesus died to bring to you as a Christian.

1st – It is essential for all those persons who say that they are Christians to believe that Christ gave Himself for our sins.

Verse 3 says, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins....” This is the gospel in a nutshell; that Christ gave Himself for the sins of each and every person who believes in Him. We must ask, how did He give Himself? We answer, He was not forced to go to the cross. He went most willingly. It was there that He gave Himself for our sins. It was not simply that wicked men wickedly contrived to put Him to death, and forced Him to go the cross; although this certainly was true. But even more, it must be remembered that He very willingly gave Himself into their hands. He willingly went along with what they did to Him; causing Him pain and grief, for your sake and mine. Let’s look at verses which will confirm this.

John Chapter 10, verses 14-18. “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” “Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” “No one takes it from Me but I lay it down of myself.” “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” “This commandment I have received from My Father.” In these most beautiful of verses we find that Christ, the good shepherd, knew the Father’s good purpose; that He was being given by the Father to suffer for all of the lost sheep that the Father had given to Him in Electing love. He would most willingly give of Himself; laying His life down for the sheep, and thus save them from their sins.

This giving of Himself, this laying down His life, would not only be done for the salvation of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but also for the Elect sheep who would be called from among the Gentiles. No one would take His life from Him, He says in verse 18, but He would lay it down of Himself; that is, of His own power and authority He would do this, in conjunction with, and submission to, His Father's will and purpose. The Father loved the Lord Jesus because He lay down His life that He might take it up again. In other words, because Christ willingly lay down His life in death, He also had commandment from His Father to take it up again; to be raised from the dead, and to even raise Himself from the dead, in order that He would then be able to give spiritual life to all of the sheep, so that they would believe and walk with Him in newness of life. Let me ask you - Are you one of Christ's sheep? You are, if you believe that Christ gave Himself for your sins.

2nd – It is essential to believe that Christ gave himself to deliver us from this present evil age.

Verse 4 says, "The Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." The words, "out of this present evil age (or world) run this way in the Greek – "ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ". Paul uses the word αἰῶνος here. He does not use the word "kosmos" or the "world" of the physical earth. No, this word that he uses here in verse 4 is more related to the time of this whole present evil age that we live in. I want you to turn with me, over to Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 1. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Paul is saying here, as he is in Galatians Chapter 1, that there will be to be evil men who are going to walk according to the course of this world (αἰῶνα, or age) according to the leading of the devil."

This is something that characterizes the whole Church age from Christ's resurrection to His Second Coming at the end of the world. There is a spirit which works in the sons of disobedience which is only interested selfishly, sinfully, and perversely living according to their own perceptions of things; especially religious things. Here he saying that all men outside of Christ are in the devil's kingdom. They are here called, "the sons of disobedience". Some of these men, who are particularly perverse in a religious sense, will go so far as to attempt to twist the gospel itself. They will try to add to it, their own understanding of what they think will please God, but actually it is damning doctrine if it is believed. I want to show you now, that there is a second and further purpose for Christ's giving of Himself for us. It is to deliver us from this present evil age.

I would like you to turn back again now, to John Chapter 10, and this time we will look at verses 1 and 2. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." Now look at verses 7-13. "Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.' "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." "I am the door." "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." "I am the good shepherd." "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and scatters them." "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep."

Now, this bears directly on what we are studying about Christ giving Himself for us. He gave Himself for us, not only to deliver us from our sins, but also to protect us from false teachers who try to deceive us about the gospel. The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were thieves and

robbers who were actually destroying the souls of the unsuspecting people. They were very religious, but they would not come to Christ and enter into God's true sheepfold by faith. Instead they thought to enter by a works righteousness; and this is what they also taught and preached. They were preaching a false gospel of righteousness coming to the people by their doing the works of the law and being circumcised. This is the very thing that the Apostle Paul warns the churches of Galatia about, in this letter that we are studying.

People who are confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ must remember that our Lord gave Himself for us, by His living a perfectly righteous life and then suffering on the cross, in our place, so that we might be delivered from the spirit (that is, the mindset, of unbelieving religious people), all during this present evil age. Jesus alone is the door to eternal life. Other men who are religious but unsaved, may teach many other ways of coming to God or knowing God, or entering heaven, or having everlasting life, but if they do not come through Jesus, and confess that they need to believe in Him alone for the forgiveness of their sins, they are false teachers. And because this is true of them, we can say that they are not in God's sheepfold. They are not in the true Church. They are still lost in their sins.

If Christ is not received by them, to be their Savior from their sins, and if God the Father has not imputed to them a righteousness better than their own because of Christ's righteous life, then they are really thieves, and robbers, and hirelings if they preach another gospel. They are stealing glory from God, who gets glory to Himself through sinners bowing their knees to the Lord Jesus Christ and their humbly receiving the truth of the gospel. A person who preaches man's ability to please God through a ceremonial or works righteousness is attempting to steal the souls of men. They are attempting to "climb up some other way" to attain the blessings of heaven which do not belong to them.

The hireling is a person who is attempting to watch over the souls of other people for money. He, too, only has selfish interests. He preaches that you can fulfill all of your selfish and sinful interests and still be a Christian. But Jesus says here that the hireling is a person who flees when they see the wolf coming. And who is the wolf? The wolf is a word picture given by Jesus here to warn us of Satan's attacks upon us, Christ's people. Satan attacks Christ's people through the promotion of false doctrine through false teachers who act the part of savage wolves coming upon the people; initially coming to them as "wolves in sheep's clothing".

I believe that this is the true meaning there in John 10: 12, for the Apostle Paul uses this same metaphor also in Acts Chapter 20, verses 28-31, if you will turn over there with me. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

You can see here that the savage wolves are "false, hypocritical, and dangerous teachers" as Albert Barnes calls them in his commentary. They will not spare the flock. These false teachers would come in gently, professing friendship, and saying that they only wanted to defend the laws of Moses. But then they would turn on the true believers at some point and show their true colors. They would try to dominate and control the Christians with harshness and severity; those who held fast to the truth that Christ only, could save. These false teachers would twist the truth of the gospel to the destruction of unstable souls. But let us remember that this is why Christ gave Himself for us. It was not only that our sins would be forgiven, but it was also for the protection and stability of your faith, dear Christian. A person who is a true Christian is one who will hear Christ's voice (that is, they will trust in Him and heed His word) and they will not listen to the voice of another, in terms of the truth of the gospel. Are you not thankful for the

fact that Christ died for you to bring out from under all that was false and to bring you into all that is true? Let's assemble down front now, and partake together of His Supper.

And then 3rd - It is essential to believe that Christ gave Himself for us in order that all the glory for our salvation would go to God and not to us.

Verse 4 – “Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever.” “Amen.” Paul is saying that the whole triune God, every Person of the Divine Trinity, is to be praised for their saving help to us. This is no doubt what He wished that the churches in Galatia were doing. But more specifically, in this verse, he was teaching the Galatians, and us, that we as Christians need to remember that once we have believed in Christ, it is very important that we live our lives in such a way that we will bring glory to God. Glory and praise belongs to the Father for the great plans and purposes which He drew up before time began. The Father together with the Son planned that our salvation would be to the praise of His glorious grace. Glory and praise belong to the Son, because He gave Himself as an offering for sin and for sinners, such as we were.

Let us acknowledge now, that it is because Christ's grace is at work in our hearts, that the truth of God's blessed word will take root downward and bear fruit upward, as we live our lives to Him and to His glory. If we do this, we will be increasingly be delivered from the spirit of this present evil age, and we will have our minds focused on things above. One more verse before we partake of the elements; a verse which shows once more, why Christ gave Himself for you, dear Christian. Romans Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2 – “I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” “And do not be conformed to this world, (there is that word “αιωνι” again) (don't be conformed to the spirit of this present evil age) but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Let us remember that abiding in God's word, and meditating upon it day and night is better than all the entertainments which the fallen people of this world can give us. Let us truly appreciate all that God has given us in His creation, and in the godly people He has surrounded us with. But let us also be transformed by the renewing of our minds, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we do not love the world and the things of this world. As we partake of the Supper, let us remember that Christ has called us to overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. As we learn to mortify our sinful flesh, let us see how reasonable, service to Him is. And let us pursue those things which will make for godliness.