

Open your bible to (quite possibly) the 1<sup>st</sup> epistle Paul the apostle ever penned.

### Galatians 1:1-5

#### "The Person, The Price, The Purpose"

Yrs ago in a movie by the name of "Brave Heart", Mel Gibson roared the clarion call to his followers, "*They may take our lives, but they'll never take our freedom!*" He was portraying William Wallace, a Scotsman w/a passion to see Scotland made free & to *preserve* the freedom, purchased at the expense of those who were willing to bleed & die *for* that freedom.

& At the risk of being a bit cheesy; truth be told that's the same passion that pulses through Paul's letter to the Galatians. A passion to protect the freedom purchased for them (& for you & for me) through the shed blood of J.C.

The book of Galatians has been called the "Declaration of Independence of Christian liberty." It's the letter that served as the catalyst for the protestant reformation as Martin Luther, climbing on his knees up the 25 steps of St John's Cathedral in Rome in a effort to atone for his sins heard the Lord speak to his heart, "The just shall live by faith", he got off his knees, went back to Germany & the reformation age was born. & He came to love the book of Galatians so much that he would refer to it as his, "Katie von Bora" (which was his wife's name). He would say that he was *betrothed* to the book of Galatians.

Why? Because having been bound by such *legalism*, he was blessed & blown away to enjoy the *liberty* w/which Christ has made us free! - Now when we start talking about liberty in Christ we want to be careful make very clear what's meant by that. **Because it's not a license to do whatever we want. It's the liberty to become all that Christ has called us to be. It's not freedom *to* sin, it's freedom *from* sin. No longer are we in bondage to sin. Jesus has made us free & whom the Son sets free...is free indeed. No longer are we bound by the snares of sin that would hold us back but (in Christ) we're free to run w/endurance this race (this life) that's set before us.**

But here's the deal, bondage isn't always found in the form of some atrocious or hideous *rebellion against* high moral standards. Sometimes it can come in the subtle form of appearing to *take on* high moral standards. We might refer to them as the, "3 R's of religion": rules, regulations, & rituals--

Any time you attach a rule, a regulation, or a ritual to the cross of Christ you've left the liberty to which you've been called & entered into legalism which is an offense to God. It's a man made effort to *get* right, or perhaps *stay* right w/God.

We're made right w/God on the basis of His grace through faith in J.C. ... period. You add to that in *anyway*, "Well you need faith in Jesus plus you need to be baptized". "You need faith in Jesus plus you need to tithe." "You need faith in Jesus plus you need to do good works." "You need faith in Jesus plus you need to repeat these prayers, or spend time fasting..." Fill in the blank, when you *add to* faith in Christ, you *take away from* the sufficiency of the cross. **You're no longer trusting in the finished work of Christ for your salvation & justification before God. Now you're shoring things up by some effort of your own. Like it or not, anytime we think we need something other than simple faith in Christ to be saved & justified in the site of God we're telling God that we don't truly trust in Him, His word, or the sufficiency of the sacrifice of His Son to save us. (Can you see how that would offend the Father?)**

Now, that's not to say that when you come to Christ you won't want to be baptized (you will). It's not saying that if you have true saving faith in Christ you won't be a giving person, or a serving person, or you won't do good things, or find yourself fasting (you will). But those things are to be the result/response *to* salvation, not the prerequisite or requirement *for* salvation. Those things aren't *foundational* to my faith, they're the *fruit* of my faith (2 totally different things).

**If I'm doing something to try & get right w/God, or stay right w/God, that's called religion (which the bible condemns). If I'm doing it out of the overflow of my love for God recognizing I've been made right w/God through the cross of J.C. that's called a relationship w/God (which the bible commends).**

The Galatians were falling prey to the former. Paul had been through the region of Galatia & several churches had been planted. (Galatia wasn't a city, it was a region in modern day Turkey) Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Derby, Lystra, these were all cities in the region of Galatia.

**History records the people of Galatia as a backwoods, country kinda folk. "Ancient Hillbillies" (if you will) ☺; unstable, uneducated & easily misled. We might say that they were "Ancient Ozarkian people" ☺, this letter hits us right where we live! Especially in light of the fact that we live in the bible belt of the country... An area that *should be* shining bright for J.C. but unfortunately has been corrupted & corroded/infected by the rules & regulations of religion.**

Julius Caesar once described the Galatian people as being, "fickle, fond of change & not to be trusted."

You can get an idea of their easily swayed demeanor in Acts Ch's 14. Paul came to town & that morning having worked a miracle & they sought to worship him as a god. He says, "Hey don't worship us, we're men like you, we've come to turn you away from this useless idolatry & to the true & Living God" & preached the gospel to them, but by that night the Judaizers had stirred them up so fervently that they stoned Paul (whom they'd previously sought to worship) dragged him outside the city & left him for dead!

Of course when Paul was raised up he went back into the city & preached to them again but you get the impression that they seemed to be a bit unstable.

So here's what would happen. Paul would go into a city, preach the gospel of the grace of God. Then legalistic Jews (Judaizers) would go in after him & say, "Hey, Jesus is great, the cross is fine, believe in the blood; but you also need to keep the law, to be circumcised, to honor the Sabbath (so on & so forth). & In so doing they would entangle these new believers in religious bondage spitting in the face of the sufficiency of the cross... As you might imagine this lit Paul's fire in a righteous kind of way; & this is the basic premise behind why the Lord inspired him to write this letter.

**Vs 1-5** (Vs 1-2)

Hey, Paul isn't messing around is he? He steps straight up to the plate & starts swinging for the fences! We'll see that he doesn't play around w/the jabs, he goes immediately for the knock out. Oh, he'll *assure* them of his affection *eventually*, but initially they need to be reminded of his *authority*.

Why? Because these Judaizers would do then, what people still do today... If someone wants to subvert, or undermine, or discredit a ministry; if they can really argue against them doctrinally than invariably they'll slander the man *personally*. We call it "character assassination". These guys would come in & begin to question Paul's credentials asking who gave him the authority to speak so dogmatically on these things... After all he wasn't one of the original 12 that the Lord commissioned therefore how can we really trust what he's telling us?

So Paul addresses that issue immediately. He says, "Paul, an apostle..." What is an apostle? Today we might better identify w/the word "ambassador". It speaks of one sent out on a mission w/the authority, representing personally the one who sent them... Every now & then people ask if there are still apostles today. The answer is "Yes" & "No". Are their men whom God raises up to spearhead a movement, He gives them authority & uses their lives tremendously? Of course that happens.

Are there men whom God uses in the capacity of the original Christ personally appointed apostles who speak words on par w/the authority of scripture & when they speak the church should follow globally? No. There were some prerequisites to be considered an apostle, 1 of which was to see the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 9:1). *So we don't have those men today, the bible tells us that the *foundation* of the church was laid upon the apostles & prophets, J.C. Himself being the chief cornerstone. So once the foundation was laid, their job was complete. Now we build upon that foundation & we're to take heed how we do so (1 Cor 3:10).*

But Paul steps up here & he introduces himself as “Paul, an apostle (notice) *not* from men nor through man,” in other words his authority, his apostleship didn't come from man. It wasn't as though he went to seminary & then upon graduating he got his masters degree in theology & received a certificate of apostleship. *He wasn't commissioned by a church or denomination... Nor did his apostleship come *through* man... That is, it wasn't as if some bishop, or pope, or pastor laid hands *on* him & said *to* him, “I hereby ordain you as an apostle of God...”*

How many of you realize that the ordination of man is worthless? I'm not against bible college, or obtaining a degree in theology, but the ordination of man doesn't mean a thing... I have a certificate hanging up in my office affirming my legal pastoral ordination. & Though I appreciate the sentiment, & recognize its necessary to perform a function or two legally, in reality it doesn't mean any more to me than the piece of paper is worth...

*Man, cannot ordain man into the ministry. Only God can call/qualify & ordain a man into the ministry. All man can do is acknowledge & ratify that work in his life, but God's call in no way depends upon man, it can only be acknowledged of man.*

Btw, have you ever stopped to consider God's call upon your life? It's not necessarily what you do vocationally. Paul made tents for a living, but was called by God as an apostle. He didn't even pursue ministry, but God pursued him (you can read of his conversion & his calling in Acts Ch 9). But it's been said that your job is what you're *paid* for, your calling is what you're *made* for. Paul told the Ephesians, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”<sup>1</sup>*

So Paul was very passionate about this (& appropriately so), you should be too! Because if you're not sure of your calling, than when you're questioned the enemy can easily derail you. That's why we're exhorted to make our calling & election sure (2 Pet 1:10).

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Eph 2:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Eph 4:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Paul, an apostle (not *from* men, nor *through* man, but through J.C. & God the Father who raised Him from the dead.)” The call upon Paul’s life didn’t in *any way* originate in man, it originated w/God & came directly *from* God. His source of authority comes directly from the Highest possible Person/place. **From J.C. Himself, straight from the throne of God.** He invokes both J.C. (God the Son) & God the Father demonstrating that they’re in no way separated in sustaining a different relationship to his apostleship, but they are together in the call upon his life.

Of course Jesus affirmed & reaffirmed time and again the absolute unity between Himself & His Father. He said things like **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”**<sup>2</sup> He told Philip that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father as well. In His prayer in Jn 17 in speaking of His desire that we be one He said of His relationship w/the Father, “just as *We* are one.” So God the Father & God the Son move in perfect unity, the call of J.C. upon your life, is the call of God the Father upon your life.

Then Paul draws attention to the resurrection, “who raised Him from the dead.” The other apostles may’ve been commissioned by the Lord while He was upon the earth, but his commission came from the resurrected, glorified Christ! “To the churches of Galatia:” **Vs 3-5**

“Grace to you & peace (again) from God the Father & the Lord J.C.” Paul used the word “grace” over 100xs in his writings & every other NT writer combined used it only 55 times. Truly Paul was the apostle of grace.

& As you may know these 2 words will always be found together (in his greetings) & always in this order. Because you can never have true peace w/God or know the peace of God w/out 1<sup>st</sup> experiencing the *grace* of God; these 2 words really summarize the nature & source of our salvation. The *nature* of salvation is peace (peace w/God, peace w/in our own heart), the *source* of salvation grace. That is, God’s unearned, undeserved favor which comes to us based upon nothing that’s found in us & everything that’s found in Him. God’s grace doesn’t find us on the basis of who *we are*, but on the basis of who *He is*.

“Grace to you & peace, from God the Father & our Lord J.C. *who gave Himself for our sins...*” Paul can’t get to the gospel message fast enough here. He wants us to know that how we’re *made* right, how we *stay* right before God is not based on anything we *do*, it’s based completely upon that which Jesus has *done*.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 5:19]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“He gave himself for our sins.” Yes, the Father gave His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16), equally true is the fact that Jesus gave His own life. Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*”<sup>3</sup> You might write it down & look it up l8r, 1 Tim 2:3-6, Titus 2:11-14, Jesus *gave Himself*, why? For what reason? For our sins...

This is why Jesus came, why He suffered, why He shed His blood & laid down His life upon the cross, for our sins. Charles Spurgeon reminds us, “Not for our virtues, but for our sins. Not for our efficiencies, but for our deficiencies. Not for our wealth, but for our lack. Not for what we have, but for what we have not. It’s not what we can boast of, but what we mourn over that qualifies us to receive the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our sin had us headed down the slippery slopes of ruin/destruction. If God didn’t somehow intervene, do something to save us, we’d find ourselves separated from Him forever in outer darkness where there is wailing & gnashing of teeth. So out of love, through His great grace, Jesus gave Himself for our sins. He became the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world.

For what purpose? “That He might deliver us from this present evil age,” How many of you realize that the day & age in which we live is an evil one? You don’t have to look far do you? To see the effects of evil in this world; pornography, child molestation, terrorist activity, brutality, the drug culture exploding in epidemic proportions.

It’s interesting; there’s a couple of Greek words that are translated as “evil” in your NT. One is “Kakos” The “Kakos” man (evil man) is content to perish in his own corruption... The other word is “Poneros”, the “poneros” man isn’t content unless he is corrupting others as well, & drawing them into the same destruction toward which he himself is headed. Satan isn’t called the “kakos” one, the evil one content to perish in his own corruption. He’s called the “poneros” one, determined to pull others into the destruction to which he himself is headed. He’s here to steal, to kill & to destroy.

Paul uses this word “poneros” in his description of this present “evil” age. You guys, the bible is very clear this word is presently under the devils dominion. People want to know why all these bad things happen in the world, it’s because when Adam sinned he forfeited the dominion God had given him & he surrendered it to Satan. That’s why when Satan was tempting Jesus, he flashed before Him all the kingdoms of the earth & their glory & he said, “These are mine & I can give them to whomever I wish.” Jesus didn’t dispute that point. He didn’t say, “No they’re not!”

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 10:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The reason the world is so polluted & perverted isn't because of God, it's because man rejected God, & gave Satan dominion over the world system. Now Jesus won back the right to the world at the cross, but He won't lay claim to that right till He comes again. There's a bit of an overlap in the kingdoms. The Kingdom of God, & this present evil age.

In giving Himself for our sins Jesus "delivers us" out of this present evil age & translates us (out of darkness) & into His light. So that we're in the world, but not of the world; we're delivered (or plucked out) not from this world's presence, but from its power. Sin no longer has dominion over us, we're no longer dead in sin, but alive to God in Christ. So the gospel is a rescue mission, a rescue message from a state of bondage. The gospel message is the power of God to draw us out of this present evil age that's seeking to drag us down to destruction; delivering us from its clutches & setting us free, giving us life in Christ (who gave Himself for our sins). (Write it down, look it up Col 1:13-14)

Listen, Jesus gave all that He could possibly give, Himself, there was nothing more that He had left, He went all in for you & me. Notice, "according to the will of our God & Father." What does that mean? It means that it's God's will for you to be saved... God *can* deliver you, God *wants* to deliver you & He *will* deliver you, the question is do you believe Him for that? Will you make J.C. *your* Lord, allow Him to be *your* Savior?

That's God's heart for you, Christ giving Himself for you, was according to the will of God. Jesus said that like this, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*"<sup>4</sup> Again Jesus came, not because of anything we had to offer, but according to His Father's sovereign will to save you. There's nothing you can do to earn it, all you can do is humbly receive it. Salvation is a free gift of grace through faith. That God might be (Vs 5) glorified forever & ever. Amen.

You see salvation *benefits* you, but primarily it *glorifies* God. Therefore any teaching that adds to or takes away from salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone robs God of glory that's due Him & places it upon me... If I can do something that seals the deal or shores it up, than God doesn't really get *all* the glory, does He?

That's why we're so passionate about safeguarding the integrity of the gospel. Jesus paid it *all*, all to *Him* I owe. "The Person", our Lord J.C. "The Price", Him giving Himself for our sins, "The Purpose", that we might be delivered from this present evil age & God might be glorified forever & ever, amen? Amen.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 3:16-17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Prayer Points:**

God we thank You for raising up Paul to be the champion of grace. That he would viciously, & w/tenacity defend the integrity of the gospel. We thank You for Your heart toward us, Your love for us & that Your will is to deliver us from this present evil age that You might convey us into the Kingdom of the Son of Your Love. Change our hearts, change our lives as we journey through this book of Galatians. Spark revival in our hearts & we'll give You praise...

Listen, you've heard the gospel, you don't have to clean up your act, you don't need to quit doing this or start doing that to get right w/God. All you need to do is believe on the Lord J.C. & He'll take it from there. I'm not talking about an intellectual nod that He exists, but a submission of your heart; turning from your sin trusting in Him. Jesus shed His blood for you, suffered & died for you, that you might find, the forgiveness of sin, life in Him.