

## Let's Go Back to Grace—The Song of Galatians

**Text:** Galatians 1.1–5; John 8.32–36

**Theme:** Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to set us free from sin so we may live by God's grace

**Introduction — text to which I'd like to direct your attention: Galatians 1.1-5, pg. 1154**

- Read text & prayer

### Begin series in Paul's letter to churches in Galatia

- exceedingly important letter, book of Scripture
- no exaggeration: Magna Carta of Christian Liberty
- shows us how the grace of God in Jesus Christ enables a person to...
  - escape the curse of his or her sin
  - be delivered from unbearable weight of curse of the law
  - be empowered to live a new life
    - no longer in bondage to Satan or sin
    - nor to flaunt his or her newfound liberty
    - nor to simply live in anyway old way he or she wishes
- this freedom is a genuine freedom of mind & spirit through power of God

### Hope to spend a good deal of time in this letter

- Martin Luther loved Galatians so much
- once said of it: I am married to this letter
- and it became a mighty weapon in the reformation of God's church
- see ties to so many other portions of Scripture, both Old & New Testaments
- discover the grand themes of doctrine, both Old & New Covenants
- learn that the salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ is the indispensable foundation of our Christian existence

### This morning, I want to teach us all the song of Galatians

- you've heard me say it before: every book of Bible has a song, a melody, if you will
- if you learn to sing this book's song, you'll always know what Galatians is all about
- so, let me state right up front what this song is:

### The Song of Galatians:

- **Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to set us free from sin so we may live a life of obedience to God's law by God's grace**
- repeat that

### Goal of this message

- help you see how that came to be the song of Galatians
- discover why this book was written
- and then hear the melody of this song pull us to God & His glorious grace

*So, without further ado, let's take a look at the...*

#### I. BACKGROUND

- Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, and buried
- He was then raised on the third day
- forty days following this display of the power of God, He ascended into heaven

- after another ten days, the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers and inaugurated the church
- about two years after this, Stephen becomes the church's first martyr
- Saul of Tarsus begins a fierce persecution of Christians over the next several years
- 37 years after the birth of Christ, Saul is dramatically and dynamically converted to Christ
- approximately ten years after this, he and Barnabas head out on their first missionary journey
- from A.D. 47–49, they travel in the region of Galatia, eastern modern Turkey
- gospel is proclaimed, people are transformed, churches are planted
- after many thrilling events, Paul & Barnabas return to Antioch & then Jerusalem
- the church in Jerusalem hears tell of large numbers of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus
- need to determine how to fold them into the church
- sometime here, in A.D. 49, Paul receives word of significant issues in churches in Galatia
- so troubling are these concerns, he pens this letter
- so, written around 49–50 years after Christ's birth, barely one year after founding of churches
- churches largely involved in this were Psidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derby
- some scholars think this letter written later, perhaps during or after second missionary journey
- believe Paul went to northern Galatia and had to write to correct matters there
- problem with this:
  - never mentioned in Acts
  - no churches ever named in that far northern region
  - long distance, mountainous region, Paul's heart set elsewhere to the west
- so, I'm a Southerner—southern Galatian churches, probably earliest or second to James

That's the basic background to the letter

- we'll see more in detail as we walk through Galatians
- but this sets the stage for us now

*You can't help but see, as your read even the opening verses, that there is a...*

## **II. BIG PROBLEM**

- if you don't see it yet, you will today and in the weeks to come
- the great predicament here is not simply one of a difference of opinion
- it is not a matter of those who disagree on the timing of Christ's return
- nor is it like discussing the difference between presbyterian or congregational church gov't
- Paul's terse words don't come because some disagree with his policies
- nor is it, directly, because they just don't like Paul personally
- while this is true for those who came after him teaching something at variance with Paul
- it is not the primary concern which he must address in this letter
- let's consider the two key difficulties which he address right off the mark in ch. 1

### **1. Paul's apostolic authority**

- a group of men arrived sometime after Paul & Barnabas had planted these churches
- even after they returned through to strengthen & encourage them, these men arrived
- they threw into question Paul's apostleship
- creating doubt upon the reality of being an apostle
- casting dispersion upon his authority to even preach a credible gospel
- these were the attempts of this group of false teachers
- this would not be the first time Paul would have to seek to defend himself
- he does this in this earliest of his letters to any church by simply stating facts
- Paul is going to let the facts speak for themselves

- look at v. 1: **“Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...”**
- then again, in v. 10: **“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”**
- when we get into verse 11 and following, we’ll track this down in the book of Acts
- Paul’s authority was not self-derived, nor did it get conferred upon him by others
- his authority comes from God through Christ alone
- and this matters because it means the gospel is at stake

## 2. The Gospel

- think of it this way: if Paul is not rightly an apostle, then he has no authority as one
- if he has no authority in what he teaches, then his teaching is just his opinions
- therefore, they would be as valid as anyone else’s, right or wrong doesn’t matter yet
- opinions are opinions, whether well-informed or not, whether based on facts & in reality or not
- if this is the case, as whoever this group of people may be, then his gospel is not real nor genuine
- it doesn’t hold weight, it’s not a true gospel
- and if this is the case, then there must be something else needed
- the group that has caused a desertion in the churches is then quick to add what is needed
- the Law—you must uphold the law
- go ahead and believe in Jesus, but that will not stand on its own
- you Gentiles will need to get circumcised and follow our Jewish laws in order to be saved

### 1) A doctrinal poison

- hear Paul’s words in v. 6: **I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...**
- Paul is fearful that the gospel he preached would be ignored
- but note, it’s not the gospel that is even his largest concern
- he says it in this way: “If you leave the gospel behind, you leave God behind. You cannot have God without the gospel!”
- so Paul’s language is sharp, his concern is deep, and rightfully so
- imagine if you left your child in the care of someone else for a time
- you gave explicit instructions on foods they could eat as well as avoid
- you told them times, conditions, and so forth
- then when you return home, you discover they have given your child a meal
- but the problem is this: they mixed rat poison in with the food & life of child is at stake
- you wouldn’t spend a moment talking about what a tolerant person you are
- “Oh, well; I’m fairly broad-minded about these things, so I guess we’ll be all right.”
- there is no difference of opinions to be weighed out
- no, you’d be angry and rightfully so
- you’d be distressed, knowing something must be urgently done or life will be lost
- well, these are Paul’s spiritual children and he now has this very same concern

### 2) A serious problem

- the life in eternity is at stake here
- this isn’t a matter of whether to have elders or deacons
- whether a woman could be an elder or not

- not a matter of hymns or choruses only
- this is all about the gospel & if the gospel is lost, salvation is lost and God is not your Father
- rather, all that is left is that He will be your judge for all eternity
- so, yes, Paul is astonished, amazed, astounded
- something reprehensible has taken place and he can scarce take it in!
- he addresses this elsewhere in Galatians
- **“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.” (Galatians 3:1 ESV)**
- **“I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.” (Galatians 4:11 ESV)**
- **“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.” (Galatians 5:4 ESV)**

### 3) Confusion abounds

- we’ll see this, Lord willing, next Lord’s Day, but there is serious confusion about the gospel
- Paul can barely take it in: he knows there are false teachers abroad
- but to have these churches taken in so soon, to be corrupted so quickly...
- in vv 3–5, he gives more than just a greeting: he gives the clear gospel
- even as he opens his letter, he seeks to clarify the issue at stake
- **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Galatians 1:3-5 ESV)**
- salvation has been achieved for us, gained for us, entirely by what Christ has done for us
- salvation is a free gift of God to sinners
- all we do is to receive it
- nothing we can do to earn it
- nothing we can add to it
- nothing we may subtract from it
- Christ has gained salvation and gives it to us; this is the gospel of grace
- the gift of God is eternal life
- stop being confused by any who would change that singular truth

### 3. Has anything changed?

- it is sad to know that in nearly 2,000 years, the situation has not changed
- churches are in confusion, pastors fail miserably, Christians simply misunderstand gospel
- a gospel is preached which is no gospel
- a salvation is believed which has no power to save
- the question: what is the gospel? Has never been more relevant to us
- one recent survey of evangelical Christians found that only 6 of 10 believed that salvation is found in Christ alone
- a simple majority summarized the gospel as the Golden Rule: do unto others...
- does it bother you if you hear someone say, “Well, do you best; follow your heart”
- recently, the head of the largest church in the world said in a televised interview:
- all people are fundamentally good; only a few real bad ones; they might be sinners
- but all are essentially good—that’s how God sees them

### 4. Back to the Gospel

- we must know what the gospel is; being “kinda sure” will never do

- Paul will say again and again: you are saved by what Christ has done by His life, death, and resurrection—and nothing else!”
- if you ever say, “Salvation is believing in Jesus and...” just stop right there
- you’re about to enter into the Galatian heresy
- only thing I contribute to my own salvation is my own sin that makes it necessary
- only thing: my sin
- nothing in my hand I bring; only to Thy cross I cling
- that is what grace means

*This is what makes Galatians such an important study for us, because it will take us...*

### III. BACK TO GRACE

- let me tell you a story, another man told years ago...
- **“There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.” (Luke 15:11-16 ESV)**
- what do you do when you’ve made a mess of things in your life?
- where do you go when you’ve blown it big time with wife, husband, child, friend, church-goer?
- how do you respond when you find you’ve drifted from faith, compromised gospel, seemingly turned your back on God Himself?

#### 1. What some would tell you

- pull yourself up by your own bootstraps
- get up, dust yourself off and get back at it again
- take your lumps and move on
- or they’ll point you to the seven steps toward forgiveness
- the five essentials to healing your soul
- read this book in order to have your best life now
- if you just knew your purpose in life, you could be so much happier
- others might just tell you to live your life, stop letting others tell you how to live
- I’ve even known Christians who told me: don’t worry; we’re not under law, but under grace
- it only proves the point: I can do all things through a verse taken out of context!

#### 2. This truth is sufficient

- Paul had a singular message
- late in life, he summed it up this way
- **“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” (1 Timothy 1:15 ESV)**
- here, to summarize Galatians, Paul says:
- **Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient to set us free from sin so we may live a life of obedience to God’s law by God’s grace**
- instead of running all over the place in confusion & getting more confused
- we must do what the man in Jesus’ parable did: **“I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer**

worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” And while he was still a long way off, His father saw him...and ran and embraced him and kissed him...and said “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found”

- run to God, run back to grace through Christ Jesus

**Conclusion – this is the first, all-important lesson of Galatians**

- go back to grace from God through Christ alone
- it is the only way you can be rescued, delivered, and saved
- as you strive to live the Christian life, this is the lesson you must remember as well
- we must constantly go back to grace for it is the only way we can live an obedient life

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace!

What are these triumphs of his grace?

He breaks the power of canceled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free;  
His blood can make the foulest clean,  
His blood availed for me.