

Paul — Apostle of the Heart Set Free

Text: Galatians 1.1–5; Acts 9.10–16

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

Introduction — I'd like to draw attention to Galatians 1.1–5 once again this morning (Page 1154, pew Bibles)

- last week, we began singing the song of Galatians
- just by way of reminder, because I know so many of you remember clearly...!
- **Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to set us free from sin so we may obey God's law by God's grace**
- this is a much needed refrain: both for those ancient Galatian Christians and us today
- we'll see this more and more as we walk through the Apostle Paul's letter to them
- so, let's do that this morning as we hear from God's Word

Read Galatians 1.1–5

Prayer

Having heard God's Word read, let's first hear from...

I. THE GREETER

- Paul's opening here begins like most other letters in the N.T.
- we don't write letters much by hand anymore
- we rarely write them up on a computer
- texting and emails may be our chief form of getting in touch with others
- but the NT letters were much different
- rather than the simple, Dear John...
- they included the identity of the writer right off the bat
- then they—Paul here in Gal. 1—would tell to whom they wrote
- and then there would be a lengthier greeting

1. The identity

- Paul makes this quite easy: **Paul, an apostle**

1) Paul's designation

- his given name was actually Saul
- Saul, being of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin, was his Hebrew name
- Israel's first king, Saul, may have been his namesake
- but there could hardly have been a greater difference in the two Saul's of Scripture
- King Saul had a good start and a horrendous ending
- whereas Saul of Tarsus has a bad start but a grace-filled ending
- Saul's name gets changed, without any explanation, in Acts 13
- Acts 13.2, Saul and Barnabas are set apart as missionaries
- then, again without any reason given, in 13.13, Dr Luke simply says...
- "Now Paul and his companions set sail..."
- Paul is most likely his Roman name
- and in some ways, it is fitting since it means small
- God uses small, ordinary people to do great things in His name

2) Paul's duty

- then, Paul tells us of his duty: he is **an apostle**
- I'd like to spend a bit more time with this on another Sunday...
- but the word merely means “messenger” or “sent one”
- however, this title, is given to a unique group of men who met a unique set of qualifications
- these Apostles, and of course I hope you hear the capital “A” in my voice...
- these Apostles have no heritage, no succession, no one in that office today...period
- there are no modern-day Apostles
- but Paul was an apostle
- **“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,” (Romans 1:1 ESV)**
- **“Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,” (1 Corinthians 1:1 ESV)**
- Paul, set apart by God through Jesus Christ was sent to preach Christ crucified
- and this he did in the cities in southern Galatia, in the synagogues, to Jew and to Gentile
- when Paul describes himself thus, he is already, in the first opening words, putting others in their place
- there were men who came in to lead the sheep of Christ's fold astray, if that were possible
- they attacked Paul's authority by attacking his apostleship
- they claimed he wasn't a genuine apostle; he didn't meet the qualifications
- so Paul puts up a defense immediately, because the gospel is at stake
- again, Lord willing, I want to come back to this next Lord's Day
- I believe it is important for us to understand more fully what Paul is doing here
- I also am convinced, because we have several movements that claim apostleship today
- some have made inroads among churches geographically near to us
- and we must see—must know from God's Word—that who Paul was is unique to that day

We will return, next Sunday, to the remainder of what is in verse 1, but for now, let's consider...

2. The individuals

- **“and all the brothers who are with me.”**
- Paul always had traveling companions
- he followed the pattern of His Lord, never going out alone, but at least in twos
- on his first trip, he had with him, Barnabas and John Mark
- John Mark left for unknown reasons upon arrival in Pamphylia
- but there were others who would later travel with Paul
- Timothy, Titus, Silas, and many more

1) Their conversion

- these men were brothers in Christ
- they were of the same faith, same purpose, same conviction as Paul
- they knew who he was and could bear witness to his being an apostle of Christ Jesus
- these men were closer than family to him; they were united in Christ

2) Their consecration

- note as well that they are with him, which means they had been set apart to this great task
- Paul believed you needed to be set apart by a local church
- recognized as believers, but also with a special call to travel with the Apostle Paul
- this was a special task as well
- Paul was subject to much persecution: he had already been stoned at Lystra & left for dead
- he would bear tremendous animosity by Jewish leaders, again a mark of Jesus upon him

- any who traveled with him could expect to suffer the same
- so, these brothers didn't just hang around, they truly were with him in this calling

That's a brief look at the Greeter, Paul; let's move on to consider...

II. THE GREETED

• v. "...to the churches of Galatia"

- while Paul wrote this 1,975 years ago, it is as real for churches today as then
- but we need always to keep in mind who these believers were & the churches they had become

1. The churches

- those mentioned by Dr. Luke in Acts were Psidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe
- everywhere Paul went, he started churches—local assemblies of gathered believers
- the church is what Christ would build & the gates of hell would not prevail against her
- Paul would have known this, planted churches, and had great concern for each one
- this is exhibited here, even in some of the harshest words uttered in the NT
- and since this letter is written to churches—and a great deal applies to us today...
- ...then we had best take heed and avoid the same issues they did

2. The country

- Galatia, as I mentioned last Sunday encompassed a large area of what we know as Turkey
- the original portion of Galatia was north of where Paul traveled on his first leg
- but the Romans referred to the southern portion, along with the north, as Galatia
- it seems this is what Paul has in mind, especially since we do know where these churches were

So, the Apostle writes to the believers in these churches and he now gives them...

III. THE GREETING

- when Paul writes his greetings to the many churches to which he wrote...
- he filled them full of doctrine and theology
- this one is no exception, in fact, as his first, it sets the stage for all others
- but this one isn't just the great Apostle saying "Hello and greetings"
- even in this greeting, he extends the gospel, the true gospel, not another gospel

1. The grace in the greeting

• "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ"

1) grace

- "grace" was a common enough greeting in Paul's day
- but this is also Paul's way of reminding the Christians there of how they came to be so
- it is by grace, not by obedience to the Law
- it is by grace, not by their own making or choosing
- he would later write to the Ephesian church, just west of these groups of churches
- **"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV)**

2) peace

- peace always follows the greeting of grace, never the reverse
- it is due to grace that you now have peace with and from God

- **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1 ESV)**
- our souls are restless until we find our peace with God
- but this will not come apart from His grace being lavished upon us first
- and then, we know this peace: of heart, of soul, of mind
- and no doubt, these believers in Galatia will need both grace and peace
- Paul wastes no time bringing a scathing rebuke
- so he reminds them of the grace extended to them thru Christ and the peace they receive
- it would have been his prayer that they return to this grace & know this peace

2. The gift in the greeting

- as I mentioned, this is no ordinary greeting
- there is a gift that comes along with these words

1) the sin

- this comes in v. 4: **who gave Himself for our sins...**
- the greatest gift of all is Christ Jesus
- **““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 ESV)**
- Paul would have preached this to these people in their unbelief
- then God, by His Holy Spirit, would have convicted them of their sin & great need

2) the substitution

- but upon recognizing their great need, they would have stumbled into their inordinate inability
- and if they couldn't save themselves, then someone must do it for them
- this Christ, this one and only Son of God, “gave Himself for our sins”
- He died in their place, in our place, in your place, do you see?
- **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” (1 Peter 3:18 ESV)**
- such was the marvelous love of God
- **“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8 ESV)**
- **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)**

3) the salvation

- now we see the actual gift: **“to deliver us from the present evil age”**
- we are delivered from the wrath of God that would condemn us for all eternity
- we are rescued from this evil age
- this doesn't mean we are taken out of it—oh, glory that that would be
- it doesn't mean our lives become perfect in this world—another glory as well
- it does not mean that life turns are roses and cherries
- but it does mean we are safe from the curse of this world
- we will be kept from the judgment poured out upon this world when Jesus comes
- we are delivered

Free from the law, O happy condition,

*Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.*

Chorus:

*Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O friend, now believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*

*Now we are free, there's no condemnation,
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;
"Come unto Me," O hear His sweet call,
Come, and He saves us once for all.*

*Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O friend, now believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*

4) the submission

- all this is done according to the free sovereign grace and will of God
- "...according to the will of our god and Father..."
- all who are saved **"... were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."** (John 1:13 ESV)
- Christ submitted to the will of God to be our Substitute
- salvation is the longing of God for everyone
- but no one will be saved outside of the will of God

Paul can never keep from breaking into doxology, even here in...

3. The glory in the greeting

- **"to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen"**

1) the recipient

- Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men
- but there is coming a day when He will come back in great power and glory
- **"...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,"** (Philippians 2:10 ESV)
- all heaven sings, even this very moment, to bring glory to God who worked all His will
- oh, for the day when we join in that celestial song
- **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"**
- **"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"** (Revelation 5:12-13 ESV)

2) the givers

- this old wicked world does not wish to honor Christ
- but no one is more worthy and will receive more honor than Him

- and all the redeemed will praise Him forever and ever
- no matter what we may end up doing in the new heavens and on the new earth, we will praise Him

Conclusion – Some people experience what has been called “Buyer’s Remorse”

- they purchase an item they think they have wanted, maybe for a long time
- but then, when they have what they think they wanted, it turns out: they don’t want it
- it wasn’t what they expected, were led to believe, or it’s all wrong for many reasons

The Galatians appear ambivalent, at best, to Paul

- once enthusiastic, now they wondering if they got taken
- they have misgivings about the gospel proclaimed to them
- they have buyer’s remorse and are turning from that truth of the good news of Jesus Christ
- they are giving it up for another gospel, one that sounds easier
- I mean, all they need to do is get circumcised; just obey a couple of laws
- we all like “How To” manuals; we Americans are a very practical people
- tell us how it works and we’ll do it
- these Galatians and us: we’re not very far apart in reality

But that way leads death

- so we must go back to grace, return to the gospel, each and every day
- this is a letter to recovering Pharisees
- and that little Pharisee that resides in you and in me needs this message...all the time
- so, let’s go back to grace
- let’s sing 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
- when we run to the cross, we’ll bow down in humble adoration and worship
- we will know the glorious grace of God
- and we will give honor and praise to Him who delivered us from this present evil age.