



Lazybrook Baptist Church

GALATIANS: FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST • FREED BY GRACE • GALATIANS 1:1-5 •

6/8-13/2020

MAIN POINT

God's grace is not based on how we try to please Him but solely on His character and His work in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you typically react to change? Do you thrive on change, or does it make you nervous? What does this say about your personality?

What is the biggest life change you've experienced recently? What do you remember most about that experience? How did you handle the change?

Change is inevitable. In our jobs, families, relationships, church, and country, change swirls all around us. For many people change is far from welcome. The way that we respond to changes shapes our lives going forward. Today we will see that Paul experienced dramatic life changes as his story went from being one of the most feared enemies of Christianity, to one of its most prolific voices. We'll also be introduced to how that change came to be: by grace, not works.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Want to give your group a general overview of the book of Galatians? Check out this video from The Bible Project: <https://youtu.be/vmx4UjRFpOM>. They do a phenomenal job providing visual overviews for each book of the Bible.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:1-5.

PAUL, AN APOSTLE -- NOT FROM MEN OR BY MAN, BUT BY JESUS CHRIST AND GOD THE FATHER WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD -- AND ALL THE BROTHERS WHO ARE WITH ME: TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA. (VS. 1-2)

What does Paul's introduction say about his identity? With what authority was he writing? Why is this so important to understand?

Paul identified himself as an apostle, an authoritative position and calling of God. He identified himself as an apostle because of his understanding that it was only through God's power and authority that he could accomplish the purposes of God. No other aspect of Paul's life was as significant as who he was because of Jesus. As an apostle, Paul claimed the authority to declare and to defend the true gospel. No human being had asked Paul to be an apostle or assigned this task to him. His appointment and commission had come not from any individual but from Jesus Christ and God the Father. These words provide a firm foundation for Paul's message to the Galatians.

What does Paul's introduction say about Jesus Christ identity? Why is this so important?

Paul's statement in verse 1 not only affirms his apostolic authority but also the uniqueness of Christ ("*not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...*"). In addition to being fully human, Christ is fully divine (as evidenced by His unique relationship with God the Father and by the fact that He was raised from the dead). Thus, He is able to redeem us from the curse of the law and from the power of sin and to reconcile us with the living God. Christ's uniqueness as both fully human and fully divine is an essential component of the gospel. This truth, however, often becomes the target of ridicule and scorn by unbelievers.

The church in Galatia had just begun to grow, so it should come as no surprise that Satan sought to bring division, particularly using the false teachers of the Judaizers who we will talk about at a later time. Read this quote from David Platt about Satan's response to God moving amongst his people...

"Whenever God is moving in a powerful way in the church, the adversary will always work to interject doubts, discord, and division, so we must be on guard. As God takes us to deeper and

deeper places of abandonment to His and His cause, we must be diligent to keep grace at the center of everything, even of radical obedience.” – David Platt

In what ways do you think that Satan will try to interject doubts, discord, and division at Lazybrook Baptist Church as we begin to grow? How can we combat these schemes of the devil?

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS TO RESCUE US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF OUR GOD AND FATHER. TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN. (VS. 3-5)

Based upon this passage, what is the result of salvation? What is the source/basis of our salvation?

John Stott explains this very well when he says, *“The nature of salvation is PEACE, or reconciliation—peace with God, peace with men, peace within. The source of salvation is GRACE, God’s free favour, irrespective of any human merit or works, His loving-kindness to the undeserving. And this grace and peace flow from the Father and the Son together.” – John Stott*

On what things, other than God’s grace, do we try to base our salvation?

Explain the following statement: Everyone has legalistic tendencies. How do these legalistic tendencies undermine the gospel of grace? What’s the difference between legalism and zealous obedience?

Paul stated the truth that salvation is based on God’s grace and on what God has done in Jesus Christ. Paul’s message to the Galatians clearly applies to us as well. Our salvation is based on what God has done in Jesus Christ, not on our own merits or on anything we can do.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How, in your own life, have you seen that holding on to the message of salvation by grace through faith is difficult? What should you do in response to that difficulty?

What steps can you take to stand up for the gospel of Christ this week?

PRAYER

As you close, ask God to continually remind everyone of our personal, intimate relationship with Jesus and all the implications of His living in and working through us. Pray that we would live lives marked by the gospel every single day. Confess that we so easily turn to false gospels and care too deeply about what other may think. Pray for boldness to stand up for the gospel this week.

COMMENTARY

| GALATIANS 1:1-5

1:1. Paul is the author of the Book of Galatians refers to himself as an apostle to assert that his authority for speaking to the problems in the Galatian churches came from God, not men. God called him to be an apostle and sent him on the special mission of evangelizing the Gentiles. The opening of Galatians is unusual for Paul. In most of his letters, he begins with a thanksgiving for the recipients, but in Galatians he omits this customary praise. Why is this omission significant? Because Paul was alarmed that the Galatians had fallen into the lethal trap of legalism. He was astonished that they questioned his authority as an apostle. Therefore, as a surgeon going after the tumor, Paul avoided small talk and cut in immediately to declare his case. Since his message and apostleship were being questioned, Paul began, even in this greeting, to present his divine credentials. No human institution nor any individual sent him. Jesus Christ, the resurrected One, along with God the Father was the only reason he became an apostle to the Gentiles.

1:2 Paul referred to all the brothers who are with me to show that he was hardly alone in the views he expressed in this letter. This letter was not only from Paul but also from all the brothers with him. Paul's companions included Barnabas and others from Antioch (see Acts 13:1). Paul mentions these recognized coworkers to legitimize further his apostleship and authority. Throughout this chapter Paul cites his association with the apostles and key church leaders as a way to substantiate his credibility and apostleship. Paul and his associates addressed this letter to the various churches in the Roman province of Galatia. The phrase the churches of Galatia indicates this letter was to be read in multiple congregations, as was Revelation (Rev 1:4,11).

1:3. "Grace" and "peace," which begin and ends every one of Paul's NT letters, summarize Paul's gospel of salvation. Grace, God's unmerited favor, is the source of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). When

a person believes in Jesus Christ, he or she receives salvation and peace with God, others, and self. Thus, grace leads to peace. Peace represents life in its wholeness or fullness, a life filled with a sense of satisfaction that only God can give.

1:4 Grace not only saves us from the penalty of sin; it also delivers us from the power of sin. We have been rescued from the enslaving power of this present evil age—a world ruled by Satan, full of cruelty, tragedy, temptation, and deception. Later in chapter 5 Paul will explain how grace works in our lives to give us this power over sin's slavery. Christ accomplished the victory over sin through the voluntary gift of himself to us in dying on the cross. This was all according to God's eternal plan to bring us salvation.

Along with the resurrection, Christ's redemptive death is the heart of the gospel message (1Co 15:1-4). Paul emphasized both the death and resurrection of Christ at the beginning of Galatians (Gal 1:1) to begin to counteract the message they had recently heard which claimed salvation came through "the works of the law" (2:16). Rescue us from this present evil age looks ahead to being freed from "slavery" to "the elemental forces of the world" through Christ (4:3-4), and previews the "new creation" wording in 6:15.

1:5 A key issue between the competing views of the gospel (salvation by grace vs. salvation by works) has to do with who gets the glory. Works-salvation provides a basis for a person to "boast" (6:13; Eph 2:9), while appreciation for the undeserved grace of God prompts the believer to give God alone the glory forever. Forever we will praise God for His grace which saves us from both the penalty and power of sin.