

## **Galatians 1 - Week 2**

Good morning everyone we will continue with our study on the book of Galatians and just a quick recap from last week - we heard from verse 1 "Paul, an apostle" and we asked the question – what is an apostle? We said this;

The word **apostle** comes from the Greek word **apostelló** in the Bible - meaning a 'messenger or one sent on a mission'. It's a very simple term and anyone in the strictest sense of the word can be an apostle, anyone that is sent out on a mission that is.

But what makes Paul and the 12 apostles unique is - **Who Sent Them** and for these men, their commission **was directly from the Lord Jesus Christ**. We looked at the 3 signs of a true apostle:-

**No.1** - They have had a physical encounter with Jesus and they have been sent out personally by Him.

**No.2** - Their ministry is marked by signs wonders and miracles - raising the dead healing the sick.

**No.3** - (and this where many of modern day 'apostles' would fall down!) Their lives are marked by suffering, hardship and persecution on a scale we can only imagine. And it often ends in martyrdom. .

Now you may say what is the importance of all this? - going into such detail about an apostle!

Well number 1 - let it serve as a warning to the dangers of our modern day 'self appointed apostles' we should judge them by these 3 credentials, but secondly let's go back to verse 1;

*"Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead and all the brothers and sisters-with me"*

But let us read that verse in conjunction with verse 11.

*"I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ"*

You can see quite clearly from the beginning of our chapter that Paul was making it patently obvious to his readers, the Galatians church, but also those readers throughout the centuries since.

**The divine authority he had been given but also the divine authority of the message he is bringing to them is all directly from God.**

So what we have here is; the apostle Paul was laying the groundwork, the foundation at the very beginning of this first chapter in 2 ways:-

**Firstly - That he himself** has been given a supernaturally unique mission from God.

**But secondly - The message he was bringing** is of supernatural origin as well.

When we open our Bibles we must remember the truth of **2 Timothy 3:16**:

**"All Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness",

And when we open our bibles we must remember also, the messenger, the authors of the Bible have been given this divine authority. This unique once in an age commission that has never been equalled before or since.

I will remind you of the first of the Statements of faith in our Baptist constitution which says:

"We accept the Divine inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as originally given. We accept its trustworthiness and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct".

We can trust it completely, with absolutely confidence as a guide and instructor in our lives in everything we do, everything we think, the decisions we make, should come into submission to this word. We should test everything by it, and this is the message from our first verse, **because it comes directly from God**

I must not dwell on this point anymore, we can move on - but we must stay in verse 1!

And we find this statement here "Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, **who raised him from the dead**"

It's almost as if Paul casually slips in this fundamental truth '**raised him from the dead**'! But it's so essential to our faith we can't let it pass by without comment.

It is what our faith is built on and as we can see again he is laying another foundation in this very first verse. And that is 'Jesus Christ is raised from the dead' **The resurrection is the chief a cornerstone of our faith.** Take that away we have nothing.

Friends - we are here today because a dead man is alive. Others used to say of the early church to describe Christians - '**they believe a dead man is alive**'. It was said of Paul, in Acts 25:19, when hearing his defence against the Jews - '*Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion **and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.***'

In a nutshell, the foundation of our faith, is that Jesus was crucified, died, rose again from the dead and is alive today. Paul said – “*if Jesus was not raised, our faith would be futile. We should be pitied among all men*” (1 Corinthians 15:17)

If Jesus was not raised - we may as well all go home now and sink into a deep depression and a pointless life, **but He has risen! He has conquered death** – and for this reason, so have we! We can lift our heads up and say:-

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O Death is your victory? Where, O Death is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55)

We must go on - and finally we get out of verse 1! - Verse 3 reads, “**Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”

Why **grace and peace** you may ask? It seems this was a normal Christian greeting in the early days of the church.

Is this just a common general greeting from the apostle? Like we would say ‘good morning’ or ‘how are you’? **No, not at all!** I have found with the scriptures every word has value and meaning, every word is divinely inspired, nothing is casual talk, and it’s not the first time he uses this greeting.

“**Grace and peace** to you from”

He uses it frequently, we find it in Corinthians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Ephesians 1:2 and many other places,

**(Martin Luther) “These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity.”**

To put it more bluntly ‘**Grace and peace to you**’ is the gospel in 5 words.

First, **Grace**. Grace is the word which best summarises the Christian gospel as a whole.

Grace, which comes from the Greek New Testament word *charis*, The *New World Dictionary* provides this theological definition of grace: “The unmerited love and favour of God toward human beings’

It is God's unmerited favour. It is kindness from God that we don't deserve. There is nothing we have done for it, nor is there anything we can do to earn this favour. It is a gift from God.

We have to remember there are 2 types of graces in our world; ‘**common grace**’, which is universal for all - God provides many blessings for His creation, including food and shelter, sunshine and rain, the restraining of evil, and countless natural blessings to all mankind.

But Gods ‘special grace’ or ‘saving grace’, means, intimacy, friendship with Him, it means eternal life with Him forever; however it is limited to those who trust in Christ alone, through faith alone.

The truth is that we only exist on this planet through God's grace. The reason the sun shines and the rain falls is due to His grace, the air that we breathe and the food that we eat. Our salvation, our standing with God, and our eternal future with Him. It is all because of His grace.

The word **peace** in Paul's greetings is the Greek version of the Hebrew word **shalom**. And *shalom* is a massive concept with many blessings attached to it.

We tend to measure *peace* through absence of conflict... for example we say there is peace in Northern Ireland because there is no longer a military conflict there, or when two people have had an argument and they make it up, we say, there is 'peace between them'.

But this word peace (*shalom*) used here goes way beyond just to a lack of conflict, it means a total wholeness, wellness, harmony with God - God has poured out his abundant blessing on us. If only we could grasp this truth.

I think this 'peace and grace' are summed up in Ephesians 1 (3-10)

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love*

*<sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

*<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace*

*<sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,*

*<sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ".*

Let's go onto verse 4, it says; "**He gave Himself for our sins**"

He gave - but it's a 2 way giving. We know from John 3:16 "**that God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**". Yet God the Father was not the only giver; Jesus also **gave he gave himself up** .

**So Jesus gave Himself up for our sins but also God the Father gave Him up for our sins.**

This is the atonement in a nutshell. I could do a complete sermon on this, but notice please, it's here it in the first few verses, there is another fundamental truth of the Christian faith.

But what did Jesus give himself up for? It says '**For our sins**'.

Make no mistake **we are all sinners**. Romans 3:23 says "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*"

But people today don't want to be told they fall short of anything!

The **word sin** is so unpopular today we are almost seeing its complete removal from the vocabulary of our culture and from the English language.

People make excuses today about all sorts of behaviours, and say it's their upbringing, they have been disadvantaged in childhood, they are not responsible for their actions, people think by putting a 'medical or psychological label' on something they are justified in doing it or living in that way.

Now don't get me wrong I think our behaviours can be influenced by many factors, but we need to be honest with ourselves and get back to calling sin - sin and being held responsible for our actions and choices - until we do that we will never get right with God.

He continues in verse 4 to say 'rescues us from the present **evil age**' 'evil age' what does he mean by that? We have to remember that Satan is 'prince of this world' and as we found out from the book of Job he is "roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it. (Job 1:7)

We have to say; the systems, the philosophies, the practises of our world are evil, they exclude God. It says in Ephesians 6 '*our battle is not against flesh and blood but the spiritual powers of evil in heavenly places*'.

We have to say as well this world is not our home, our kingdom; we are 'pilgrims passing through' (1 Peter 1:1)

And what Paul is saying Christ has rescued us from this evil age.

He rounds off this section of by saying '*according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen*".

I am just amazed how many incredible and important truths, how many fundamental church doctrines are in these few opening verses and here's another one.

**"According to the will of our God and Father". His will never be thwarted,** we may see the world crumbling all around us, but we know as it says in the Lord's Prayer 'thy kingdom come thy will be done in earth as in heaven'

He will have His way, He is sovereign over all - everything in the end will be as God has planned it to be.

### **Isaiah 14:27**

*"For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back"?*

And finally the great apostle brings this section to an end.

According to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> **to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.**

It's not about us, everything we do, the lives we live, the service we bring

It's all about His glory it all returns to Him.

**I will leave you with some words of that great hymn 'Thine be the glory'**

'Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;  
endless is the victory, thou o'er death hast won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave clothes where thy body lay.

*Refrain:*

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory, thou o'er death hast won'*

*In response let's sing it together.*

Amen

*Tony Troy*

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