

Message #2

Galatians 1:1-5

We have all had the experience of driving and seeing flashing lights up ahead. When you spot those flashing lights, you immediately realize something is wrong. Actually those flashing lights are a positive warning that something unusual or even dangerous is happening.

This is the way the book of Galatians opens. We see flashing lights and it indicates something is wrong. Typically when Paul opens a letter he likes to take some time to give a thanksgiving or express some commendation or praise; but not in Galatians. There is something about the beginning of this book that says something is seriously wrong.

Paul was under attack and his grace doctrine was under attack. There were agents of Satan who were coming into the church shortly after Paul left and they were trying to discredit him and his ministry. The real underlying goal of all of this was to stop the teaching of grace. **The doctrine of grace is not the doctrine of Satan; it is the precious doctrine of God.** Satan does not want grace taught. Satan's doctrine is a doctrine of religion, denominations, works, laws, creeds, and legalism. Paul's doctrine of grace stood against this entire religious network. **Satan knows that one of the best ways to eliminate the doctrine of grace is to attack the credibility and the authority of the one teaching it.**

That is exactly what the Judaizers were doing and that is why the introduction to Galatians is so unique. Paul begins the letter strong. He comes out of the gate as fast as a race horse and he doesn't stop until he gets to the end. Paul is very emotional in writing this letter, but he does not let his emotions affect his doctrine or logic and what he ends up writing is the "Manifesto of Grace and Christian Liberty." In the opening five verses what we learn is this:

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE MADE PAUL AN APOSTLE AND MADE THE GALATIANS BELIEVERS; AND GOD ALONE RECEIVES THE GLORY FOREVER FOR ALL HE HAS DONE.

Paul is very clear here, God's grace does it all and God's grace gets all the glory. No works, no religion, no religious laws, no legalistic codes get the glory; God's grace gets it.

As Paul launches into this letter, there are four opening realities he states:

OPENING REALITY #1 – Paul is an Apostle. 1:1

The doctrine of the pure grace of God did not come from some teacher of religion; it came from an apostle. The actual word "apostle" means sent messenger. This word carries with it the idea that one is fully authorized and commissioned by God as an official messenger (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 54-55).

Now to be an apostle one had to be specifically chosen by Jesus Christ and one had to have actually physically seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22; 2:32; 3:15; I Cor. 9:1). He had to be given a specific, supernatural gift that enabled him to do certain apostolic, sign-type miraculous things (II Cor. 12:12). This gift was critical to the foundation of the Church and the Grace Age (Eph. 4:11).

Paul's apostleship was under attack and the Judaizers and Galatian legalizers were claiming that Paul was not an apostle like the other twelve and they were trying to discredit him and his message and authority.

Don't be surprised if when you are grasping grace and growing in grace, someone comes along who tries to discredit you and discredit the one who taught you. Relatives, friends, religious people may attack your grasp of grace. They may want to pull you back under the O.T. law or pull you back to a focus on works. Don't let that affect you because they did the same thing to Paul.

Now there are two opening facts that Paul brings out about his apostleship:

Fact #1 - Paul's apostleship did not originate from men. **1:1a**

Do not miss this point; all those who claim they are apostles today are all man-made; not God-made. Any who claim they are an apostle today have made themselves to be apostles; God did not do it. In other words, anyone who says they are an apostle has its originating source as men.

You can go to the Bitterroot Mountains in Montana and Idaho and actually walk or ride on the trails that were once used by Lewis and Clark. You could actually get on a trail and tell people you are part of the Corps of Discovery with Lewis and Clark. But it would all be a lie. So it is with those who claim to be an apostle today. It is all a lie.

But in Paul's case, he was an apostle and his apostleship came directly from God. In fact, Paul uses two different prepositions "from" and "through" to stress this point.

The first preposition "not sent **FROM** men" means that Paul's point of departure into apostleship did not originate with any man, including himself. There was nothing human involved in Paul's apostleship because Paul himself was not even looking to be an apostle. Jesus Christ stopped him on the road to Damascus and made him an apostle.

The second preposition "nor **THROUGH** the agency of man" stresses the fact that no movement toward apostleship had anything to do with any human agent. No human could say, "Well I pointed Paul to Jesus Christ and the result is he became an apostle."

Paul was not an apostle because he went to school or passed some human academic standard for becoming a religious leader.

He did not go to a theological institution and earn a degree and graduate and now could say I am a qualified apostle. **No human, even himself, had anything to do with this.**

Fact #2 - Paul's apostleship did originate from God. **1:1b**

The conjunction “**AND**,” which joins Jesus Christ and God the Father, is a coordinating conjunction and not subordinating conjunction. **This point clearly and grammatically establishes the co-equality and deity of God the Father and God the Son.**

Don't miss what is stated here—Paul was made an apostle by a decision of two Persons of the Trinity—God the Father and God the Son. This whole process of Paul becoming an apostle was fully authorized by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul brings up the resurrection for a couple of reasons:

- 1) This was one of the requirements for being an apostle—see resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22/I Cor. 9:1; 15:8)
- 2) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that which proves the doctrine of justification (Rom. 4:25).

This resurrection proves that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ, not works and not law.

Paul was an apostle because God made him one.

H. A. Ironside said that Jerome concluded that there are four classes of men in ministry:

- 1) There are men who have been put in ministry, not through men but directly by God—apostles.
- 2) There are men who are put in ministry indirectly by God through agency of men—most today.
- 3) There are men who are put in ministry by men and not God—other men put in ministry.
- 4) There are men who are put in ministry not by God nor by men—they put themselves in it.

Paul was truly one put in ministry by God alone. No human had anything whatsoever to do with his apostleship.

OPENING REALITY #2 – Paul is not alone. **1:2a**

This may seem like such an insignificant point but it really is not. There were lots of brethren “with” Paul. Paul had fellow soldiers who were with him and who would fight to defend him. In other words, many brethren recognized that Paul was a gifted apostle who was presenting the true grace Gospel.

It is interesting that he does not name who these people are because his apostleship or message does not need their support, but he has their support. Paul wanted to startle these fickle Galatians by reminding them there are lots of people who can testify of my gift and my grace teaching.

If a person is gifted by God, many of God's people will realize that point. When one is teaching the pure grace of God, there will be many people who will come to your defense because they can testify of how the teaching of God's grace has dramatically affected them.

Paul was not some "lone ranger" saying he was an apostle and teaching grace. There were many people who could back that up because that was reality. Many were "with" Paul.

OPENING REALITY #3 – Paul is writing to churches in Galatia.

This is critical to see—**Apostolic grace teaching is written to the church and will come alive in the church when it is taught.** God's truth has been written so it may be taught in the churches. Galatian churches included Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Each of them needed Paul's instruction of grace.

The Word of God is dynamic when taught in church. It is written for this purpose.

OPENING REALITY #4 – Paul writes his opening message to the churches. **1:3-5**

Now there are three main opening messages that Paul has for the church:

Message #1 - The saving grace that brought us into a peaceful relationship with God is from God. **1:3**

The grace of God is that work of God which saves us from our sins, which we did not earn, do not deserve and do not merit. **Grace is completely anti-works.** It is so fitting that Paul starts here because there were those who were attacking this very point. They were saying that in order to be right with God, you had to keep the O.T. law and legalistic codes. Paul says the grace that actually saves you and brings peace and tranquility to your life is not from you; it is from God.

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ fully authorized our grace salvation. We had nothing to do with any of it. Chrysostom said the reason why Paul brings this up in **verse 3** is that he wanted to stress the fact that their relationship with God did not come by law or legalism, but by God's grace.

We may observe that law and legalism will offer you no grace and therefore will never produce peace. You focus on O.T. law and legalism and you will be in war with yourself the rest of your life. You focus on grace and you will soar like an eagle and be set free from your sin and you will have tranquility in your conscience.

Message #2 - The saving grace of God, which brought us into a peaceful relationship with God, is solely due to the grace work of the Lord Jesus Christ. **1:3-4**

You will not ever find peace in your conscience until your sin is forgiven and your sin will not be forgiven until you come to terms with the grace of God found in Jesus Christ. This opening is powerful. We are not in a right relationship with God by our works or law-keeping or legalistic codes or man-made traditions. Everything we have in our relationship with God is due to Jesus Christ. The entire grace package is found in Him.

There are three grace Christological facts Paul points out:

Christological Fact #1 - Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins. **1:4a**

Now carefully think about that pronoun “our” and put it to yourself, not someone else. Jesus Christ gave Himself “for” us, which means He went to that cross to take our place and he went to that cross in our stead. He is not on that cross for Himself; He is on that cross for us.

The cross work of Jesus Christ is stressed many times in Galatians (2:19-21; 3:1, 13; 4:5; 5:11, 24; 6:12-14). Why is that? Because this is the only place where one may be saved from his sins. By the way, the noun “sins” is plural. We haven’t just sinned and missed the mark a couple of times in life; we have fallen short multiple times. This is why we cannot be saved by our works.

Grace that saves is only found at this cross. Our salvation is not earned by our works or efforts. We cannot eliminate our sins by trying to keep the O.T. law and do the best we can. All people in this world need to answer the question—“Why did Jesus Christ come into this world and die on that cross?” The answer is as a sin offering for us. Christ died on that cross to save us from our sins—big sins, bad sins, terrible sins, horrible sins, perverted sins, and evil sins. He did not die on that cross for good people, but for sinners. This is pure grace.

Christological Fact #2 - Jesus Christ gave Himself to rescue us. **1:4b**

Jesus Christ came into this world as a rescue operation. He came to emancipate a bunch of sin slaves. He came into this world to rescue us “from this present evil age.” Now don’t miss this. **This age is evil.** It is evil in its goals and objectives. This world is given to greed, lying, cheating and immoral behavior. We live in a world in which many esteem animal life above human life. People kill for drugs; children are abused; babies are aborted and much of this happens without any remorse. Relationships are twisted and demented—men with men and women with women. This is an evil age.

Perhaps one of the most evil of all forms of thinking is in religion. Humans who live in this evil age and have done evil stuff think they can save themselves. The truth is we need someone who can rescue us from this evil age and save us from our own sins and the one, the only one who can do that is Jesus Christ.

Without Jesus Christ you are trapped in evil. The moment you believe on Him you are rescued. Our liberation does not come from our works; it comes from Christ's work. It is His grace and He came here to rescue people just like us.

Christological Fact #3 - Jesus Christ gave Himself for us according to the will of God. **1:4c**

Make no mistake about this point; you and I are saved by God's will, not our will. If you could analyze this entire verse in Greek, you would see that the grammar only supports a thesis that God's grace and God's will are the only things that saves us. There is no hint that you may be saved by your will, by your works or by your keeping the Law. It is all of God's grace and God's will.

Martin Luther said this is the hardest doctrine to get into human hearts. The world does not understand this doctrine. It boasts of "free will" in light of reason of good works and of keeping law. The Word of God boasts of the grace of God and the will of God.

Message #3 - God gets all the glory forever for the grace that saves sinners. **1:5**

The grace of God that saves us is not about our works; our law-keeping; our rules; it is all about God's glorious grace work. God says in Isaiah 42:8 that "I will not give my glory to another." In grace salvation God gets all the glory and man gets zero glory.

If you want to be free from your sin and if you want a real relationship with God, don't look at yourself or your rule book or your religious codes or laws; look at the glory of God found in the cross of Jesus Christ. For it is there where grace is found.