

Back to Grace

Galatians 1:1-5 (ESV) ¹ Paul, an apostle - not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead - ² and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul's heart was filled with the love of God. His heart broke for unsaved souls, and he did all that he could to win people over to Christ. Once they were saved, Paul poured his life into them. Paul disciplined the saved through his writings, teachings, preaching and one on one conversations. He did this because his heart was filled with the love of God. It is the love of God in us that motivates us to share Christ with the lost and disciple those who are saved, helping them to grow in the grace of God and the love of God. Paul was forgiven much by God and therefore Paul loved much.

Before he was saved, Paul hated the Christians and had the Christians imprisoned, put to death by stoning. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, saved Paul by grace giving to Paul the faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Filled with the love of God Paul became the greatest witness of the Gospel of any human being in the history of the church. Paul was completely motivated by God's love.

Application #1. Please ask God to flood your heart with love for the unsaved and for the unchurched. With a heart filled with love it is difficult to be quiet about your faith in Christ and your life in the church. A transition has been made in my relationship with our children. They are all adults, and the relationship has changed big time. Our talks have grown deeper and now they instruct me as much or even more than I instruct them. My heart is flooded with love for our children so much so that I cannot help but call them because the love is overflowing, and I want to connect with them. If they do not answer I leave a message because I have to show, display, exhibit that love to them and not just keep it to myself. Don't we burst with love for our children?

Paul's heart bursted with God's love for the unsaved and for the saved. He had to give that love away and that he did until he took his last breath. May God fill our hearts with God's love for the lost, for the unchurched and for those in the church. When this occurs our days of being silent about the faith will be over and the church will grow like never before. May the grace of God do this in all our lives from the youngest to the eldest.

Verse 1. ¹ *Paul, an apostle.* The Apostle Paul was called, sent, commissioned by God to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people in general and to the Gentiles in specific. The term apostle used here is unique in ways that need to be mentioned. From a wider group of disciples, Jesus handpicked twelve to be apostles and sent them out to preach and teach in his name. (John R.W. Stott. *The Message of Galatians*, pg.13). Every Christian can be called a disciple or a saint but only those handpicked by Jesus in the Gospels and last of all the book of Acts can be called apostles such as Matthias, James, half-brother of Jesus, and last of all Paul. The apostles were a small and unique group and once they breathed their last, that particular gift and office no longer existed. The apostles were given special abilities by God that have not been seen since they died. Their writings are considered the very Word of God, inspired by God, and authoritative over all the church. The church is not the authority over the Bible. The Bible is the authority over the church. If anyone claims to be an apostle today, he or she has an extremely high view of oneself and is a false teacher.

Paul begins this letter by going right to the main point of the letter. He establishes right away his authority as that of a true apostle, not picked by another apostle or any man for that matter but through the highest of power, through Jesus Christ and God the Father. There is no higher power than God. So right away Paul is pulling rank because he had to. False teachers had invaded the Galatian churches making Paul out to be an imposter. Paul was forced to defend his apostleship and was right to do so as inspired by the Holy Spirit. I so believe one of

the reasons Paul's ministry was so successful is he was absolutely firm in his identity as an apostle of Jesus Christ. "Paul, an apostle." He was not shy about this and boldly proclaimed it.

His apostleship meant he was called by God the Father, and God the Son to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. *"¹ Paul, an apostle - not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."* The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the basis of the Christian faith. If there was no resurrection, there would be no Christianity and Paul witnessed the resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. This is when and where Paul received his position as an apostle picked by God the Son and God the Father. Paul was no imposter out to make money and to be liked by people and become famous. No, he was God's man sent primarily to lead the Gentiles to Christ and plant churches wherever he went.

Application #2. When you know who you are in Christ, you are free to soar for Christ. When you are firm in your identity in Christ, you have confidence to speak for Christ and be the Christian witness God calls you to be using the spiritual gifts that God has given to you to build up the church. Paul could be so bold because he was so sure of his calling from God. I do not expect any of us to be a Paul. No one has been a Paul since Paul. But we can all be sure and certain of our Christian identity, living our lives in Christ. Then we too will do great works of ministry and see people come to faith in Jesus Christ and the church grow. I have books in my office I will gladly show you that tells you exactly who you are in Jesus Christ. You are a saint. You are completely forgiven. You no longer have to carry guilt or shame. You are born again. You are a child of God, adopted into God's family. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are a big shot, a priest, a friend of Christ's, you are complete and secure in Christ, hidden with Christ in God, a citizen of heaven, plus a lot, lot more. When you know who you are in Christ, there is no stopping you in the way you live for Christ.

Paul loved the churches in Galatia. Paul founded those churches. Unfortunately, Paul heard there were false teachers leading the Christians away from the Gospel of grace to the Law of works in order to be saved. The false teachers were the Judaizers, Jews who wanted to put the entire law on the backs of the converts to Christianity. Jesus' death on the cross was not enough for their salvation. They had to follow the dictates of the law in order to be right with God. This meant the early churches planted by Paul were falling away from the grace of God to a false religion, a religion of works. This broke the heart of Paul.

Verse 2. - ² *and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia.* Every Christian has been born again into the family of God. That means we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are one church. One family worldwide with all the true believers. In these last few years studying Paul I have learned that Paul never did anything just by himself. He always worked with other Christians, a team of missionaries, pastors, and evangelists. Paul was no loner, an island unto himself. He longed for deep Christian fellowship and encouragement from his brother and sisters in Christ.

Application #3. Please read the book I am asking you all to read during Lent.

“Thank You, I’m Sorry, Tell Me More.” We are living in a day of strained relationships at work, at home, at church, and in our neighborhoods, especially since covid hit. This book shows you how to be kinder and how to improve all your relationships. God never calls you to live the Christian life all alone just to yourself. Christianity is a community religion. God calls us weekly to gather in His name and worship him. You cannot worship God collectively all by yourself. Those at home, if possible, we would love to have you back here in worship. You are missed. Paul was never a loner.

Verse 3. ³ *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

There are times that my temper gets the best of me, at the worst of times, especially when I am exhausted, hungry, and stressed. I tend to panic. Paul sees the church at Galatia and knows

the church is going down the tubes forsaking the Gospel of grace. In this verse Paul is calling the churches in Galatia back to grace, God's grace. Jesus was raised from the dead. The entire price for our salvation was paid for in full when Jesus died on the cross and the resurrection and ascension proves Jesus words to be true. "It is finished." Every bit of grace that comes our way come to us through the work of Jesus on the cross. Following a list of rules does not cause us to enter the Kingdom of God. It is God's grace that He bestows upon us that makes us right with God through faith and gives to us the peace with God and the peace of God.

Instead of blowing his temper Paul offers grace and peace hence the sermon title, Back to Grace." Dr Stott writes, "The nature of salvation is peace, or reconciliation, peace with God, peace with each other, peace within. The source of salvation is grace, God's free favor, 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" (ibid. pg16). If the people choose to follow the false teachers and live by works, they will lose their peace with God that was purchased for believers by Christ's atoning death on the cross (James Montgomery Boice, The Expositors Bible Commentary Vol 10. pg. 426).

Application #4. Friends, going back to grace is a way of staying close to Jesus.

We all sin. We all blow it. We even begin to doubt and neglect the word of God. Please quit beating yourself up. Quit trying to earn God's favor. God's grace is sufficient to save you and to keep you safe in Christ forever. Let us all go back to grace. Quit working so hard to achieve what Christ already achieved for you on the cross. God's grace through faith in Christ is the gateway to a life of peace. God's peace is the end of our strife.

Verse 4 "*4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*" We live in a day where acts of kindness and love are appreciated more than ever because the world has grown cold in my estimation. Take one look

at the cross and you never have to ask how much God loves you. He gave His life for you. What more can He give? He took all of your sins upon Himself and made you right with God by giving to you His righteousness. It is His finished work that saves us, not our works. Jesus took care of everything on the cross. Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient. The Judaizers were absolutely wrong, and it is Paul's goal to prove that.

God has removed us from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light. We have been delivered from this evil age according to the will of our God and Father. God has rescued us from the wickedness of this world. Every single Christian has the ability through Christ to no longer let the wickedness, the evil, the clamor of this age to run our lives. We live to the beat of a different drummer, living in the light and being light, being salt, and showing our love for Jesus by the way we love one another. We think differently. **Application #5. We have an eternal perspective ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**