

Grace Isn't Dead
It's all about HIS Grace
Galatians 1:1-5

Introduction: What's all about His grace? The Bible's very clear answer would be EVERYTHING; all of it! As such, right out the gate, in the introduction of the book that some scholars believe to be the first book authored in the New Testament, Paul makes it real clear that the same commitment of God to save us, is the same commitment of God to grow us, mature us, use us and give us life – His GRACE. In addition, because it's all about God's grace, Paul makes it abundantly and bluntly clear that, by definition, the only way to access and experience it, is through faith. As such, the definitions of the words 'grace' and 'faith' are two of the most central definitions in Christian doctrine, so much so, that to diverge from their orthodox definition is considered heresy. The definitions of these two terms dictate our experience in a relationship with God and define our orientation with His promises.

However, since the church began, false teachers have gone out into the world proclaiming what they claim to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ “by grace through faith,” but they do so with redefined terms! Some redefine Jesus Christ as someone other than the eternal Son of God in the Bible; some redefine the terms 'grace' and 'faith'; and others go for broke and do both! Amazingly however, it took little time for all this to begin. As a matter of fact, when you read the book of Acts, opposition to how the Bible defines these three terms began almost immediately!

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas set out on a missionary journey from Antioch in Syria, which is north of Judea, to preach the Gospel in an area on our map called Turkey. They first went to the port city of Seleucia, then from there they set sail to the island of Cyprus, landed in Salamis and traveled westward across the island preaching the Gospel. They then left from Paphos to sail back to the mainland, landing in Perga which is in the western part of the country we know as Turkey. From there they did a big loop which included going through cities and towns in a Roman Province called Galatia.

Below is some history on the people and the region known as Galatia, as well as a little on the debate of who the specific churches are that Paul is writing.

About the year 278 b.c. a large body of Gauls or Kelts, who had previously invaded and ravaged Greece, Macedonia, and Thrace, crossed over into Asia Minor. Their coming was not—at least not altogether—an unwarranted intrusion, for they arrived as a result of an invitation that had been extended to them by Nicomedes, king of Bithynia. So, here they were, with their wives and children, occupying the very heart-land of Asia Minor, a broad belt extending northward from the center (see accompanying sketch). They belonged to three tribes: the Trochmi, Tectosages, and Tolisbogii, with whom are associated the cities, respectively, of Tavium, Ancyra, and Pessinus. All three of these tribes were *Galli*, that is, Gauls (“warriors”), also called *Galatae*, that is, Galatians (“nobles”). They rapidly gained the mastery over the native

population of “Phrygians,” of mixed ancestry, devotees of the ancient and impressive religion of Cybele. For a long time, due to constant raids into adjacent districts, the boundaries of the Gallic domain remained fluid, but the newcomers were finally forced by the Romans to live in peace with their neighbors and to remain within the limits of their own territory. In course of time, as happens often in such cases, the Gauls amalgamated with the earlier population, adopted their religion, but in most other respects remained the dominant strain. Since the Gallic rulers were gifted with shrewdness they generally allied themselves with whoever happened to be “on top” in Rome. The latter reciprocated by allowing the former to be treated more as an ally than as a conquered nation. They were considered a “kingdom.” During the reign of their last king, Amyntas IV, their realm was even extended southward. Upon the death of Amyntas (25 b.c.) the Romans fell heir to this already somewhat enlarged kingdom and converted it into the Roman “province of Galatia,” which soon comprised, in addition to the *central and northern* territory, *to the south*: parts of Phrygia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, and Isauria ... It is understandable that the terms *Galatia* and *Galatians* could now be used in a twofold sense, as indicating either *a. Galatia proper* with its Gallic population, or *b. the larger Roman province*, inhabited not only by the Gauls as the dominant race in the central and north, but also by others farther south. When the term *Galatians* was used in the former sense, it naturally could not refer to those to whom the gospel had been proclaimed in the course of Paul’s first missionary journey. The churches of Antioch (Pisidia), Iconium (Phrygia), Lystra and Derbe (cities of Lycaonia), would then be excluded. On the other hand, when it was used in the latter sense it could very well refer to these early converts to the Christian faith about whom we read in Acts 13 and 14. All of this leads to the question: “To whom was Galatians addressed: to the churches of Pessinus, Ancyra, Tavium and surroundings, or to those in Antioch (Pisidian), Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and vicinity? Did the apostle use the term *Galatians* (3:1; cf. 1:2) in the racial (ethnic) or in the political sense? Was he thinking of people in the north or of those in the south?” For well-nigh two centuries there has been a sharp division of opinion with respect to this subject. Both camps of advocates have their great scholars as well as their lesser lights.”¹

However, no matter who you believe the specific people and churches are that you think Paul is referencing in this letter, there is no debate on the subject matter! Paul and Barnabas ran into constant problems throughout their missionary journey and almost all of it was rooted in Jewish opposition to the Gospel. Certainly, the original opposition was rooted in a total rejection of Jesus Christ as the eternal son of God. However, after they left, there arose false teachers known as the Judaizers. We are going to talk more about what they taught as we go through the book of Galatians, but it essentially came down to them redefining ‘grace’ and ‘faith’ into something different! They claimed to preach it, but the

¹ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of Galatians*](#) (Vol. 8, pp. 4–6). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

“it” they were preaching contradicted the very definitions that define the Gospel, and thus they were literally preaching a different Gospel! They could not grasp or accept that God’s grace was equally poured out in full measure to all who repent, believe and follow Jesus (faith!) because they could not grasp and/or accept that Christ had fulfilled and replaced the Old Covenant (The Law of Moses) with something better. We will mention this frequently through our study of Galatians, but just to get it in your head now, know this, Christ didn’t improve upon the Covenant made with Moses (The Old Covenant), or even make it more “doable”, instead, He fully fulfilled, finished and entirely replaced it with what God had promised all along!

Fast forward to almost 2,000 years since Paul wrote this letter, and every generation of Christianity sense seems to start fresh and anew with an attempt to “improve” the very straight forward Biblical definitions and applications of God’s grace and our faith. Every generation of church history finds itself under the constant pull of their sinful flesh to make what God has established into something they feel is more worthy of God and more effective for man. Even in the Protestant Reformation, the reformers, who called the church out of a rapidly swelling mire of religious methodology, superstitions, and outright idolatrous religious imprisonment, still lacked the willingness to totally separate themselves from some of the religious “refinements” to the doctrines of grace and faith. Even the reformers found ingenious ways to eisegete the New Covenant into endorsing religious practices they valued as righteous works that somehow justify receiving God’s grace in more effectual and confident ways than our weak and flawed faith!

We are going to get WAY more into this as we go through this letter, so for now I just want you to see the heart of the battle this letter is passionately addressing. I want you to see that ultimately, this letter is not written to address external threats to the teaching of the Gospels, but the internal threat within all of us to make it something more than the GRACE that is only experienced by the kind of faith defined and taught by Jesus; the GRACE that is clarified and defended by the Apostles in the writings of the New Testament! The New Testament is clear, the Gospel that we also call the New Covenant in Christ is life and everything else is death. Therefore, to no surprise, Paul writes this blunt and even sometimes pithy letter, with the kind passion you would expect a person to have if you were trying to convince somebody they were running off a cliff!

So, with that, let’s dive into the introduction of this letter and take a look at the two very clear statements he makes at the beginning of his letter to let us know this book, and everything else related to God and God’s life, is all about Grace; that is, EVERYTHING is about Grace!

Proposition: In Galatians 1:1-5 Paul gives two clear statements that point us straight to the fact that it’s all about grace.

The first clear statement that points us to the fact that it’s all about Grace is that ...

(1) Service in Christ’s church is only by His grace. (1:1-2)

- A. **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:**
- B. Paul knew being an apostle made him no more valuable as a child of God than anybody else in the church, however, he also knew it was a massively important position, and as such, Paul understood the responsibility of it. D.K. Campbell notes,

Note: "The word *apostolos* connotes authority and refers to a person who has a right to speak for God as His representative or delegate."²

- C. K.S. Wuest put it this way,

Note: "Our word *ambassador* would be a good translation. The word *apostle* as Paul uses it here does not merely refer to one who has a message to announce, but to an appointed representative with an official status who is provided with the credentials of his office."³

- D. Paul started off the letter reminding his readers not only that he is an Apostle, but also how he became one. He is clearly laying out the authority of his Apostleship in this statement, and this is going to be very important as the letter progresses. He is making it clear that he wasn't elected to be an apostle by a council of men, nor was he even trained to be one by man, but rather, he is an Apostle because God determined it. This wasn't made true because Paul said it, but rather because it was true! Men didn't select him nor train him, they only affirmed God had. This fact was a linchpin in his confrontation of the false Gospel being taught by the Judaizers. For Paul to authoritatively refute these men, he had to have the authority to do it!
- E. In addition, in declaring how he was made to be an Apostle we learn a very important truth about how we all serve God in and through His church – GRACE! Paul understood this at such a deep level. Paul, literally tried to stomp out Christianity! There was no way he could understand His salvation or His calling to serve the church as anything but grace! Its why Paul wrote,

Note: "9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10a)

² Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Galatians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 589). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 28–30). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

F. But here's the deal, the New Testament always identifies the opportunity, calling and ability to serve the church of Christ as a "gift," and as such, it uses the same exact Greek word that's also translated as "grace." Whatever talent or calling God has given you is a gift, a grace, a kindness of God, that grants you the experience of value when you know you have a God given purpose.

G. Every believer has been given the grace to serve, and that grace comes in the various opportunities, callings, and abilities that He gives each believer. In first Corinthians we read,

Note: 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

H. The Bible also makes it clear why God has given these opportunities, callings and abilities. Peter wrote,

Note: 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

I. Being it is impossible to say you have a purpose higher than the glory of God, it should therefore be no surprise then that the Bible calls the different opportunities, callings and abilities that equip us to intentionally live our lives for His glory, GRACES given to us; and thus, it's all about GRACE! How could you possibly suggest that what you do to glorify God is somehow less important than what doesn't?

J. Furthermore, as we get further into Galatians, we are going to learn that it is only by His grace that our works could ever be for His glory any way! There is no purpose higher than glorifying God, but we are all incapable of it! "**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**" (Romans 3:23)

K. Everybody in the world has opportunity, calling and ability but only God's children have the Holy Spirit within them that empowers them to intentionally labor for His glory. It's the Holy Spirit of God that brings God's power and purpose to our life and as such, no matter what your career is, marital status, financial status and position or lack of position within the local church; if you are a child of God, He has graciously equipped and empowered you to accomplish His work in your family, neighborhood, job site and in His church. God has called and anointed you to influence people out of darkness and into His light; He's

GRACIOUSLY given you the opportunity, talent and calling to join Him in His work to change lives in and out of the church. What a gracious act of God to equip us with the calling and ability to accomplish what truly glorifies Him!

The second clear statement that points us to the fact that it's all about Grace is that ...

(2) Salvation is exclusively to God's credit and glory. (1:3-4)

- A. 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.**
- B.** Verse three begins with a rather standard, but a very sincere greeting in the church. Paul is saying that his prayers and his efforts are that the grace and peace that only comes from God would be the experience of those in the churches in Galatia. There couldn't be anything greater for a person to labor for and wish to send. However, in light of the context of the rest of the letter, K.S. Wuest makes a very interesting observation. He writes,
- Note: "The salutation proper as given in this verse is the uniform one found in all of the Pauline church letters, but it has special significance in the Galatian letter since the recipients were turning away from the doctrine of grace toward the legalistic teachings of the Judaizers. The grace spoken of here is sanctifying grace, the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the saints. The Galatian letter reveals the fact that the Galatian saints were being deprived of the ministry of the Spirit by the teaching of the Judaizers to the effect that growth in the Christian life was to be had by obedience to the legal enactments of the Mosaic law (4:19), and thus coming under the Mosaic economy in which there was no provision for an indwelling Spirit whose ministry it was to sanctify the believer, they substituted self-effort for their former dependence upon the Spirit."⁴**
- C.** So, so, many Christians do this very thing. We are going to talk about it throughout our study of Galatians so I don't need to belabor it here, but it cannot be missed that Paul has teed up the purpose of the letter right out the gate! It's all about Grace because nothing else works! Paul longs for them to know the power and presence of God; He longs for them to know the peace that only comes from Him; He longs for them to experience a life lived in His righteousness; but that is only made possible by His grace and thus why He concludes this sentence with **"5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."**

⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 3, p. 32). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- D. There is no peace in religion because there is no grace in religion, only His wrath! Religion, even the Christian version of it, fails to deliver. Religion is to man's glory, but there's no glory to be had. God's grace works and as such it ends in all the glory and praise going to HIM!!
- E. Now this really comes up in those three phrases sandwiched between verses 3 and 5. Specifically they lay out three fundamental truths about the Gospel that make it abundantly clear why all the glory goes to God forever and ever concerning our salvation!

The first fundamental truth about the Gospel that makes it abundantly clear why all the glory goes to God forever and ever concerning our salvation is that,

1. Jesus came to pay the penalty of our sin. - "who gave himself for our sins"

- a. Let me first rid you of any concept that God somehow doesn't punish sin.
 - 1) **4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! (Luke 12:4-5)**
 - 2) FYI – Jesus wasn't talking about Satan, he was talking about GOD! The idea that God doesn't cast people into hell for their sin stands in direct contradiction with the words of Jesus!
 - 3) Paul made God's wrath on sin real clear in his letters. For instance,
 - 4) **18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)**
 - 5) **6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6)**
- b. But, Christ came to suffer God's wrath on our sin! It was never not Christ's mission! He gave Himself of His own volition. He came for this purpose, and He chose to fulfill it! As a matter of fact, Jesus was so adamant about His mission that Peter took it upon Himself to try and convince Jesus otherwise! Matthew writes,

Note: "21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." (Matthew 16:21-23)

- c. Peter had his mind on a purpose of Jesus that had nothing to do with Jesus dying! Peter was fixated on a national messiah to restore the glory of Israel before men, but Jesus came for the glory of the Father, and the glory of the Father is His children from every tribe and tongue living in eternal fellowship with Him!
- d. So, Jesus came to deal with what separated us from the Father. He came to satisfy the judgement of God on sin, and He did it fully! The writer of Hebrews put it this way,
- e. **24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)**
- f. Let me help you grasp the measure of what we are talking about here. Imagine if you were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. But imagine if right before you were supposed to be summoned from your jail cell and marched up to the gallows, a man went to the judge and took the blame for your actions. Imagine this man took your guilty verdict on himself, and as such, he took the judgement placed on you! Imagine if the morning you were to hang, you instead woke to hear the voice of the judge carrying across the courtyard through the bars in your cell window, declaring your sin and your sentence over a stranger you had never met. You would probably be struck by how odd it was that somebody was guilty of the exact same sin and pronounced guilty in the exact same way, with the exact same sentence. But imagine how horrified you would be when the judge announced the person's name as your name! Through your window you stare across the courtyard as the executioner slips the rope around this stranger's neck, who stands unflinching, and then with horror, watch the executioner pull the lever to implement what you believe is a totally unjust death! You know the

man being hung is not you! A man has just died for your sin as if he was you! But listen,

- g. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)**
- h. 21 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)**
- i. But, listen, as crazy as it sounds, the Gospel is bigger than even Christ dying for our sins!!

The second fundamental truth about the Gospel that makes it abundantly clear why all the glory goes to God forever and ever concerning our salvation is that,

2. Jesus set us free from the bondage of sin. – “to deliver us from the present evil age”

- a. The Bible says this present age that we live in, is not new. When Adam sinned all died; all were cursed to be slaves to sin; slaves to a life that is incapable of knowing God, of experiencing His love and of living in His life! Sin not only separated us from Him, but it also cursed us to be incapable of freeing ourselves from a life lived under the control of sin. Sin left us locked in a prison with a death sentence!
- b. So, consider again the imaginary scenario I just gave you of being in prison with a death sentence and you end up seeing somebody suffering that death penalty on your behalf. Imagine if not long after you witnessed the horror of that strange man hanging by a rope for your sin, you then saw the judge and the warden coming down the hall for you! However, the closer they got you noticed there was a third person walking with them; it's the strange man you swore you just saw die by the executioner's rope! You stand frozen with shock, confusion and maybe even fear. As you wonder what in the world is getting ready to happen, your cell door suddenly swings open, and instead of deputies running into the cell to put shackles on you; the warden, the judge and the stranger tell you that you are free! Your debt has been paid and there is no longer any judgement on you! You are free to leave the prison and live! He doesn't come and say your sentence got reduced, He comes to say your sentence has been completed! The man that took your blame, did so by taking your name and as such, when He died, you died and now there is no death left for you to die – you are free!!

- c. This is exactly what Paul was trying to get the readers in Rome to understand when he wrote this,
- d. **3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:3-14)**
- e. Christ didn't die so that we would be forgiven but still trapped in this incapable state of never being able to walk in God's righteousness; to never being capable of experiencing the love of God; of never being able to know Him and His life! He came that we would die with Him and as such be set free from the entire curse of sin; that we could walk out the jail that keeps us in bondage!

The third fundamental truth about the Gospel that makes it abundantly clear why all the glory goes to God forever and ever concerning our salvation is that,

- 3. **It was God's will to send His eternal Son to suffer His wrath on us! – “according to the will of our God and Father”**
 - a. To truly understand this, you almost have to be a parent. On Feb 20th, Tim and Monica Hayes had to say “see you later” to their teenage son Walker who died in a car crash. There was no prep time or forewarning; the “see you later” just came at them like a catastrophic earthquake under their feet. Knowing the pain they were experiencing, not only caused everybody who knows them to grieve for them, but likewise

caused every parent who heard what happened feel the gut punch of the reality that you are not guaranteed to be buried by your children. Nothing pains a parent any more than the thought of having to bury their child. So, process this for just a minute.

- b.** The Father sent the Son to die! The Father, who in all of eternity had never experienced separation from the Son, sent His son to suffer separation from HIM so that we might be redeemed! Listen Church, if you and I can grasp for a moment the pain the Father suffered as He poured out eternal separation from Him on His son; if we can grasp for even just a second, the pain suffered by the Father when His eternally loved Son cries out “My God, My God why have you forsaken me”; if we can grasp at least the edge of this truth, then we may start believing just how big of a deal His grace is; how big the Father loves us! If we can for a minute grasp the level of love the Father made clear in that moment of eternal pain, then you can understand why Paul wrote “**5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**”

Challenge: How much does it mean to you that God has rescued you from the curse of sin? Is your life a testimony of obedience and praise, ignorance, or arrogance about what He has done for you?

To live arrogantly about what He’s done is to see Grace as insufficient, that is, that His grace can’t cover your sins, but your religion can fill in the gaps Christ death couldn’t! His grace doesn’t bring you into God’s presence and grant you His favor, but your works can get it done! You might even think something more devastatingly arrogant; His grace is insufficient for you because you think your sin is so bad that not even the death of Christ could pay for it; that you are eternally damned because your sin is more unjust and more horrifying than the suffering of the spotless perfect lamb of God!

However, to live ignorantly about what He’s done is what I think most confessed Christians end up doing. They hear but don’t listen. They go to church and even read their Bible, but they are so interested in finding out some kind of secret information nobody else knows, or figuring out whether or not they should purchase a house or not, buy a new car or not, which college to go to, which career to choose, which day they are supposed to worship, which songs they should sing or not sing, what words to pray to make things happen the way they want, and the list goes on and on; that they miss the most important and fundamental reason the Bible exists – to teach us about His grace so that we can know HIM and HIS LIFE!

If you’re living arrogantly towards the grace of Christ let today be the day you repent, believe, and follow HIM! If you’re living ignorantly, complacently or just out of spiritual laziness, settling for life in a prison you have every right to leave, then let today be your wake-up call! Stop wasting time like a fool and get out of the prison so you can run in the fields of you King!