

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 abundantly and bluntly states that faith is the only way to access and experience His grace.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

As such, the definitions of the terms 'grace' and 'faith' dictate our experience in a relationship with God and define our orientation with His promises. The terms are so fundamental to Christianity that any change to their obvious Biblical definition should be considered heresy.

Nonetheless, since the church began, false teachers have gone out into the world proclaiming a Gospel of Jesus Christ "by grace through faith," but they do so with redefined terms! Some redefine Jesus Christ as someone other than the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God who became the Godman—perfectly God and man. Some redefine the terms 'grace' and 'faith'; 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 terms started 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 now known as Turkey. They first went to the port city of Seleucia, then set sail for 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 region known as Galatia, as well as a little on the debate about who the specific churches are that Paul is writing about.

“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 ... 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

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

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 Galatia, false teachers, known as the Judaizers, began to appear. We will address 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 "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 "achievable", instead, He fully fulfilled, finished and entirely replaced it with what God had promised all along!

Fast forward to our time, 2,000 years after Paul wrote this letter, and every generation of Christianity since seems to start fresh and anew with an attempt to "improve" the very straightforward Biblical definitions and applications of God's grace and our faith. Every generation of church history finds itself under the constant pull of its sinful flesh to make what God has established into something it feels 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 that they had more confidence as effectual ways to receive and experience the Grace of God than 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 rather the internal danger 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 call the New Covenant in Christ is the only way to experience life, and everything else provides nothing but death. Therefore, to no surprise, Paul writes this blunt and even sometimes pithy letter, with the kind of 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 Paul makes at the beginning to let us know that 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 its responsibility. 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 men, 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 an essential truth about how we all serve God in and through His church – GRACE! Paul understood this at such a deep level. Prior to his conversion, Paul had 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! It's why Paul wrote,

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.

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)

- 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 translated as “grace.” Whatever talent or calling God has given you is a gift, a grace, a kindness of God that grants you the exclusive experience of value found in a God-given purpose.
- G. Every believer has been given the grace to serve in Christ’s mission, 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 He gave us to empower us to intentionally live our lives for His glory, GRACES; and thus, it’s all about GRACE! God made humanity to glorify Him; it’s literally His expectation for everybody. Therefore, how could a greater grace be shown to us than to be given a gift that equips us to accomplish the task God expects us to accomplish?
- 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 anyway! There is no purpose higher than glorifying God, but we are all incapable of it!

Note: “23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

- K. Everybody 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, community, career and 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 very sincere greeting in the church. Paul is saying that his prayers and 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 fascinating 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

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.

be missed that Paul has teed up the purpose of the letter right out of 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."**

- D. There is no peace in religion because there is no grace, 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 because it always falls short of God's expectations. However, if God graciously gives us righteousness as a true, unearned, and undeserved gift, then all the glory and praise go to HIM!
- E. Now this really comes up in those three phrases sandwiched between verses 3 and 5. Specifically, these verses lay out three fundamental truths about the Gospel that make it abundantly clear why all the glory will forever go to God concerning our salvation!

The first fundamental truth about the Gospel that makes it abundantly clear why all the glory concerning our salvation will forever go to God 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) Jesus wasn't talking about Satan, he was talking about GOD! Therefore, 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 really 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 wanted the purpose of Christ's ministry to have nothing to do with being rejected and dying! Peter was fixated on a nationalistic messiah that would restore the glory of Israel with men, but Jesus came to restore our glory with the Father! Therefore, Jesus came to deal with what separated us from the Father—the judgement of God on sin; and He fully dealt with it! The writer of Hebrews put it this way,
- d. **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)**
- e. 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 a man went to the judge and took the blame for your actions right before you were supposed to be summoned from your jail cell and marched up to the gallows. Imagine this man took your guilty verdict on himself, and as such, he took the judgment 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 with the exact same sentence

to be carried out on the exact same day as yours! However, 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 hanged is not you! A man has just died for your sin as if he were you! But listen,

- f. **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)**
- g. **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)**
- h. Now, as amazing as that sounds, the Gospel is even bigger than Christ suffering the penalty of sin for us!

The second fundamental truth about the Gospel that makes it abundantly clear why all the glory concerning our salvation will forever go to God 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 a third person was 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 you

are no longer judged! 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 who 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 precisely 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 then still trapped in an incapable state of never being able to walk in God's righteousness; to never be 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 concerning our salvation will forever go to God 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 the 20th of February in 2023, 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. Seeing the pain they were experiencing, not only caused everybody who knew them to grieve for them, but it likewise caused every parent who heard what happened to feel the gut punch of the reality that they are not guaranteed to be buried by their children. Nothing pains a parent any more than the thought of having to bury their child because death separates in a way that we can’t resolve. So, process this for just a minute.
- b. The Father sent His only 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, 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 cried 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, and as such, just how big the Father’s love for us is! It should only take grasping a hair of the level of the love the Father made clear in that moment of eternal pain to 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, or of ignorance or arrogance about what He has done for you?

To live a life trusting in or relying on religion is to live arrogantly about what He’s done. It sees His grace as insufficient, that is, that His grace can’t fully cover our sins, but our religion can fill in the gaps Christ’s death couldn’t! It says His grace can’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 feel 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 do so as one so consumed with religion and at its practices that they can only see God’s Word as the source to answer the questions they have about which day of the week they should gather with other Christians to worship God and what they should do when they gather. They get concerned with which songs they should sing or not sing when they worship God, or what words to pray to make things happen the way they want, or how, when, and who can participate in church traditions like Communion, and the list goes on

and on! Their occupation with their ignorantly perceived notion to make sure they have perfected their religious practice totally blinds them from everything they already have in the Grace of Christ. They spend their entire life trying to earn the right to have and experience something they have already been given the complete and total right to have and experience.

If you're living arrogantly towards Christ's grace, 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 walk out of the prison that has no right to keep you so that you can run in the fields of your King!