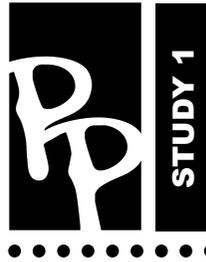


## DEAR GALATIANS

### THIS IS PAUL



### Galatians 1:1-5

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Over to you

### Introduction to the passage

Paul's opening verses identify both the writer (verse 1) and the recipients (verse 2) and then greet his readers (verses 3-5). In his greeting, Paul summarizes the essentials of the gospel, which means "good news". It was Paul's custom to begin his letters with a greeting, which contained in seed form his thinking behind the purpose of the letter. This is especially so in his summary of the gospel in verses 3-5 because, as the letter unfolds, we will see that this "gospel" was under attack.

### What these verses mean

We will go through these verses phrase by phrase in order to understand their meaning.

Verse 1

#### ***Paul, an apostle —***

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent on a special mission". (Acts 14:14 refers to Barnabas as an apostle). The word is usually used of the disciples of the Lord (Luke 6:13) who, with the exception of Judas, were later commanded by the risen Lord to be special messengers (Matt. 28:19).

#### ***sent not from men***

"Apostle" was not a title Paul gave to himself. Apostleship is not of *human* origin.

#### ***nor by man,***

"Apostle" was not a title given to Paul by other people. He was not made an apostle by other apostles.

#### ***but by Jesus Christ***

Jesus Christ was the person by whom Paul was made an apostle. Jesus actually called him directly, in person (Acts 9:6), not using anyone else to take that message.

#### ***and God the Father, who raised him [Christ] from the dead —***

Paul was called an apostle after Christ's resurrection. So the Father, by raising Christ from the dead, was also involved in the calling of Paul. What the risen Christ does is the will of the Father also; compare verse 4.

Verse 2

#### ***and all the brothers with me,***

There were other believers who agreed with Paul. Paul was not preaching his own ideas. Because Paul has to write to rebuke the Galatian believers, he first (verse 1) emphasises that he is a true apostle and now (verse 2) indicates that others believe as he does.

#### ***To the churches in Galatia:***

See the map on page 4. Paul has no word of praise for these believers. He does not even call them "saints". He is sad that the Galatians seem ready to give up the truths of the gospel which he had taught them. (See the Introduction WHY STUDY GALATIANS? and the section ***Why did Paul write Galatians?***).

Verse 3

#### ***Grace and peace to you***

Strictly God's grace is God acting in love to unlovely sinners. Peace is the consequence of God's love being known by a person. God is not angry with them any more. What a beautiful wish this is that Paul prays for the Galatians!

#### ***from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,***

The Galatian believers were being influenced by those who taught that there were certain ceremonies a person must do in order to be saved from sin. Paul is emphasising that everything necessary for salvation comes from God.

Verse 4

**who gave himself**

By emphasising that our salvation comes because Christ gave himself, Paul shows how people insult Christ if they insist on adding some works of their own for salvation. Was not Christ's giving of himself good enough?

**for our sins**

For whose sins did Christ die? Everyone's? For those of some people only? Paul is going to say next that God's purpose and Christ's coming were in order to "rescue us". So Christ must have died for all those who are being rescued from this present evil age. The evidence that anyone is being rescued is that they have saving faith which leads to holiness. Therefore we can confidently say that Christ has died for everyone who believes and seeks to be holy. If a person shows no signs of faith or holiness, there is no evidence that Christ died for him.

**to rescue us**

The idea in the Greek word literally means "to lift up out of". Because sin has made unbelievers unable to save themselves, someone else must lift them out of it.

**from the present evil age,**

The Greek word used here for "age" means "a period of history that is passing". This present world is temporary and is evil. The word Paul used for "evil" describes the trouble, pain, sorrow, weariness and degradation, which are all the deadly effects of sin in the world. This world is real but from the time of the events in Genesis 3 it is not normal and it is not lasting.

**according to the will of our God and Father,**

Believers are rescued from sin and its effects only because God intended to do this. Salvation is from God entirely, as Paul's apostleship was from God entirely (verse 1).

Verse 5

**to whom be glory**

It is the glory given to God that will be unending – his honour, wealth, authority, beauty, brilliance and goodness will never cease to be seen in full, after this present age ends!

**for ever and ever.**

Literally "to ages of ages". This is the same word "age" as is used in verse 4. Now, in verse 5, Paul speaks of something that will not be temporary; not **an** age, but "ages of ages" – i.e. an unending time.

**Amen.**

This is a Hebrew word. In the New Testament the same sounds are spelt in Greek letters. The Hebrew word means "truth" or "let it be true". The word expresses the thought that "what has just been said is true". The word is used as a name of God (Isaiah 65:16 – "God of truth" = Hebrew, "God the Amen"), and as a name of Christ (Rev. 3:14).



## Summary

The writer of the letter introduces himself as Paul, an apostle. He calls himself an apostle because Jesus Christ appointed him to be one for a specific task. The letter is written to Christians in the churches of the Galatia region.

Paul greets the churches with an outline of the gospel. First of all he wants them to know God's undeserving love in their lives through which they will experience an inner peace. This salvation can only come through Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for our sins by rescuing us from this sinful world. The amazing thing is that this was in accordance with God's plan, so our response is to praise him forever.



## A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

**The gospel is good news to people from God**

(See also: **What is faith?** in the Introductory Paper WHY STUDY GALATIANS?)

### Introduction:

Note that Paul was not a self-appointed apostle:

- i He was called by God to preach (verse 1) and
- ii Other believers recognised that call to be genuine (verse 2).

Both these things should be true of any preacher. See Acts 13:1-3.

### Paul's message was about:

The greatest rescue plan in human history

1. The need for it

We are prisoners in this present evil age. The present causes us to forget

the life to come. The evil prevents us from loving God. Yet this age is only temporary; it will end in judgement, when God will condemn all ungodliness. We need rescue!

2. The means of it

Christ gave himself – to live a perfect earthly life, earning God’s favour; to die as a perfect offering for his people’s sin; and now, being raised again, to pray for his people and send the Holy Spirit into them, rescuing them practically.

3. The origin of it

God wanted to rescue a people from this evil world, to show his glory (verse 4).

4. The result of it

All the redeemed <sup>1</sup> give praise and glory to the God who willed their rescue (verse 5.) See Revelation chapters 9 and 10.



## Over to you

Why do you preach?

What do you preach?

Look at your sermon notes and see if the truths of verses 3 to 5 are to be found.

<sup>1</sup>. The word “redeem” means “acquire out of the forum”. It is a reference to the practice of freeing slaves through the payment of a purchase price. Christ, then, has “bought us back” from the slave-market of sin. (Edgar H. Andrews, “Free in Christ”, Evangelical Press.)