

“The Gospel in Five Verses” - Galatians 1:1–5

Brandon Holiski
Southern Oaks Baptist Church
August 16, 2026

[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take a Bible and meet me in Galatians 1...

This morning we begin a new series through Paul’s letter to the Galatians called “No Other Gospel.” And if you have been with us through Acts 13 and 14, the move from Acts into Galatians may feel like a pause in the story. Paul and Barnabas have just returned to Antioch from the first missionary journey. The natural next step would seem to be Acts 15. Instead, we are opening a letter.

But this letter may, in fact, be the next part of the story. Galatia was the name of a Roman province that included the cities we have just visited with Paul—Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. There is debate about whether Paul wrote this letter to churches farther north or to these churches in the south. I believe the southern view best fits the evidence. If that is correct, Galatians was likely written to congregations established during Paul’s first missionary journey, which we just completed, and probably before the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15.¹

So we are not really leaving the story behind. We are moving from Luke’s account of the mission to Paul’s pastoral words to some of the people reached by that mission. And somewhere between the last verse of Acts 14 and the first verse of Acts 15, word reaches Paul that the churches he nearly died for are being talked out of the Gospel he nearly died to bring them. Men have come in behind him teaching that faith in Jesus is a fine start, but that Gentiles must also be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses if they really want to belong to God. Last Sunday, I told you that God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles, and that no human being had the authority to narrow it. Galatians is Paul watching men try to narrow it—and refusing to let them. They weren’t denying Jesus outright, but they were trying to add something to Jesus—and Paul will have nothing of it.

That danger is not confined to the first century. The Gospel is simple enough for a child to understand, yet our hearts are endlessly inventive in finding ways to complicate it. We receive grace, then begin to act as though God’s acceptance depends on our performance. We confess that Christ is sufficient, then quietly add our morality, our knowledge, our traditions, our politics, our discipline, or our reputation. Galatians confronts every attempt to improve on Christ.

I should warn you what we are walking into. This is not a gentle letter. Martin Luther loved it so much that he called it his Katharina von Bora—his wife. John Wesley’s heart was strangely warmed while a friend read Luther’s preface to Galatians aloud in a room.² This book has a habit of setting things on fire. So over the coming months we are going to let this letter do to us what it has been doing to the church for two thousand years.

But we begin with a greeting. And here is what I want you to see: Paul is so full of this gospel that he cannot get through hello without preaching it. Before he has finished addressing the envelope, he will tell us where the Gospel comes from, what it gives, what it cost, what it accomplishes, and where all the glory goes. The Gospel comes from God, not man. It gives what we could never earn. It rescues us at Christ’s expense. And it gives all glory to God. The whole letter is folded into five verses.

Let us hear God’s Word together. If you are able, let me invite you to stand to your feet in recognition of the authority of God’s Word over our lives. Follow along as I read Galatians 1, beginning in verse 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.” (Galatians 1:1–5)

This is God’s Word. You may be seated...

There are four truths that I want us to see in these verses this morning, and we will take them one at a time. Here is the first...

The Gospel Comes from God, Not Man (1:1–2)

Paul begins with his name, but he immediately adds his office: *“Paul, an apostle.”* That word, *“apostle,”* means a sent one, an authorized representative. An apostle did not speak merely as a private individual offering personal reflections. He was commissioned to carry the message and authority of the one who sent him. The one who sent him was Jesus. Like the other Apostles, he was part of a unique (and unrepeatable) group of men who were personally chosen by the risen Christ and were commissioned to lay the foundation of the church.³ Paul is telling these Galatian churches, before he says anything else, “You need to know whose messenger I am.”⁴

That may sound defensive, and it is. Paul’s apostleship was under attack. His opponents could point out that he had not followed Jesus through Galilee as one of the Twelve. He had once persecuted the church. They likely portrayed him as a late arrival with secondhand credentials and an incomplete message. Perhaps, they suggested, Paul had made the Gospel easier for Gentiles by leaving out circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses.

But Paul is not some thin-skinned narcissist, nursing a bruised ego when he defends his apostleship. The issue is larger than his reputation. The false teachers attacked the messenger because they wanted to weaken the message. If you want to destroy a message, you do not always have to argue effectively with it. It is often easier to discredit the one carrying it. The teachers troubling Galatia could not get a hearing for their false gospel while Paul’s authority stood, so they went after Paul.⁵ If Paul was merely self-appointed, then the Gospel he preached could be treated as merely Paul’s opinion. If his authority came from Jerusalem, then they could claim Jerusalem had corrected him. Discredit the Apostle, and you make his Gospel negotiable. John Stott puts the connection plainly: Paul’s apostolic authority and his Gospel of grace stand together. An attack on the messenger is an attack on the message. Discredit the ambassador and you have quietly discredited the King who sent him. Paul defends his office, then, in order to defend our salvation.⁶

So Paul says his apostleship was *“not from men nor through man.”*⁷ Those phrases close both doors. It did not originate with a group of people, and it was not mediated to him by one particular person. Ananias prayed for Paul after his conversion. Barnabas introduced him to the church. The church at Antioch later sent him on mission. Human beings played real roles in Paul’s life and ministry. But no *mere* human created his apostleship. The risen Christ met him, called him, and commissioned him.

Then comes the positive statement: *“but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.”* Paul places Jesus Christ and God the Father together on the divine side of the contrast. His commission came from them. And the reference to the resurrection is not decorative. The Jesus who called Paul was not a dead teacher whose ideas Paul decided to promote. God raised Him from the dead,⁸ and the living Christ confronted Paul on the Damascus road. Paul did not invent a new religious system. He was conquered and sent by the risen King.⁹

That means the Gospel he carried has the same source as his apostleship. Paul will say it explicitly in verse 11: *“the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel.”* Then in verse 12: *“I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”* The point is already present in the greeting. Paul’s message does not rise from human speculation. It descends from divine revelation.¹⁰ The Gospel is not a human invention.

Sit with that, because it is the hinge of the whole letter. The gospel is not a set of religious conclusions that thoughtful people eventually reached. It is not the accumulated wisdom of the church. It is not Paul’s interpretation of Jesus, as though a simple Galilean teacher had been dressed up in complicated theology by a brilliant man from Tarsus.¹¹ It is an announcement from God about what God has done.

Every other message about salvation begins with humanity looking for a way up. We construct ladders from morality, ritual, knowledge, achievement, or self-discovery. The Gospel is different. It is news about what God has done. We did not reason our way to the cross. We did not imagine a crucified Messiah and then persuade ourselves He had risen. God acted in history, God appointed witnesses, and God caused that saving news to be announced.

Verse 2 adds, *“and all the brothers who are with me.”* Paul alone was the apostle writing with this authority, but he was not a spiritual loner inventing theology in isolation. The brothers around him stood with him in the apostolic Gospel. And he writes *“to the churches of Galatia.”*¹² The problem had traveled through more than one congregation, but so would the letter. Each church needed the same authoritative Word.

We need it too. The authority of Galatians does not rest on Paul’s personality, education, courage, or rhetorical skill. It rests on the Christ who sent him. That is why the church cannot place Jesus against His apostles, as if the red letters were divine and the rest were optional commentary. The risen Jesus chose these men to bear authoritative witness to Him. To receive Christ is to receive the Word through which Christ makes Himself known.

That does not give pastors apostolic status. A pastor’s words are not true because he says them, and no preacher has the right to demand trust merely because he occupies a pulpit. Our authority is ministerial and derived. We are authoritative only when we faithfully explain the apostolic Word. You should test what you hear by Scripture. But when Scripture speaks clearly, the question is no longer whether the teaching suits our preferences. The question is whether we will submit to the God who speaks.

Now let me press this home. Every one of us has an authority. The only question is which one. Some of us have inherited ours—this is what my family believed, this is what my church has always said. Others of us have located it inside—I know my own heart, I will follow my conscience, I will keep the parts of the Bible that resonate with me.¹³ Paul will not let either one stand. He plants an authority outside of us and above us, and he says: measure your tradition by this, and measure your heart by this.

And here’s why that is good news rather than bad news. A gospel that came from men could be improved by men—updated, adjusted, softened where it embarrasses us and tightened where we would prefer it stricter. But a gospel that came from God can only be received or abandoned. There is no third option. Which also means that the promise it makes to you does not rest on anybody’s opinion—not the culture’s, not your family’s, and not your own on your worst day. And that’s really good news.

So that is the first truth Paul establishes: the Gospel comes from God, not man. And because it comes from God, it gives what only God can give. And this leads us to the second truth...

The Gospel Gives What We Could Never Earn (1:3)

Verse 3 says, “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” It sounds like an ordinary greeting because we have heard it so often. In the ancient world, Greek letters commonly opened with a word meaning “greetings” (*chairein*), while Jewish people greeted one another with “peace” (*shalom*). Paul takes familiar language and fills it with Christian substance. “*Grace*” (which rhymes with the typical Greek for “greetings”) and “*peace*.” Together they are not simply polite filler. They summarize what the Gospel brings.¹⁴

Grace is God’s undeserved favor toward sinners. It is not divine assistance for people who have nearly made themselves acceptable. It is not God noticing potential in us and deciding we are worth the investment. Grace is favor that cannot be earned, purchased, or repaid. If it were earned, it would be wages. If it were deserved, it would be justice. Grace is given precisely where there is no claim upon it.

And grace produces peace. Peace here is larger than a quiet feeling or mood. It is reconciliation with God. Sin places us in rebellion against our Creator, under His righteous judgment. The Gospel does not teach us to manage that hostility or distract ourselves from it. It announces that God has acted to put sinners at peace with Himself. Augustine captured the relationship well: grace is the forgiveness by which we are reconciled to God; peace is the reconciled condition that follows.¹⁵ You can hear both ideas together in the blessing Aaron was told to speak over Israel: “*The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace*” (Num 6:24-26).¹⁶

The order matters. Grace comes first; peace follows.¹⁷ We often reverse it. We tell ourselves, “Once I have improved enough, prayed enough, resisted temptation long enough, or repaired enough of my past, then I can have peace with God.” But if peace waits on your performance, peace will always remain one more good week away. The Gospel does not say, “Make peace, and perhaps God will show grace.” It says grace comes to you from God, and therefore peace can be yours.

Notice the source again: “*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” The Father and the Son are united in giving these blessings. Grace and peace are not moods we manufacture. They come to us from outside us. They are gifts secured by Christ and bestowed by God.

Some of you live as though God’s posture toward you changes with the quality of your week. After a week of disciplined prayer and visible obedience, you feel safe approaching Him. After failure, distraction, or sin, you assume you must remain at a distance until you have balanced the account. We received grace for free, but then we live as though we have quietly attached a surcharge to it. But grace with a surcharge is not grace. It is a wage. And you cannot earn a gift; you can only take it.¹⁸ To be sure, repentance matters. Obedience matters. Sin must never be treated lightly. But your record is not the ground of your acceptance. Christ is. The Gospel gives what you could never earn: grace for the guilty and peace for those who were enemies. And free to us does not mean free of cost. Verse 4 tells us who paid it...

The Gospel Rescues Us at Christ’s Expense (1:4)

Paul describes the Lord Jesus Christ as the One “*who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*” Every phrase matters. This is the molten center of the greeting and of the entire letter.

Begin with the subject: Christ “*gave himself.*”¹⁹ He did not merely give teaching, an example, healing, or inspiration, though He gave all of those. He gave Himself. The cross was not something that happened to Jesus while He struggled unsuccessfully to avoid it. He said of His life, “*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord*” (John 10:18). Judas betrayed Him, the authorities condemned Him, Pilate sentenced Him, and soldiers nailed Him to the cross. Their guilt was real. Yet beneath and above every human action was the willing self-offering of the Son of God. He went knowingly, freely, and lovingly.²⁰

Then Paul tells us why: He gave Himself *“for our sins.”* The word *“for”* is doing enormous work here.²¹ The cross cannot be understood apart from sin. Jesus did not die merely to show us that love sacrifices. He did not die simply because courageous prophets sometimes provoke powerful enemies. He died for our sins. Our rebellion against God created guilt we could not remove and judgment we could not survive. Christ placed Himself where sinners belonged and bore what our sins deserved.

Later in this letter, Paul will make it personal: *“the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (Gal 2:20). He will also say, *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us”* (3:13). The language is that of substitution. The innocent One takes the place of the guilty. He does not pretend sin is harmless. He answers it with His own blood. Thomas Schreiner is right to call substitution the heart of the atonement in this verse: Christ took upon Himself the death we deserved.²²

And do not hurry past the pronoun: *“our sins.”* It is easier to discuss the evil of the age than the evil in our own hearts. We can identify what is wrong with the culture, the opposing party, another generation, another denomination, another family, or another person. Paul brings the need close to home. This is not sin as an abstraction, an unfortunate feature of the human condition in general. It’s *“our”* sin. Which means it includes *your* sin. Your specific sins. Christ gave Himself for our sins—our pride, our unbelief, our lust, our bitterness, our dishonesty, our self-righteousness, our refusal to love God with all that we are.

That means the Gospel begins with a verdict about us that wounds our pride. We did not need a little assistance. We needed rescue. Paul says Christ gave Himself *“to deliver us.”* The word was used for pulling someone out of grave danger. A person being rescued is not directing the operation from a position of strength. You do not help a drowning person by standing safely on the bank and explaining better swimming technique. Someone must enter the danger, take hold of the helpless, and bring that person out. The Gospel is not advice shouted from heaven. The Son of God came for us. And this means that Christianity holds a lower estimate of you than any other religion in the world, and a higher one at the very same time. Lower, because you are not merely struggling in the water; you are going down apart from a rescue outside of yourself. Higher, because the God you sinned against came in after you.²³

But what does He rescue us from? Paul says, *“from the present evil age.”* Notice that he does not say Christ immediately removes us from the present world. Jesus prayed for His disciples, *“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one”* (John 17:15). Christians remain here as witnesses, neighbors, workers, family members, citizens, and servants. Paul is describing liberation from the age as a realm of sin’s dominion.

Scripture speaks of this present age and the age to come. The present age is marked by rebellion, decay, deception, and the shadow of death. The age to come is marked by the reign of God, righteousness, resurrection, and life. When Jesus died and rose, the powers of the coming age broke into the present. Everyone united to Christ still lives in this world but no longer belongs to the age that is passing away. This present age no longer owns us. Its verdicts no longer define us. Its fears do not have to rule us. Its appetites are no longer our masters. We have been transferred into the kingdom of God’s Son, though we still await the day that kingdom is seen in fullness.²⁴

So Christ’s rescue is both forgiveness and freedom. He delivers us from sin’s guilt, and He also breaks sin’s claim to rule us. The Gospel is not only good news for the day you die. It creates a new life now. You no longer have to measure yourself by the values of an age that tells you your worth is your appearance, income, influence, pleasure, productivity, or approval. You no longer have to obey every desire simply because it rises within you. You no longer have to build an identity from achievements that can disappear. You belong to Christ and to the new creation He has begun.

Of course, we should be careful here. Rescue from the present evil age does not mean Christians become instantly sinless or immune to its pressure. Galatians itself is written to rescued people who are being tempted to

return to slavery. Deliverance establishes a new allegiance and a new power, but believers must still learn to stand in the freedom Christ has given. We fight sin from the position of people Christ has claimed, not people trying to persuade Him to claim us.

And one of the old age's most religious forms is self-salvation. Legalism. And legalism may look respectable, but it belongs to the same fallen order as open immorality because both keep the self at the center. One person says, "I will find life by breaking God's rules." Another says, "I will make God owe me by keeping them." Both are attempts to live without His grace. Christ rescues us from both rebellion and boasting.

Finally, this happened "*according to the will of our God and Father.*" The cross was not Plan B. The cross was not an accident of Roman politics that God turned to good use. Nor should we imagine a compassionate Son persuading a reluctant Father to forgive. The Son gave Himself willingly, and He did so according to the Father's saving will (cf. Acts 2:23).²⁵ The Father planned our rescue; the Son accomplished it. The Father's holiness and love meet in the cross, and the Son's obedience and love carry that purpose to completion.²⁶

The Gospel therefore does not ask whether you can rescue yourself. It announces that Someone else has already acted at His own expense. Perhaps you have spent years trying to make yourself clean enough to approach God. Perhaps your rescue plan is not religious at all. You are trusting money to make you secure, another person to make you whole, success to silence shame, or control to keep pain away. Those saviors always demand more and finally fail. Jesus gave Himself for sinners. Nothing less could save us, and nothing more is needed.

But we are not done today until we see the next lesson in this text...

The Gospel Gives All Glory to God (1:5)

Paul reaches verse 5 and breaks into praise: "*to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*"²⁷ A doxology is an ascription of glory to God. It is unusual to find one this early in a letter. Paul has barely finished writing his name, yet contemplation has already become worship.

Why? Look back at the verbs and their subjects. God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus Christ and God the Father commissioned the apostle. Grace and peace come from the Father and the Son. Christ gave Himself. Christ delivers. The saving plan accords with the Father's will. God acts; sinners receive. There is no room in these verses for human boasting because there is no saving achievement assigned to us. The only thing we contributed to our salvation was the sin that made us need it.

That is why the Gospel gives all glory to God. If salvation depended partly on Christ's work and partly on ours, the glory would have to be divided. We could sing about the cross and still reserve one verse for ourselves. We could say, "Jesus made salvation possible, but my wisdom, willpower, morality, or decision made the decisive difference." Paul will not allow it. Even the faith by which we receive Christ is an empty hand, not a payment. Faith gives glory to God because it stops presenting our credentials and rests in His promise.

This is one reason additions to the Gospel are so serious. Adding a requirement does not merely burden tender consciences; it steals honor from Christ. If circumcision, law-keeping, religious performance, cultural conformity, or moral improvement completes what Jesus began, then Jesus did not actually save. He only assisted. But the Gospel says He gave Himself "*to deliver us.*" The rescue is His. Therefore the glory is His.

Every false gospel, however it dresses itself, gets this wrong. It finds a way to give you a little of the credit. Some obedience. Some ritual. Some sincerity. Some decision you made that other people did not make. And the moment you have contributed, you have a claim. You have something to point to. This is what the Galatians were entertaining. And this is what makes Paul burn in anger—not merely because the Galatians are in danger, but because God is being robbed.²⁸

So here is a question that will follow us all the way through this letter: When you finally stand before God, what will you point to? If there is anything in your answer besides Jesus Christ—anything at all—then some of the glory will have to come to you. And Paul says there is no glory for you here. There is only glory for God, forever, into the ages.

The phrase “*forever and ever*” also places two ages beside each other. English translations obscure this. Verse 4 speaks of “*the present evil age*.” Verse 5 speaks of glory extending through “the ages of the ages.” That’s an odd expression in English, so it gets translated “*forever and ever*,” but the Greek is literally “the ages of the ages,” which echoes the language of the previous verse. This evil age (1:4) feels permanent when we are living inside it. Its pressures are loud, its griefs are real, and its powers can appear immovable. But it is present, not perpetual. It has an expiration. God’s glory does not. It runs through all the ages, and outlasts every last one.²⁹

So the Christian life learns to evaluate everything by the age that lasts. The approval of this age is temporary. Its fashions, arguments, status symbols, and definitions of success will pass. The glory of God will fill eternity. Wisdom is living now for what will matter then.

Paul ends with “*Amen*.” That word means, “Truly,” or, “Let it be so.” It invites the churches hearing the letter read aloud to join the praise. They cannot remain neutral observers while Paul speaks about grace. They must either cling to their additions or say amen to God’s rescue. As Calvin put it: “So glorious is his redemption that it should ravish us with wonder.”³⁰

Has the Gospel become too familiar to move you? We can defend grace with precision while rarely being amazed by it. We can explain substitution, justification, and redemption while our hearts remain cool. Paul’s theology does not end in a diagram. It ends in doxology. The clearest understanding of the Gospel should make us humbler, more grateful, more eager to obey, and more ready to worship.

And it should expose our hunger for recognition. We want to be noticed for our sacrifice, admired for our discipline, and credited for whatever good appears in our lives. The Gospel frees us from carrying that burden. You do not need to manufacture glory for yourself. You may serve quietly, repent honestly, receive correction, and rejoice when someone else is used. Your salvation and your life can point away from you. The Gospel gives every gift to us and returns all glory to God.

Conclusion

Paul has given us the Gospel in miniature before the letter has really begun. It comes from God, not man. It gives grace and peace that sinners could never earn. It centers on Christ, who gave Himself for our sins and rescued us from the present evil age. And because salvation is God’s work from beginning to end, all glory belongs to Him.

There is something especially fitting about hearing this after Acts 13 and 14. We watched Paul endure opposition, rejection, exhaustion, and stones to establish these churches. Yet when he writes to them, he does not make his sacrifice the center. He does not say, “Remember what I suffered for you.” He points to the One who “*gave himself for our sins*.” Paul’s wounds mattered, but Christ’s wounds saved. The messenger could serve only because the message was already true.

That is the message this entire series will defend. There is no other Gospel. There are many ways to distort it, but only one Gospel can save. Every distortion eventually places something beside Jesus. Jesus plus circumcision. Jesus plus law-keeping. Jesus plus religious tradition. Jesus plus political identity. Jesus plus moral achievement. Jesus plus your preferred tribe. But Jesus plus anything as the basis of acceptance with God is no longer the Gospel of grace.

So ask yourself a plain question: What am I relying on to be right with God? If your answer begins with what you have done, what you intend to do, what you have avoided, what family you came from, what church you attend, or how sincerely you are trying, you are carrying a burden that will crush you. None of those things can bear the weight of your soul and the guilt of your sin.

If you have never trusted Christ, you do not need a revised rescue plan. You need to abandon the attempt to rescue yourself. You are more sinful and helpless than self-salvation allows you to admit, but you are more loved than you have dared to hope. Jesus Christ gave Himself for sins. He was raised from the dead. Turn from your sin and trust Him. Surrender your life. Lay down your arms. Call upon His name to save. Receive grace rather than wages, peace rather than condemnation, and life in the kingdom that will never pass away.

And if you belong to Christ, come back again to the same Gospel. Stop treating God's gift as though an invoice will arrive later. Stop making your worst day greater than Christ's cross or your best day a rival to it. Repent where you have sinned. Obey because you are loved. Stand in the freedom Christ purchased. And let the wonder of His rescue loosen your grip on the glory you keep trying to hold for yourself.

The Gospel came from God. Its gifts come by grace. Its rescue came through Christ. Its glory returns to God. That is the Gospel we will spend the coming weeks learning to recognize, defend, and live. There is no other.

To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray...

¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 458-463. Carson and Moo judge the South Galatian theory more compelling and identify Galatians 2:1-10 with the famine-relief visit of Acts 11:25-30, making a date before the Jerusalem Council most probable. If this is correct, then Galatians was probably written somewhere around 48 A.D. In Galatians, Paul argues with great intensity that Gentiles do not need to be circumcised. The Jerusalem Council settled that exact question in exactly that direction. And Paul never mentions it in Galatians. If the ruling had already come down, leaving it out would be like arguing your case and forgetting that the court has already decided in your favor. Thus, as Carson and Moo note, while the South Galatia theory "comes short of complete demonstration, the arguments in its favor are considerably more compelling than those for North Galatia." Ibid., 461.

² On Luther's affection for the letter and Wesley's encounter with Luther's preface, see Josh Moody, *No Other Gospel: 31 Reasons from Galatians Why Justification by Faith Alone Is the Only Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); and Timothy J. Keller, "The Rescue," sermon on Galatians 1:1-5, in *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013), which recounts William Holland reading Luther's preface aloud to Charles Wesley. Bunyan's similar testimony—that apart from the Bible he preferred Luther on Galatians "before all the books that ever I have seen"—is quoted in Ryken, *Galatians*, 5.

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 13-14; John F. MacArthur Jr., *Galatians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 2.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 72.

⁵ J. Gresham Machen put it plainly: "The Judaizers had not been able to gain an entrance for their false teaching so long as the authority of the great apostle remained beyond dispute" (quoted in David Strain, "Grace and Peace," sermon on Galatians 1:1-5, First Presbyterian Church, accessed online at: <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/grace-and-peace/>).

⁶ Stott, *Message of Galatians*, 15 ("he defended his apostolic authority in order to defend his message"); Ryken, *Galatians*, 6 ("What was at stake, therefore, was not simply Paul's reputation, but our salvation").

⁷ Moo takes ἀπό to indicate ultimate source and διὰ the mediating channel. Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 68. Thomas R. Schreiner cautions that the two

prepositions should probably not be pressed, since the general point is clear either way; see Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 74.

⁸ Interpreters differ on why Paul mentions the resurrection (v. 1) before the crucifixion (v. 4). Ryken suggests the order is autobiographical: Paul's own encounter with Christ began not at the cross but with the risen Lord on the Damascus road, so in a letter defending both his apostleship and his gospel he "quite naturally begins with Christ and his resurrection." Moody makes the related point that the resurrection is itself part of the credential, since Paul's commission came from the risen Jesus he actually saw. Moo and Schreiner add a further reason: in Old Testament and Jewish expectation the resurrection of the dead marks the turn of the ages, so the mention signals at the outset the salvation-historical argument that will dominate chs. 3–4. See Ryken, *Galatians*, 10; Josh Moody, *No Other Gospel*; Moo, *Galatians*, 69; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 75.

⁹ There is more here than autobiography. In the Old Testament, resurrection was what happened when God finally set the world right. So by the end of verse 1, Paul has already told you what time it is. The last days have begun. Moo, *Galatians*, 69; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 75; cf. Matthew S. Harmon (*Galatians*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021], 28), who reads the phrase—"God the Father, who raised him from the dead"—against the Old Testament identification of God as the one "who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Exod 20:2), now recast as the one who raised Christ to accomplish the promised new exodus.

¹⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, 74.

¹¹ Ryken, *Galatians*, 7. Ryken notes that skeptics still "accuse Paul of Tarsus of inventing Christianity."

¹² These are colder words than they may appear at first glance. There is no "beloved." No "saints." Paul commends every other church that he writes to, even the difficult ones. Not these. The greeting itself, if you are acquainted with his later epistles, tells you how much trouble they are in.

¹³ Keller, "The Rescue," *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013). Keller distinguishes three competing sources of authority—tradition, personal intuition, and apostolic revelation—and argues that Paul subordinates the first two to the third.

¹⁴ Roger Mohrlang and Gerald L. Borchert, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 14, *Romans and Galatians* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 260.

¹⁵ Augustine, Epistle to the Galatians 1:3, in *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, ed. M. J. Edwards, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁶ Timothy George, *Galatians*, Christian Standard Commentary (Holman Reference, 2020), 85; Harmon, *Galatians*, 31. Both trace the pairing of grace and peace to the Aaronic blessing of Num 6:24–26.

¹⁷ MacArthur, *Galatians*, 5: "The first is the source of salvation and the second is the result."

¹⁸ Philip Ryken attributes our tendency to forget these realities to the fact that we are "recovering Pharisees." Fortunately for us, "Galatians is a letter for recovering Pharisees." And it was written by the most famous former Pharisee. Ryken, *Galatians*, 3.

¹⁹ Standing behind these words is Isaiah's suffering servant—the one crushed for our iniquities, and crushed by the will of God. Harmon (*Galatians*, 31) and George (*Galatians*, 86) both also identify Isaiah 53 as the background of "gave himself for our sins."

²⁰ Alistair Begg, "The Glory of the Cross," sermon on Galatians 1:4 and Isaiah 53:1–12, March 11, 2010, accessed online at: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/the-glory-of-the-cross/>.

²¹ Moo (*Galatians*, 72) rightly concludes that ὑπέρ here carries the nuance of substitution. See also Timothy Keller, *Galatians for You*, God's Word for You (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2013), 16.

²² Schreiner, *Galatians*, 76.

²³ Keller, *Galatians for You*, 17.

²⁴ Stott, *Message of Galatians*, 18; Michael H. Burer, *Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman III, Andreas J. Köstenberger, and Benjamin L. Gladd, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2024), 33–34.

²⁵ As Ryken puts it: "The Father does not love us because the Son died for us. Rather, the Son died for us because the Father loves us." Ryken, *Galatians*, 13.

²⁶ George, *Galatians*, 88. George writes, "God loves us not because Jesus died for us; rather Jesus died for us because of the Father's eternal and unconquerable love for us" (Ibid.). In a footnote he adds, "Thomas Aquinas describes the *ordo salutis* in terms of traditional categories of Aristotelian causation. Thus the formal cause of the plan of salvation is the Father's plan, the efficient cause is the death of Christ, and the final cause is the forgiveness and deliverance wrought but the Spirit. We may accept this schema as a helpful teaching device so long as we remember, as Aquinas did, that the works of the Trinity are inseparable. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Albany: Magi, 1966), 5–9." George, *Galatians*, 88 n.20.

²⁷ If you know Paul's letters, something is missing here—and something has taken its place. Ordinarily, right about now, Paul thanks God for the people he is writing to. He thanks God for the Corinthians, and the Corinthians were a mess. He thanks God for the Philippians, the Colossians, the Thessalonians, the Romans. But there is no thanksgiving in Galatians. Where the thanksgiving belongs, Paul puts a doxology—and then, in verse 6, an alarm: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ." So why does Paul break into praise right here? Because of what he has just said in verse 4.

²⁸ Strain, "Grace and Peace."

²⁹ Moo, *Galatians*, 74; Ryken, 14.

³⁰ John Calvin, quoted in George, *Galatians*, 89.