

GALATIANS 1:3-5

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PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:6-12

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*“Deep down in Paul’s mind there is a progression of thought which darts by too quickly to identify or develop. But it leaves him with this: God’s plan of salvation is glorious.”*

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***GALATIANS 1:1-2***

The first few sentences in the epistle of Paul to the Galatians look for all the world to the casual reader like just another pleasant salutation and the first verse merely a return address, a warm “Hello, this is Paul here.” But you would not have thought so if you had been one of the Judaizers, the enemy, and had opened the envelope and read while you strolled in casually from the mail box. That first verse would have had your heart beating a little faster, would have put you on the phone straightway to some of the other religious “experts” from Jerusalem. “Looks like we might have a spot of trouble here,” you would have told them. Paul simply can’t wait to get to the point. His initial words constitute a large part of his argument. It isn’t, he reminds them, some sort of naive clergyman, some pseudo-apostle, they’ve grabbed by the tail. “Now hear this. Now hear this. This is your leader speaking.”

There are apostles and there are apostles. They all serve under some sort of commission, those who are sent by the church, “by men,” and those privileged few who are sent by Jesus Christ Himself, and whose credential is that they have been eyewitnesses to the life and ministry, and especially the resurrection of Jesus. But there is only one Paul. He alone can lay claim to having received in person his commission from the ascended Christ, risen and sitting at the right hand of the Father, showing up outside Damascus like an extra-terrestrial on a beam of blazing light.

To be called by Christ at all, through a local congregation or rinsing your nets at the Sea of Gennesaret, is a startling experience and provides one with a certain sense of confidence. To be knocked off your horse by the One “Who lives and reigns to all eternity” is overwhelming. But it leaves you very certain

of your purpose and your ministry. Of one thing you can be sure: Paul is out here preaching and teaching because God Almighty wills it.

Now, that's not the kind of credential one treats lightly. The Judaizers could see the gauntlet at their feet. And the folks in Galatia were reminded mightily who it was who had sent Paul to bring them "the Gospel of peace."

"And all the brothers who are with me" (v.2): Luther says, "That should go far toward shutting the mouths of the false teachers." The Judaizers were calling Paul's teaching erroneous and different. Yet it was they who were out of step with the church. Paul strongly insinuates that his point of view is the point of view of the brothers. It's a neat turn, this mention of the brothers. It's loaded with innuendo. The Judaizers, it strongly implies, are the ones who have gotten themselves all alone out on a limb.

Thus far we have covered two verses. But it's the word "covered" which is suspect; not nearly covered. What a word of introduction! It sets the tone — this is war. It establishes the credential — this is as close to God talking as you get on this earth anymore. It presupposes victory, what with Jesus and His Father on Paul's side. And it ushers in the first major point, the personal section of the epistle, chapters one and two.

Paul will get to that. Just now, reflecting suddenly the fondness he feels for the people of God in those churches, whose faith is being threatened, Paul's mood changes drastically. Remembering them, Paul delivers the remarkably warm greeting which you find in chapter 1:3-5. Let's look at it.

### *GALATIANS 1:3-5*

Chances are the last time you heard the words which comprise Galatians 1:3, they preceded the pastor's Sunday sermon. People, who appreciate the liturgical, call this the "votum." If on Sunday it doesn't come off sounding a little bit wistful, an almost desperate expression of hope and good intentions, it should. If a pastor is going to use these words in a way which is true to their original intent, he will breathe into them warmth of feeling, an eagerness and anticipation. There is a promise here. All these are most appropriate for the pastor who presumes to stand before his people to preach the Word of God. And all these were very much in evidence in verse 3.

In his mind's eye he could see the group picture of his beloved Galatians: Dychus and Myrna, little Pennuel and Temah. The very recollection melted his heart. The eager protagonist, impatient to join the argument, softens for the moment. There is a lot of heart in his next words. But, if the tone has changed, the point has not. He doesn't for a second lose sight of his theme. "I am committed to preserve for you the glorious Gospel of grace, to underscore for your comfort, hope and peace that your salvation is in God's hands. He freely gives you life through Jesus. You don't, you needn't, you can't, make even the slightest contribution on your own. Grace is the opposite of works. Grace is the antithesis of works. It spurns words like 'law' and 'circumcision.' And I say, Grace be unto you."

What a lovely and appropriate way for any Christian preacher to begin a sermon, with the earnest yearning that his preaching will be a conduit for the Gospel of grace, for the free gift of a loving God, who in spite of, not because of, what we are sends His Son to do and be for us

what we don't do and cannot be. It doesn't always work that way. Sometimes a sermon leaves you feeling guilty and hopeless. But there's always the "votum" to save the day. What your pastor really wants, that to which he is actually committed, is to get God's grace across to you for your peace.

For your peace: There is no peace, not inside in the heart and in the conscience, in a religion which stresses works, where you are the designated hitter, the active agent. You know yourself too well to find any real comfort from the things which you have done. All the things left undone, all the dishonest, mean, cruel, unclean, crude, vengeful, impatient, thoughtless (how long does this list go on) things, set themselves down alongside the good you've done and about the best you can manage is to get the stacks to come out somewhat even. How much is enough? God, of course, flatly tells us nothing less than perfection will suffice. There goes the ball game. It's too late. It's always too late. We lose. If Judaizers in Galatia or legalists in Philadelphia insist you try a little harder, you're sunk. At best, you'll fret the whole day through wondering if your motives are up to snuff or your secret thoughts can pass muster. You've got all those past mistakes to undo and may very well become immobilized in the fear of future ones as well.

But, if your hope and your life, now and forever, are in God's hands totally, what a relief. He is able. He alone is able. There is peace of mind and conscience if it all rests with God. Grace leads to peace. It comes from God, our Father, all of it. It comes from Jesus. He is the source of our peace, because He is the source of our salvation. It is His grace by which you are saved. This is the same Jesus who gave Himself for our sins (v.4). That is God's plan for redemption, not what you do; what Jesus does.

Paul's moment of calm as he addresses his Galatians is beginning to slip. Don't miss the point of verse 4. Don't let anyone tell you what you must do to be set free in this evil world. God's plan is to send His Son to rescue you. Deliverance is key to Paul's point. Once delivered, set free from the constraint to do good works, you are liberated from the world and its evil so you can freely do good works. That will be a major consideration in the doctrinal section (see Introduction) but Paul can't wait. His words and thoughts and arguments are piling up. He's got to get it out. He's just about back to full boil.

And that's the way you have to read verse 5, "To whom be the glory." The Judaizers were trying to take the play out of the hands of God and put it in the hands of men. Deep down in Paul's mind there is a progression of thought which darts by too quickly to identify or develop. But it leaves him with this: God's plan of salvation is glorious. What the Judaizers are urging on you would shift the glory to people, with their efforts and their works. That's sheer impudence. "Who," Paul is thinking, "do they think they are? Listen, to God be the glory, not to you or me or anyone. Forever. Amen. That's the way it is. That's the way it's going to be. Forever. And ever." Not exactly fit words for a quiet melody, even though that's the way we usually read them. Rather, they have Paul off and running, right into Section #1, chapter 1, verses 6 to 12.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:6-12

*Bless the moments which I spend with You, dear Savior, and with Your Word.  
Your Scripture shines to light my way and dispels the gloom and darkness  
of my life. Guide me by my study of Your Word and will. Amen.*

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1. Read verse 6. Long established convictions are sometimes abandoned overnight. List some circumstances which can be a temptation to a quick surrender of convictions.
  
  2. List some traditions, customs or convictions in the church which have changed over the years. Explain why you feel the changes are good or bad.
  
  3. Are there doctrines in the church which have changed over the years? If your answer is “no” explain why you think this is good or bad. If your answer is “yes,” list them and discuss.
  
  4. Paul equates a change of doctrine in verse 6 with “deserting him who called you.” To whom does Paul refer?

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Who called you to the Gospel?

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What were the circumstances attending your call to the Gospel?

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Read 1 Peter 2:9. By whose action are you a member of the Christian Church?

5. Read verse 7. The word Gospel means literally “good news,” “glad tidings.” Why does Paul, why would you, think the word gospel is inappropriate for the work oriented teaching of the Judaizers?
  
6. What makes the Gospel of grace good news?
  
7. There are two other verses in the Bible that use the same Greek verb, translated in verse 7 as “pervert” (NIV/KJV). How does your Bible translate this verb in:  
Acts 2:20?

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James 4:9?

Which translation do you think most accurately reflects Paul's meaning?

8. Read verse 8. When Paul refers to "we," to what credential does he point?

Name some respected teachers in our day in the world and in the church.

On what basis must church leaders and teachers be judged?

9. Read verse 1:9; Deuteronomy 21:23; and Joshua 6:17-18. What does Paul invoke upon the false teachers?

10. Identify three ways in which today we are tempted to alter our stated convictions in order to accommodate the feelings and beliefs of others.

11. Read verse 10 in as many translations as you have access to. The ESV says "seeking...approval," the NIV says "win approval" and the KJV employs the word "persuade." Other translations suggest a slightly different meaning. What word would you use, given the context? Why?

12. Suggest reasons why the Gospel of grace might be less than popular.

13. In Acts 9:1-20, we find that obviously Paul was selected for ministry and sent to preach by God. Today's pastors and church workers speak of being "called" into ministry. How might the conviction that one is "called" to serve impact:
- The ministry of a pastor?

b. The role of the church worker?

c. The role of the parishioner?

Discuss misapplications of the concept of the call by pastors, church workers and parishioners.

By what authority does a pastor (church worker) preach, administer Sacraments and serve the spiritual needs of the congregation?

14. What implication does Matthew 20:25-28 have for ministry?

15. Paul is beginning the personal defense of his ministry in verses 11 & 12, and establishing the legitimacy and authoritative nature of his teaching.

Who does Paul claim as the source and authority of his teachings?

What makes a pastor's teaching authoritative, his call or the source of his teaching?

16. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Whose word is the Scripture?

Whose word is the epistle of Paul to the Galatians?