

Freedom in Christ

Passage: Galatians 1:1-5 | Speaker: Steve Grothoff | Date: 260802

SUMMARY

Steve opens a new series in Galatians, noting it covers many of the same doctrinal themes as Romans in a shorter, more accessible way. After reading Galatians 1:1-5 aloud and praying, he walks through Paul's opening words. Paul begins by defending his authority as an apostle, since some in Galatia were trying to undermine his credibility by pointing to his past as a persecutor of the church. Paul insists his calling came directly from Jesus Christ and God the Father, not from any human appointment. Steve then turns to verse 2, "all the brethren who are with me," noting that Paul wrote alongside trusted companions -- likely including Barnabas -- and that believers need a community of faith around them. He gives historical background on Galatia, explaining that the name referred both to an ethnic Celtic people and, later, to a wider Roman province (including Lyconia, Phrygia, and Pisidia) where Paul had personally planted churches on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). He closes by walking through verses 3-5 and summarizing the gospel: because of God's grace, Jesus lived a perfect life and died to take away the curse of sin, and it is faith in that finished work -- not human effort or credentials -- that saves.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your past mistakes or lack of formal credentials don't disqualify you from what God is calling you to do -- what matters is obedience to that calling, not other people's opinions of your past.
- Surround yourself with a real community of faith, people who will encourage you and hold you accountable to the truth, the way Paul surrounded himself with trusted companions.
- Don't wait passively for direction -- move in the direction you believe God is leading, trusting Him to redirect you if needed, the way He redirected Paul on the road to Damascus.
- The gospel is simple at its core: because of grace, Christ died for our sins, and faith in Him - not works or pedigree -- is what saves us.
- Hold to the truth you've already been taught, even when others try to pull you away from it.

Introduction & Scripture Reading (Galatians 1:1-5)

you. So we are going to start in Galatians this week. Galatians is, it's one of my favorite, really just broad spectrum theological doctrinal books of Paul's. It's what I would consider, because there's a lot of things that tie in with Romans. There's a lot of it that it's like a light version of Romans, an easy beginner's version of Romans. There's a lot of the same themes, a lot of the same topics. And as we go through, I hope that we can all come to a deeper understanding of the many fundamental aspects of the things such as what the gospel is, what it means for each and every one of us individually, and then how we can directly apply it to our faiths and our lives as Christians. My prayer is that no matter where we are in our Christian walks, that we can be encouraged, strengthened, and deeper rooted in our faith. So if you guys would please stand with me, we will go through, we will read the first five verses here of Galatians, and then we will get into it. Galatians 1.1 says, Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brethren who are with me. To the churches in Galatia, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God our Father, and to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Father, we thank you. We thank you for today.

Opening Prayer

Father, we thank you for your word. And Father, as we get into this book, Father, that we can just remember that your gospel is our responsibility. Spreading your gospel is our job as Christians. Not only are we to go out and make disciples, but Father, we are supposed to proclaim the gospel to be able to bring people to Christ, to be able to make them disciples. So Father, as this, as we go through this, just help us to use this as an edifying thing. And Father, just pray that through your word, that we can encourage one another. And Father, that we can each be encouraged just by your word specifically. We thank you. We praise you. And we ask all these things in your son's name. Amen. Thank you, guys. He starts out, it says, Paul, an apostle. He, as we'll get into a

Paul's Apostolic Authority (v.1)

little bit next week, we see that the Galatians were quickly being led astray by local religious leaders. What they were trying to do was they were trying to enforce Jewish rules and tradition on Gentiles, people that were not bound by that law. And what was happening was these Jewish leaders were spreading the belief that in order to become a Christian, the first step you have to do is you have to become a Jew. You have to become Jewish and you have to follow all of the Mosaic law. You have to become a proselyte Jew and making the Jewish faith a stepping stone into Christianity instead of what

Paul preaches often of it does not matter Jew, Gentile, anything, anyone. You can come to Christ. And the overarching theme and truth in the book of Galatians is that we are justified in faith. Our faith is what makes us safe in Christ.

Paul's defending his position here. He says, Paul, an apostle. These leaders were trying to undermine who he was. They were trying to take away his credibility and his authority based on his past. They looked back on who Paul was and they said, well, weren't you this guy that was persecuting the church? Weren't you this guy that was doing all of this stuff against Christianity? And now you're all of a sudden you're such a giant proponent for Christianity? Like, what happened? And so they were trying to undermine him. They were trying to negate his ability to come and share the gospel based on who he was and not who he now presently was.

I hope we can all look back on our lives and we can say, I am so glad that I am where I am now. And I am so glad that I have Jesus in my life because I know where I've been and I know who I was and I am thankful for who I am now. And how easy it can be for people to look back on our lives and say, well, I don't believe you're a Christian because X, Y, Z. I recently hung out with a good friend of mine who I have known since high school. I haven't kept in close contact with him. He's he's in the military and he's been overseas a lot. And he was in town before he gets ready to go ship off to Korea for a year. And he and I hung out and we hadn't really communicated or anything like that. And it was just like, well, hey, man, you're in town. Let's get together. Let's hang out. I haven't seen this guy in 12 years, but we are we have been best friends and we don't talk a lot, but that doesn't negate who we are together as friends. And the first thing he asked, he's like, well, what are you what are you up to now? And I said, oh, I'm a I'm I'm interim pastoring at a church. And he just turned. He's like, good, good for you, man. Like, that's awesome. But it took him aback because we grew up. We went to high school together. We did all the dumb stuff that you do in high school together. We were in trouble together often.

But having people like that from your past that can look at who you are now and can encourage you because of that are good friends. The people that know you from your past and look on your past in a negative light and say, well, there's no way that you're qualified to do something like that. Those are the kind of people that that we need. To that we've known that we know then are not really true friends of ours. I have had those. I have a few that I did. It was it was like, hey, this is what I do now. And they're like, yep. Sorry, man. We can't be friends anymore.

The Bible is pretty clear in that we're going to lose friends. We're going to make enemies with people that we were once friends with because of the choices that we make to follow Jesus. Paul's no different. Paul has is is in a place where he is defending who he is because of who he used to be. He has people that are trying to to.

Say, well, you don't know what you're talking about because I know who you used to be. He says that I'm I have this position. He says, I am an apostle. And then in parentheses there, it says not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God, the father who raised him from the dead.

Paul says, I didn't get my position from man. God called me to be this in this position. God called me and I am an apostle because Jesus himself.

Resurrected Jesus approached me on the road to Damascus.

And redirected my life. We don't all have a road to Damascus.

Thing in our life, not all of us have a conversion like that, but there are some of us that do and and and. Those are the people that I feel like are the most bold. A lot of times you had John the Baptist, who most people didn't like. You had John the Baptist. Everybody thought he was weird. Everybody was like this guy eating locusts, living in the desert, wearing camel skin. But he had people that followed him and he wasn't scared. He wasn't afraid. He wasn't afraid to preach the truth that was to come. He wasn't scared of the things that that led to his eventual beheading. He boldly proclaimed that.

Because that's what he was called to do. There in verse two, it says, and all the brethren who are with me.

"All the Brethren With Me" -- Community & Fellowship (v.2)

He's not alone. He's not by himself. Paul is not writing this letter, just Paul. There's a group of men. There's a group of men that are determined to preserve the truth of the gospel. And Paul invites them in to help him write and make sure that what he is saying is what needs to be said. There's a shared conviction among these men. These are men that were probably leaders and teachers of the faith that probably were on the mission field with him in different places. Barnabas was likely one of these men who helped him plant the churches that Paul is now writing this letter to. Barnabas was likely one of those men. And we need to remember that the people we surround ourselves with and the things that we do as a fellowship of believers matters. The people we surround ourselves with are either going to encourage us or tear us down. And that is something that Paul surrounded himself, made sure that he was surrounding himself with the men that he knew had his back.

This letter is written to the churches in Galatia.

What Is Galatia? (Historical Background)

Now, where is Galatia? What is Galatia? The term Galatia in that time period had two very distinct meanings. Now, there was an ethnic group of Galatians. These were Celtic people from Gaul, which is modern-day France. This was a Celtic group that during the Greek time period of the Greek Empire moved to this region, probably around the 3rd century B.C.

It was conquered by Rome, but not officially a Roman province for almost 150 years. These were, it was, so there was an ethnic group called the Galatians. And then there was the area of Asia Minor, which is now modern-day Turkey. Once it became a Roman province in 25 B.C. When those people were there and then Rome made it an official province, they lumped a lot of other areas in that region together also and called it Galatia, because that's what everybody knew it as. They just expanded the borders of what that was.

This included areas like Lyconia, Phrygia, and Pisidia. If you've read through Acts, these are all places Paul has been. And we're familiar with those names because those were places that were dear to Paul in his ministry.

If we read through Acts 13 and 14, we hear that Paul founded a lot of these churches in Galatia proper then. Churches such as the Church of Antioch, the Church of Iconium, the Church of Lystra, and the Church of Derbe on his first mission journey. Now, this was during a time when the Romans were very actively in that area. They were under Roman rule, and these were likely the churches he was writing to. These were the people. And that's why you can see that there's a lot of likeness between this and the book of Romans. The difference is, Paul had met these people. Paul had directly preached to these people, set up these churches.

Paul had personal relationships with a lot of these people that he's writing this book to, or this letter to. He had taught them, a lot of them, at great length of the things that he speaks of here in this book, but that he dives a lot deeper into in Romans. And the reason is, is I think that there's a lot of it that he's like, listen, guys, you already know this stuff. You already know what is being said. You already know what I'm getting ready to tell you, because I've taught you this before. Why are you so quick to abandon it?

Now, we're going to spend a lot of time as we get going into these. There's going to be a lot of times that our deeper dive into these chapters is going to lead us just directly into Romans, because Romans just expounds on it, the topics, that much more.

Paul begins this letter, his greeting, if you read there three through five, his greeting is a quick, very succinct, very accurate gospel message. And he's just, he's reminding them immediately, this is his primer to this book, is he's like, guys, here's the gospel. What are you doing? As we read there in verse

six, as we get ready to, as we go into that next week, I marvel at how quick you're turning away. Guys, you know what the gospel is. Why are you not living it? So as we read through this introduction that we have here, a few short verses, there's nothing super doctrinally deep in this.

How can we read these five verses specifically and apply them to our own lives? How can we read these five verses and think, all right, what can we gather from this? Well, I want us to think about how we can apply this in our own lives.

Application: Living Out These Verses

Number one, there will be those, there will be people who will try to undermine and invalidate your faith based on your past or your shortcomings, your present shortcomings, or your lack of man-made credentials. The thing is, is it doesn't matter what other people think if you are doing what God is calling you to do. If God is calling you to do something for his kingdom, don't let your past, your inexperience, other people, or even your current situation stop you from pursuing him. God is calling.

Go.

We talked last week about being prayerful and praying and how when we ask for something, that is, that we ask, but we ask according to God's will. But what we fail to understand sometimes is that's not a holding pattern. That's not a waiting period a lot of times. When you pray for something and you ask God for something, move. Go. Start doing. We were in Sunday school a couple weeks ago. I think it was Dennis that said, it's a lot easier to redirect a moving ship. It's very true. You're not going to turn 180 degrees in a ship that's not moving. Be going in a direction and redirect from there. God will tell you if it's where he wants you to be and he'll guide you in the direction that he wants you to go. He did that with Paul. Paul was on his way to Damascus. He was doing. He was moving. He was going.

But it wasn't what God wanted. But look how quickly he redirected him. It's not up to us to sit and wait for God to start moving. We need to be moving so that God can move also.

Again, as we read there in verse 2, we need to have a community of faith. Having a community of faith, brothers and sisters in Christ alongside you, will help you to keep accountable to the truth of the gospel. Having people there to encourage you. Having people there to keep you focused on what the gospel is. And having people that are rooted in the word and have a lifestyle of prayer are the people we need to be surrounding ourselves with. And we need to be those people for others also.

Again, Paul and the others were writing this letter to correct and encourage a church that was failing to adhere to the truth. So quickly they fell from the truth and said, well, you're not here anymore, but these guys are telling us that we need to do this.

Hold to your convictions. Hold to what you know.

Hold to the truth is what Paul is telling them.

The Gospel Truth (vv.3-5)

And then he tells them what that truth is there in verses 3 through 5. The truth of the gospel is that because of the grace of God, Jesus came to this earth.

He lived a perfect life and he willingly died to take away the curse of our sin.

And the main theme that he gets at this entire book is that that faith is what's going to save us. Having the faith of knowing that when Jesus died on that cross, he did it for each and every one of us. And the only reason that we are even going to be saved is if we put our faith and we live our life based on that. We put our faith in that. We repent from the sins that we have in our life and we wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

That's all Paul's getting at here in this first little bit is like here I am.

I was not a good guy.

I'm an apostle now. But there are people that are going to tell you that because of who I was, you can't believe who I am now. And that's not true.

Closing Summary

So, that's a quick introduction into Galatians. And we will go through this. And there's going to be a lot of application in this. There's going to be a lot of application here.

And I really just want this to be a book that is an encouragement to each and every one of us. But also a reminder of A, just how simple the gospel is. But B, how difficult it is sometimes to really truly live that out.

And we will fail. And we will falter.

But like Paul says here, the people that we have with us are the ones that are going to encourage us, keep us on track, and help us to stay the path and follow the course and end end up in heaven because we've done obediently what we put our faith in.

Closing Prayer

So, you guys will bow your heads. We will pray.

And and we will go through the rest of Galatians as we, as the weeks go on.

Father, we love you. Father, we thank you for who you are. Father, we just,

we are so grateful for your word. Father, the encouragement that it brings. Father, the correction that it brings. As Paul writes to Timothy in his second letter, just all of the things that scripture is sufficient for, for, for correction, for reproof, for encouragement. Father, let it be that for each and every one of us.

Father, if we are staying true to the course, let this, let your word be an encouragement. Father, if we are, if we are just being misled off of the path, Father, let your word draw us back. If we are wandering knowingly, Father, let this be your word bringing us back.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for being able to come to you and pray and bring our, our desires and our, our, our shortcomings all to you, Father, just knowing that, that you hear what we say and, Father, that, that you act upon that. You answer those prayers and, Father, we just, we, we thank you for the gift of your son. We thank you for what that means for each and every one of us and, Father, I pray for everybody in this room but specifically, Father, those that, that don't know you. Father, those that, that have not fully put their faith in you and, Father, I pray that, that, that you just continue calling them and, Father, if you are calling them that they can hear it and, Father, that they know that it is you that wants what's best for them. Father, that it is you that is doing everything and that, Father, that you, you, you don't,

you're not, you're not surprised by our actions. Father, you're not, you're not confused by the things that are going on in our lives. Father, because you are sovereign. Father, you, all of this is, is your will. Father, I just pray that we can continue seeking your will and, Father, that we can just continue holding to the truth. we ask all these things in your Son's name. Amen.