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Galatians

Chapter 1 – God's Message Sent by God

Glory Belongs to Him (vs.1-5)

Galatians 1:1-5: “Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of 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 of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.”

I am particularly drawn to this book myself. It was in Galatians 1 that the Lord began to deal in my heart as the Lord had been calling me. Of course, I had been resisting, but He doesn't seem to take “no” for an answer. Have you noticed that? I think one of the reasons why I was so resistant is because I had grown up in the church and I had seen many things in the church that quite frankly, I wish I had not seen; inconsistencies and hypocrisy, of course. It oftentimes is a part of it. I remember thinking, “I just don't want to even mess with this.” I also remember that it was oftentimes a place where people were condescending and critical. It is amazing how people absolutely positively know exactly what God wants to do in your life. Have you noticed that? I don't know how they get that insight. Nevertheless, they begin to direct you in ways that you never thought were possible. Like the Pharisees that Christ talks about in Matthew, He says they lay heavy loads upon people without lifting a finger to help. I've oftentimes thought of Romans 2, which talks about the fact that you go around pointing everybody else's faults out; that's proof positive that you know what's right and maybe you had better change. So, God says, “The fact that you're pointing out to everybody else, I'm going to hold you accountable because it shows that you know.” It is that pressure of man that begins to cause you to be resistant. It's hard to believe that the message of the gospel of Christ is that “God has come to set you free” because you find yourself in this quagmire of legality and people putting burdens on you. It really is a gospel of freedom. In fact, that's one of the things that Paul will write about in Galatians 5, that it was for freedom that Christ came to set you free. There is freedom in Christ because when you receive God, you receive the Spirit of God within you. Then, it's His Spirit that begins to move you to do the right thing rather than all of the legality of the list.

Scripture says that love fulfills the law. If you love somebody, you won't have to be told to be nice. You'll be nice automatically. You won't have to be told to be kind. You won't even have to be told to think of them first. It's a natural phenomenon because the Spirit of love is within you. God does that marvelous work that goes beyond imagination when we receive Him.

Paul's going to be talking about that message of the gospel specifically in this epistle. His emphasis as you go through this book is that it's not of man because anytime that man gets mixed up into things, it's amazing how he can mess it up. When you go all the way back to Genesis 3, you begin to see how even the words of God, the words of the serpent, and even Eve when she responds back to the serpent, begins to convolute what God had actually said about the garden. Quite frankly, it doesn't take long before it's messed up.

Peter talks about this in 2 Peter 3:16, in which he talks about the unstable and the untaught distort Scripture.

If you look in Galatians 1:7, he says that they're talking about a different gospel. Actually, there's not another gospel. Then, he says at the end of verse 7, "but you want to distort the gospel." Paul is not happy at this juncture with those who are in Galatia. This letter is not necessarily a happy letter. A lot of times you'll read the beginning of the epistles, and he'll start off by saying, "I'm here and Timothy is here..." He will mention the different ones that are with him. He doesn't do that in this letter when he writes. He goes, "There are people with me. Let's move on."

As he goes on within the letter, it's like he puts his hands to his head and he goes, "I can't believe you're doing this." What we see with the Galatians is that they're going away from what they knew to be true. More specifically, they're being influenced by man. So, this letter is about that influence. Paul is saying, "God has freed you from that. Stop listening to them. Listen to the message of the gospel." He's going to be talking about the fact that he was sent by God to them and the way that they knew he was sent because the gospel that he presents is pure; once again, not convoluted by man.

Unfortunately, the word of God has been abused and misused throughout the years. I've thought about the fact that it's been scientifically dissected, historically scrutinized, and literally academically shunned. Yet, what's amazing is that strangely enough, God has preserved his word throughout all the years. At about 1995, they were trying to figure out what has been the bestseller of all time. Guess what book it was? Yeah, they figured 5 billion. There was no other book that ever came close. You have to ask yourself, "Why are people buying this book?" Why is it that man still seeks it? What's even more amazing is that God has not only preserved His word, but He has preserved messengers for His word.

If you look at the beginning of Galatians 1:1, Paul says, "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man) ..."

"I'm not here because of anything that man has done. I'm here because God sent me." That efficacious call of God is amazing. What would cause Paul, who was a supreme court justice that had all the necessary things for success in somebody's life where he lived to just chuck it all; go into a place in which the very people that he longed at one time to look up to him, now hated him and wanted him dead. What would cause somebody to do that? It was like he saw a bright light. It was like maybe he was on the road to Damascus or something. He sees this great light and in Corinthians or Acts he goes on to give this testimony. He says, "I asked this One who sought me in Damascus, 'Who are You?' and He says, 'I'm Jesus.'" So, his statement in Corinthians is "I saw the resurrected Christ." What an amazing thing that would've been to be in contact with the resurrected Christ. It was life-changing for him. It changed the way that he saw everything, and he realized that this calling was directly from God Himself

It's going to be his initial point that the influence of man and the intimidation of man will dissuade you in a particular way It's one of the reasons why you have to have a personal relationship with God yourself. There are a lot of negative influences and a lot of convoluting and distortion of Scripture. We believe that the word of God is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). We literally believe that the word of God is "*theopneustos*," "God-breathed." We believe that and that it's "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; (2 Timothy 3:17) so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

We believe that. It's an amazing word, and Peter goes onto say in 2 Timothy 1 that no Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, but men were moved by the Holy Spirit, and it was given to us. In other words, this isn't just a conjuring up of somebody thinking, "I'm just going to write this book." There are a lot of books out there that man writes, but that's not what this is. This is the word of God. This is actually God talking to us. The fact that God works in our lives and as 1 Corinthians 2 will say that God takes spiritual words, and He mixes them with spiritual thoughts. Then, we begin to understand the mind of God. How could that happen? How could you ever figure out what God really wanted? Yet, Scripture does that. It not only tells us in God's word that it happens, but 1 Corinthians goes onto say these words are then revealed by God Himself. Like Paul writes in Ephesians 1, "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened that you might see these things." Who does that?

I remember oftentimes reading a particular passage, especially when I was younger, and going, "I'm just not feeling it. I'm not getting anything." I remember asking my dad, "Why am I reading this? It doesn't make any sense to me." Then, I remember when I devoted my life to the Lord, and wow, I just couldn't get enough of it and all the lights started coming on. God begins to

reveal to you the hidden things, the miraculous things of the word of God. The eyes of our hearts become enlightened. What book is there in which, if in fact you believe, you become saved; transformed?

One of the passages in Titus 3 has always been near and dear to my heart because chapter 3 starts off by saying, "You once were this way." How did you change so radically? There's only one answer to that: It was the word of God as the Spirit of God. There was something miraculous that happened through that combination. The way that it reads in Titus 3, he says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers..."

(Titus 3:2) "to malign no one..."

Then he says this in verse 3, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

(Titus 3:4) But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

(Titus 3:5) He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy..."

Think about that. You used to be this way. You could read a lot of books, but I don't think it would change you like that. There's a wonderful passage in John 3:16. The fact in 1 Corinthians 12:3, that it says you couldn't even confess Jesus as Lord except by the Spirit of God, but as Romans 10:9-10 would say, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Once again, we're miraculously changed. It's something that God could only do, but He does it through His word. It's this gospel that is pure; it's this gospel that is holy.

That's why Paul will state in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation..."

The clarity of the gospel, if in fact it's shared appropriately, is that which really designates your messenger; whether he's legitimate or not. Is this a legitimate messenger? Is this a messenger from God? Well, if he proclaims the message that changes your life, he's legitimate; he is sent from God.

As Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 11, "I'm amazed that you would go away from the simplicity and devotion of the word of God." Once again, it's not a confusing thing. Evil and sin complicates, but if in fact you just see the gospel, how clear that is. God so loved the world that He gave you His Son. You remember the first time that you embraced that, when you go, "My

sins are forgiven?" It's like that hymn, "My chains fell off, my heart was free." And "O thou, God, You saved me; You changed me."

You begin to realize that this is a marvelous message. Paul is going to specifically talk about in this book that you don't want to mar the message. It's so pure; it's so wonderful. In fact, in Galatians 1, he will make this statement in verse 8, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!" Now, his point is that you can't trust in man, but the gospel will clarify the legitimacy of the messenger. He's going to be sharing that he was sent by Jesus as an apostle. So, man was not in the mix to in any way distort the truth. His emphasis all the way around in Galatians is going to be "It's not of man." That's what we're going to see, and to me, that's what was so freeing because it was at that moment when I began to wrestle with the decision that I had to open up this book as a young person. I read Galatians 1:10, and it was just like everything fell off because you're going to school; you want to meet the grades that you feel like you need to make; you want to get the degrees that everyone's expecting you to get. There's a lot of pressure on you. I remember, at that particular time I was working three jobs and going to 17 hours of school. So, I had maybe 2-3 hours a night of sleep. I don't know why, but I got involved in the church. Obviously, I should be getting involved in the church, but I took upon myself a lot of things that I probably shouldn't have at that time as well. I remember feeling the load of expectations on me. Then, I remember reading this verse, "Do I seek to please men, or do I seek to please God? If I sought to please men, I wouldn't be serving God" and how freeing it is to come to that point. You see, God's wanting you to try to learn, according to Ephesians 5, what is pleasing to Him. That's what this book is going to do for you. It's going to get you out of the whole influence, intimidation, dissuasion of man and it's going to say, "Listen to God."

You go back to Jeremiah 17, one of my favorite passages, and it begins to say, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind..." (Jeremiah 17:5), but "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD..." (Jeremiah 17:7)

It makes you think differently, but there has to be a time that you take this and make it a decision for yourself. Paul is very concerned over the fact that the Galatians have become fickle, and they've allowed the influence of man to come in and convolute. They begin to align up with what the expectations of man are. Well, nobody can tell you what you should be doing. In the orientation class, we were talking about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are not something that you could work about; it's not something that you can decide, "I want this spiritual gift. You can have that one." It's not about that. A spiritual gift, by name, is a gift. Scripture says that God gives to each man just as He wills. You begin to realize that God is working in your life in a very unique way and God is going to direct you in a very unique way. We don't try to delegate where people should serve. We listen to how the Spirit of God is moving in your lives and we

say, "Well, maybe you might want to serve here because this seems to be where the Spirit of God is nudging you." It's listening to Him, not man. I couldn't figure out where you would best serve anyway; where your heart is. You start delegating service, and before long, you start having a lot of mad people, and the way that they serve is not going to be very good. When you let the Spirit move them, they're going to do everything they do out of love. That's the kind of people you want serving in the church. God is doing a work, but we need to listen to Him. The concern that Paul has is that they're already allowing people to tell them what it looks like to follow God. They're also setting up rules and regulations, but they're doing it to put them in bondage or elevate themselves. Once again, it's a bizarre thing that oftentimes you'll go into a church, and people after a while will start putting expectations on you, and you just feel pushed and squeezed. You realize, "This is man doing this; this is not God." Once again, where the Spirit of God is there's freedom. All the way through this book, you're going to see this.

At the very beginning, if you look with me in verse 1, "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)"; a power that certainly goes beyond anything that we could imagine.

James puts it this way in James 1:18, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth..."

It is the moving of God.

Romans 1:4 says that Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness."

The point of the matter is that if Jesus designated you, done. It's the Spirit of holiness. Let's put it another way, there's no hidden agenda but to save. Think about that. If Jesus is doing the moving, there's no agenda.

One of the great concerns is that though God preserves His messengers, there are many false messengers out there. In fact, the great warning is that there are going to be false prophets among you. It goes all the way back even before Jeremiah, but in Jeremiah, there was great concern over the fact that almost all of them were false prophets except for Jeremiah. God just raised up a few, but God had raised up those that were true messengers.

The same thing is seen with Peter in 2 Peter 2. Literally, the text says in verse 1, "there will also be false teachers among you."

We're talking about churches and stuff.

We also read in Paul's letter, 2 Corinthians 11, that many will actually disguise themselves as apostles; angels of light to be deceptive.

When you go into Matthew 24, Jesus will say things are going to happen where there will be many false teachers in the last days.

So, the word of God is constantly being convoluted and twisted, but God has set apart for Himself those that will, according to 2 Timothy, handle accurately the word of truth. You know what the word of truth is when you hear it if you're a truth-seeker. It just rings true. His Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we are sons of God, Romans says. There is great comfort when you think about it. I would say that if you're feeling constricted and oppressed, that's not the Spirit of God. If you're feeling the influence and the intimidation of man to get you to do something, that's not the Spirit of God. However, if you feel a sense of "I want to do this! You can't stop me." That is the Spirit.

When you read about those in Philippi, in particular in Macedonia, where Paul is collecting and there was a need in the church of Jerusalem because there had been a famine in the land. So, they were taking up collections to help and the Corinthians were holding back, and he began to write to them about the church in Macedonia. He says, "You know, the people in the church of Macedonia are not very rich? They began begging us for them to give, 'Can we give? Can we give?'" That's the Spirit of God. Fundamentally, if you're not begging to do it, it's not the Spirit doing it. So, don't do it.

When you go into chapter 2, you begin to see the fact that the reputation of man begins to be an issue; people are worried. One of the great passages in Galatians 2:6 is "But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me)..."

Paul says, "So what? They have a reputation." These people come in with their degrees and pedigrees, "Oh these are really important people. You need to listen to them." I've heard some really stupid things come out of people with high degrees because it's the wisdom of man. Man begins to look at things like reputation. Not only that, but he talks about the fact that there's partiality and hypocrisy. Galatians 2:13 talks about the hypocrisy of man. The problem is that man tries to impress man by using facades; hypocrisy and reputation to somehow manipulate people.

Chapter 3 is going to talk about the fact that there are people that are always proclaiming their race, their nation, their heritage, their background; that they find some position in proclaiming this. Paul is going to deal with that.

You're going to see in chapter 4 that there are many people that are looking for ways to manipulate, control, oppress. People all around you are going to be trying to do that. Paul is going to address that in chapter 4.

Then, in chapter 5, he's ultimately going to come to the point of "Christ has come to set us free." This is the gospel. He will end that particular chapter by talking about the fruit of the Spirit which is the freedom.

I like chapter 6 because it really gets into the practical in which he begins to talk about the fact that Christ has brought us to the point in which we think like Him. So, when we come together, even when we see someone in a trespass or a sin, our number one goal is restoration. It's not to oppress; it's not to make fun of; it's not to embarrass. Though, the shame of the sin may come out, but the whole purpose is restoration. You have no other motivation; you have no other desire. It's also interesting when he begins to talk about "bearing one another's burdens" which is once again, just the opposite of the Pharisees who would place heavy burdens on people. Our goal is to bear one another's burdens.

You can feel that Paul has not been happy with these people; the fact that they're being led astray. There are a couple of passages that I want to show you in regard to this. In Galatians 3:1, if you look at the way he addresses them, "You foolish Galatians..."

So, that's not a raving review.

His phrase then goes onto say, "who has bewitched you?" Have you ever seen a phrase like that in Scripture? That's probably the only place where that's used. "Who has bewitched you" or "mesmerized you?"

"... before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?"

Watch verse 3, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

By the things that these people are trying to tell you to do? You're trying to jump through their hoops to impress them? Really? Isn't the Spirit of God moving you or is it the threat of man moving you? Get out of that.

So, he will write this in Galatians 4:12, "I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;

(Galatians 4:13) but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;"

Then, he talks about the trial in verse 14, but then he asks an interesting question in verse 15, "So, what happened?"

"Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me."

Where's that heart? Where's that mentality? Once you get in the realm of people telling you what to do, then it literally sucks out all the spirit. Now, everything you do is regimented, detached, and unloving. What happened? Paul wants to get them back to the Spirit of God; to what the gospel is really about. The gospel takes off the chains; the gospel frees you. Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Remember that feeling? Walk in that. "God has called me. He loves Me. He has wonderful things for me." Why do you obey Him? Quite frankly, I don't even think of it as obedience. I think of it as "I want to."

He writes this at the very beginning of Galatians 1, "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ..."

"I write to you, all the brethren who are with me, I write to you as well."

Verse 2 makes mention of the fact that there's not just one church in Galatia, but "churches." There are a number of churches which I believe are part of the concern because this seems to be spreading throughout all those churches as well.

(Galatians 1:3) "Grace to you and peace..."

Where does that come from? Not man. It doesn't come from the agency of man. It doesn't come from man. It comes from God, and he's going to be emphasizing that.

Man has a strange way of taking credit for things he could never do. "Come over here, I'll make you happy." You can't make people happy. "I'll give you peace." You can't give people peace. Only God can give these things. Man will take credit for those kinds of things.

(Galatians 1:4) "who gave Himself..."

This phrase is reflective in the sense that God willingly did this for you which demonstrates the Spirit of Christ.

"who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age..."

"*Ponēros*" is not only the fact that something is bad perhaps ethically or morally, but it's also dealing with that which is troubling in your life. You know how there are things in your life that are hardships and difficulties? God wants to take you out of that life of dreading every day, and He wants to bring you into this wonderful life. You say, "Why would he do that?" It's because He wanted to.

Look at the passage, "...according to the will of our God."

It's literally because God wanted to because God so loved you. God has good for us, doesn't He? Why would you ever give glory to man? This is God who sends Paul. One of the things we were looking at this morning was that it wasn't Moses' idea to go save the people. He tried to

kill somebody to get them to stop being mean, but he had no perception. He went back to take care of the sheep. God's the one that led him.

As Paul was going along and getting all of his trophies, he wasn't thinking, "Hey, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to go to the Gentiles." He hated Gentiles. Pharisees avoided Gentiles. They walked around Gentiles. Why would he be thinking about going to the Gentiles to preach the gospel? But God's going to call him to demonstrate His mercy, and it's going to be a miracle.

The passage reads this way, "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

(Galatians 1:5) to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen."

Paul is saying, "This wasn't me." As you look in the very first verse, "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men)." I think the way that it's put in John is that it wasn't by the will of flesh, it wasn't by the will of man, it was by the will of God that we were saved. So, you begin to realize the love of God. When you and I begin to put our hope in man, you can't be saved. It's impossible.

Jesus will put it this way in John 5:44, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another..."

See, once man's ideas become the pinnacle, then there is no salvation from God. You and I have to release all of these things that keep us in that quagmire of bondage. Then, go into the realm of "It's all God. Glory to Him." That's the simplicity of the gospel. If you hear another "gospel," let whoever preaches that be accursed. If you hear anything else but "It's all God," then it's a lie, and there are a lot of liars out there. There are a lot of people on the stage and that are pointing to themselves. There are a lot of people that will elevate man because of all the things that he's "accomplished" which is virtually nothing.

In Galatians 6, here's a verse that you can memorize that will keep you humble. You know how there are certain verses that you just keep in your head? Here it is, Galatians 6:3, "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

Don't you love that one? "I think I'm somebody." "I think you're lying." "Do you know who I am?" "Yeah. Nobody, but hey, I'm nobody too. So, that's a wonderful thing." What makes us somebody is that He loves us. We were not purchased with silver and gold; we were purchased with His precious blood. What makes something valuable is what you pay for it.

You can see at the end of Galatians in Galatians 6 what Paul is a little troubled over. He doesn't end with a usual, "Ok brethren, I hope to see you" and stuff like that. He ends this way in verse 17, "From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."

“Don't mess with me. Don't say that I'm not called of God. You've heard the message. You see the clearness of it. You know that it's only through God that these life changing things can happen. It's the power of the word of God.” That's what we preach.

I realized the day where I had been called, where I had been wrestling. Like I've said, I think my greatest aspiration was maybe to have ten surfboards and to live on an island. I think that was the pinnacle. Maybe have a surf shop. As God began to work in my life, I began to realize that I can't do anything else but this. He took me out of my selfish desires to where I would be willing. Do you want to hear about one of the greatest miracles that ever happened? I left my surfboard when I went to school. It was the greatest miracle. It was like parting waters stuff. What would cause somebody to do that? The same was true with Paul and with the fishermen. “Drop your nets.” How do I know God called me? Well, according to 1 Corinthians 1, I fit the profile perfectly. The profile is “God chooses the weak and the foolish things to confound the wise.” He chooses the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no man would boast in himself. When Scripture says in Chronicles, “The eyes of the Lord search to and fro,” this is what God was looking for. This guy doesn't know anything. He can't do anything. “Perfect.” So, He chooses me. He begins to work in lives such as this so that when the gospel is preached, the one thing you hear is Him, not me.

The end of this chapter is going to be the conclusion of this chapter. If you'll look with me in Galatians 1:24. The last part of this chapter summarizes the emphasis of it.

(Galatians 1:24) “And they were glorifying God because of me.”

That's what it's about, isn't it? John will say, “I've got to decrease, but He's got to increase.” If I can walk away, and you can completely forget my name, but you can glorify God, I've won. That's exactly what I want because not to us. So, Paul is going to get man out of the stage and he's going to cause us to embrace this wonderful pure gospel that man cannot convolute.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for this wonderful word that you bring us to. We look forward to going into this epistle that frees us from the influence and the intimidation of man. How wonderful it is to realize that there's only one that we have to please and that's You. Your desire is that we love You with all of our hearts and that we walk in Your love. We receive Your gracious gift as You even cause the unction for us to do that. How wonderful it is to walk away going, “It was all Him.”

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I don't know what kind of intimidation or forces that moved in your life; I don't know what kind of expectations people have had of you. Sometimes, it's parents, and sometimes it's family members. Sometimes, outside of the family.

Sometimes, it's business. Whatever. How about stepping out of that and just saying, "You know what? I'm just going to please God. I'm going to do whatever He wants. I'm going to do it all to the glory of God. I'm just going to serve Him. I'm going to let Him take care of everything else, but I'm not going to let the intimidation of man ruin my life anymore."