

A GOD-GIVEN MINISTRY Galatians 1:1-5

Whenever a sporting event is about to begin like the upcoming Superbowl, it starts out with a bang, doesn't it? There's a lot of build-up, a lot of hype right before it begins. Players sometimes breaking through a paper barrier as they run out of the tunnel and onto to the field, the national anthem is sung by someone with a prominent voice, a loud applause and shouts comes from the crowd, fireworks bursting straight up around the tops of the stadium and there's some type of flyover from some of the most impressive jets the military has to offer.

When it comes to the beginning of the book of Galatians, that's kind of what I think of – Paul starts out this letter with a bang as well. Normally he would give some type of greeting and thank God for them, but not here. He gets down to business. **The situation and the subject at hand calls for business.** He doesn't want to be accused of being a man-pleaser at all. The churches of Galatia had been duped by false teachers, deceitful workers, who had introduced a false gospel – a different way to be right with God other than the way God had prescribed, so Paul begins by shutting them down immediately with a brief summary of his calling and ministry, which he will later break down in further detail.

1. **Verses 1-2: The Origin of His Ministry (The man)**
2. **Verses 3-4: The Message of His Ministry (The message)**
3. **Verse 5: The Motive of His Ministry (The motive)**

I. **THE ORIGIN OF PAUL'S MINISTRY (VV. 1-2)**

In Galatians 4:14-15 Paul says that in the beginning moments of planting the Galatian churches and witnessing to them during his sickness, they received him, “as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself...For I bear witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.” Basically, that's just an expression saying they would've done anything for him when he first came to them! He asks now, “Where then is that sense of blessing you had?” They had begun to turn on him. Just like today, wherever there is spiritual revival and God doing great things, there is always false teachers following close behind to tear it down. Wherever Paul went, there were men who were trying to undermine his ministry and make him look like a fraud. They wanted to tear his ministry apart and **to do that they went after his authority** as an apostle. If they could discredit his apostleship, then by default, it would certainly discredit his message and cause doubts about his message in the minds of those who had originally gratefully received Paul. These false apostles were calling themselves **super apostles** and claiming that Paul wasn't a genuine apostle. So Paul begins this letter with a defense of his apostolic ministry, claiming his apostleship didn't originate with him – it wasn't his desire at all, actually he would've had apostles put in jail previously – but it all began with God. It's all God's doing. It was God's desire to make him an apostle. So he begins immediately with some defenses.

A. **Defense #1 – (Paul says, I am an apostle) Paul is an apostle. (v. 1)**

He repeats that in his other letters. To be an apostle is to be a “special representative” or “special messenger” who represents the one who sent him. And Paul here says **he was sent as a representative of God directly by God.** Not by man or by men. And he's not making much of his calling as an apostle to try and earn a reputation for himself or favor from men, not for money or for followers, like false teachers are known for doing, even today. But he's simply stating a fact about God choosing him for this ministry. He's not exalting himself in vain, but exalting the office to prove his God-given authority and assurance for all to know that what he speaks or writes is from God. This word apostle just isn't a word that can be shared with every believer. It was distinct for the 12 disciples, for Paul and some other key, influential leaders

who laid the foundation of the Church. But with the 12 and Paul, it is certain that there is a unique authority with it, as we see in his authority to damn false teachers and even himself, should he preach a different gospel. I liked what John Stott said: “Apostolic authority is divine authority. It is neither human, nor ecclesiastical (church governed). And because it is divine, we must submit to it... Don’t call him saint Paul, call him apostle Paul.” The position of apostle is so unique in God’s eyes that he even inscribes the names of the 12 apostles on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. Also there’s certain criteria that must be met for someone to be an apostle, which I believe Paul alludes to in verse 1 when he mentions the resurrection as his next defense.

B. Defense #2 – (Though not directly stated but maybe implied) **Paul had seen the risen Christ.** He brings up the fact the Christ was raised from dead and seeing the risen Christ was one of the requirements for apostleship. I think that’s why Paul mentions the resurrection in verse 1, saying, “through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.” In Acts chapter 1 when the 11 disciples are discussing who should replace Judas to be the twelfth, they said he had to be a witness with us of the resurrection and it came down to two men and the lot fell to Matthias. But Christ had appeared to Paul as well. Christ had singled him out later on. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul says, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” He had. Whether he was referring to his Damascus Road experience, some time in Arabia after his conversion, or when God gave him a glimpse of the third heaven, he had seen the risen Christ. In fact, the only reason Paul even mentions that he has witnessed the third heaven, things of which no eye has seen nor ear has heard, is because he’s being forced to boast about the things he’s seen and done during his time in the ministry because that’s what the false teachers were doing. They were boasting of things like visions in order to make themselves look good so that they could steal the minds and money of immature believers. But Paul puts their boasting to shame with his vision of heaven, which is more than the false teachers could say. He is a real apostle who had witnessed the risen Christ, even interacted with Him.

C. Defense #3 – **Paul is in harmony with the collaborative work of God the Father and God the Son in salvation. (alludes to)**

Paul was sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. God the Father and God the Son were the primary members of the Trinity involved in the mission of paying for man’s debt to God’s holiness and bringing a sacrifice that would satisfy the wrath of God. Whatever Christ did and whenever He did it, it was always the will of God the Father. In fact, Jesus Christ said He didn’t even do anything on his own initiative but only that which pleases the Father. There was probably a lot more He could’ve done on earth to blow our minds with His display of divine power but He didn’t because it wasn’t the will of the Father. Why didn’t He climb off the cross? Because it was the Father’s will to give Him the full cup. In John 17 He said, “I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” A little later on the cross when He was on His last breath He cried out, “Tostellestai!” – “It is finished!” The sins of mankind have been paid for by His sacrifice. Then God the Father raised Him from the dead to prove it was complete and sufficient for justification. Mission complete.

But with the completion of that *mission*, another one rose up in its wake: the *mission* to spread the good news of Jesus’ completed mission, which is where the Holy Spirit steps in to apply salvation to everyone who believes. And that’s what Paul seems to imply, is that his apostleship and his message is in full agreement with the work of God the Father and God the Son in salvation, since that is the subject at hand, and they are the authority, not men. These Judaizers were writing off the work of Jesus Christ and God the Father in their satisfactory work of salvation by saying it wasn’t sufficient.

D. Defense #4 – Paul was given his ministry by God, not men. (v. 1)

Paul was not sent from men or by a man or by any other human authority – He was sent by the Lord Jesus Christ and the God the Father. This wasn't something he just decided to do. He didn't decide to call himself an apostle. Paul was called to the ministry **by God Himself**. Think about that. **GOD ALONE had place Paul into the ministry**. Men had no part in it. Paul is a unique apostle. He said he was one **untimely born** because he wasn't like the others. He didn't walk with Jesus during the years of His ministry like they did. He considered himself least of apostles and **not fit for apostleship in his own mind** because of his previous life as a persecutor of the Church. He didn't immediately believe the message that Christ had risen. He was a hard-core Pharisee out to make Christians' lives miserable by putting them behind bars, if not even taking their life. I mean, He held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. His direct calling and well known, public calling by Jesus, came on the road to Damascus as he was blinded by Jesus Christ Himself and when led to the house of Ananias Jesus told Ananias, "he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." So Paul's ministry came by Jesus, and for the main purpose of breaking down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. He is considered the apostle to the Gentiles.

E. Defense #5 – Paul was not alone. (v. 2)

Now normally Paul mentions a companion in his ministry like Sosthenes or Timothy or Silvanus, but here in Galatians in verse 2, Paul mentions how he had **brethren** who were with him. He had a support team. And this is further backing for his message in that he wasn't the only one who was **thinking or writing or preaching or teaching the way he did**. There were many others who had believed the message of pure grace as well. What Paul had preached, wasn't done in a corner somewhere hidden. It was public. Everyone knew his message and there should be no confusion as to what his message was. So often we think of Paul as a lone-wolf pioneer, but he was never alone. Even at his commissioning in the church of Antioch, Barnabas was called by God to go with him. Paul always had a support group with him. And I think there's something to be said about that.

1. Ministry requires a team. (v. 2)

No ministry is dependent upon one man. Ministry requires a team. We're the body of Christ and it's pretty hard to function with some of the members of His body missing, just like a normal human body. If a part of the body gets hurt or goes missing, the rest of the body notices it and feels it. Even just a little sliver or stubbed toe, it effects everything. We frown, wince, grit our teeth, tense up, jump up and down. A lot of believers think they don't need a local church or need to be a part of it but what good is a foot left to itself (or an eye, arm) They're helpless if they're not connected to the body. Hebrews says don't forsake meeting together as some are in the habit of doing. Encourage one another all the more. Ministry requires every member doing what they were designed to do. It requires the body of Christ, all exercising the gifts that they've been given by Christ. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift that they've been given the moment they were saved, and it's for the building up of the body of Christ and the strengthening of it. Some of you may **not know** what your gift is... you haven't had time yet to figure that out or maybe never thought about it. That's ok, **ask God for wisdom in that, ask Him to show you what gift He has given you and ask others who know you, what they see in you.**

2. Don't assume you know your gift.

You might be surprised because sometimes it's something you wouldn't expect. **Expect it to come in an area of weakness for you.** God told Paul His power is perfected in weakness. It's in our weaknesses where God displays His power because we know we can't do the something

He's calling us to do it if He doesn't enable us to do it! Does that make sense? One guy said something like, "It's when you know you can't do it, that's when you do it. If you think you can do it, you won't be able to do it!" I think God enjoys seeing us squirm a little bit and learn to trust Him in our weaknesses. He also gets more glory because He's clearly enabling you. Would you be shocked if I told you that my least favorite place to be is standing up in front of people talking? I've learned to enjoy it because I see God enabling me to do it, but really, I never would've chose this. The most feared class I ever had growing up was speech class and I was first forced to take it in eighth grade! However, after I got saved, God kept giving me opportunities to share in front of people and I was willing to do it because even though I didn't like it because I wanted to tell people about Christ and I discovered my gift in time. But we all have a gift and we all have a responsibility as believers to exercise that gift and refine it and share it – not be selfish with it by ignoring it. You may have a gift for administration, evangelism, teaching, giving, showing mercy. Whatever it is, use it here! Be a part of the team and exercise it for the building up of the body!

II. THE MESSAGE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY (VV. 3-4)

Paul sums up his entire teaching ministry right here in verses 3-5. By the way, this greeting is incredible. Paul's greeting pack a lot of theological punch. This one here in Galatians is actually one of the clearest mentions of the gospel in the Bible. And what I want us to notice is **6 specific realities of the gospel.**

A. Gospel Reality #1 – We all need the grace of God. (v. 3)

Grace is the first key gospel word we see here. Before anyone ever believes in Christ they need to understand their need of grace. They need to see that they are a sinner before a holy God and that there is nothing they could ever do to somehow remove that sin barrier in and of themselves. We need God's GRACE. We need His is unearned, unmerited, favor towards us. Like the sign in the men's bathroom here – "God giving us something we don't deserve." It's something you can't work for. No amount of law-keeping, rule-keeping, religion-keeping, or good-doing will ever earn grace. But God has made it available through Christ and so part of Paul's message is obviously that God desires to extend His grace unto men by the work of the cross. It is Paul's desire for them to receive the grace FROM God.

B. Gospel Reality #2 – We all need peace with God. (v. 3)

That's the second key word here – PEACE. There are different forms of peace that we see used in the Bible and that Paul uses and quite frankly, that we use. One form of peace refers more to outward mobility and physicality, like being still or being quiet. We can be peaceful in the sense that we're not moving. Another version of peace might refer to inward well-being – involving our state or condition inwardly. And the other form of peace refers to our standing or position with God relationally. The peace I believe he's talking about here is an all-encompassing, practical peace because they're all connected **as results of the gospel**. According to Vine it could mean "a harmonized relationship between God and man, accomplished through the gospel, but consequently, comes with a sense of rest and contentment." There is an physical peace that results from knowing God. But that outward peace is the result of an inward peace, like in Philippians where he talks about the supernatural peace of God that surpasses all comprehension. But the only reason we can experience that peace is because, in Christ, we have peace with God relationally.

Before we come to Christ, the Bible says we are hostile towards God, enemies of God, whether we thought of ourselves that way or not, we just were. We did the things of the world and god of this world, Satan, had a hold on us through his lies, what Ephesians calls his fortresses or strongholds in the mind. The connecting term that immediately comes to mind and goes hand-

in-hand with relational peace is the term **reconciliation**. To be reconciled is to go from a state of war, to a state of peace and when we put our faith in Christ, that's exactly what happens. We have PEACE with God! We've been made right with God! Romans 5:10 says, "For if while **we were enemies** we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's second desire is for them to receive this all-encompassing peace FROM God.

C. Gospel Reality #3 – God made grace and peace available through Christ. (v. 4)

Notice those two blessings come from God the Father and Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins. If you want grace and peace from God, the only place to look is Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to make that possible. Since the first sin in the Garden of Eden by the first man and woman it became clear that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, and so God became a man and died, shedding His own blood for our forgiveness. God is the giver of grace and peace through Christ. There is nothing we can ever give Him in exchange because He already gave all that was necessary and will not be a receiver of anything. There is nothing we can give God, but simply accept His free gift of salvation. He's the giver. We're receivers.

I have the last words of an old Statesman named William Pitt etched on my mind all the time who on his deathbed said, "I throw myself upon the mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ." That's the mindset we should have if we really understand the gospel. It's that **we are to totally throw our hands up and throw all of our weight on the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross**. He paid it all and we shouldn't even attempt to add to it. To add to the cross is to nullify it and say that it wasn't enough. To try to add to the cross is just to **increase our sin** against Him because we're saying we don't believe His testimony and **increases our debt** because we're trying to **credit ourselves**. Grace and peace were not offered by the law and are not offered by any self-effort of our own. The gospel means 'GOOD NEWS'. If we have to work for heaven, or be circumcised like some of these full grown men were, that's not 'GOOD NEWS'. That's horrible news. Who knows when you've worked enough?

If we think we can ever get right with God by works or some religious ritual, we're making light of sin. **Sin is not easily covered by some good works. It's only covered by the blood of Lamb of God**. Revelation 5:9 says, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." The Lamb being slain was the only way.

1. Those Three Little Words

Never forget those three little words: FOR OUR SINS. Those are words to doubly underline. Those are words I've noticed that the religious institutions leave out when they talk about Christ's death, burial and resurrection. They can talk a lot about how Jesus died, buried and rose again, but if you leave out those three words, you're leaving out the purpose He went through it all! It was FOR OUR SINS. Put yourself in there. He died for your sins and it was enough to pay for them in full. Luther said those words are thunderclaps of protest from heaven against all forms self-righteousness or self-effort.

D. Gospel Reality #4 – God desires that we believe and be rescued. (v. 4)

God gave His only begotten Son to rescue us! Jesus' mission was a rescue mission! That's the heart of our God! We have a missionary God. He loves us so much that when we are helpless, without hope and living in slavery to our sin nature, He will go out of His way to save us from it, even if it means giving His own life. The story of the gospel is the most beautiful story about a loving God who **loves us too much to let us stay captive** to our own sin and the forces of

evil. And that's God's will for men today in this age of grace. For men to believe on Christ, be born again by His Spirit, and restored, transformed by the renewing of their minds. We're to be holy nation, freed from the slavery to the sin nature, set apart to be salt and light in the world during this evil age.

1. Evil Age

And don't miss the fact that we do live in an evil age. It's pretty obvious with the recent abortion law passed in New York that the age is evil. What's the difference between killing a baby inside the womb or outside? It's still murder. What's the difference between the ancient practice of offering child sacrifices to Molech for personal prosperity or sacrificing our children to the god of self for personal gain? It's a selfish world. Many animals have more rights than an unborn child. 2 Peter says that we have escaped **the corruption that is in the world by lust**. We live in lust-crazed world. Evil after evil is committed in lust. Every time you turn around, an advertisement is in your face trying to win you over to their product by appealing to the inner desire for lustful pleasure. Sex sells anything. Man likes to think he's evolving and getting better and better, but according to the testimony of Scripture, the opposite is true. Now I don't believe there are any new sins under the sun but according to Romans 1, man is devolving. It reveals how man started out in a right relationship with God and has grown increasing worse, exchanging the glory of God and worship of Him for the worship of other men, and birds, and animals and even creeping insects. Romans describes this age as filled with wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, jealousy, gossip, slander, arrogance... lacking in trustworthiness, lacking in understanding, and lacking in proper love. And hearty approval is given to those immoral things. David DeSilva said that the best thing this age can do is "pass away". Sometimes it's hard to stay positive. But keep dwelling on what is good. Praise God for rescuing us and not forget that there was a time when we weren't any different, and at times tend to be the same. Now I get holy anger with things like abortion but the reality is, most people haven't flat out rebelled against God. Many of them are simply deceived by Satan and don't need our scowls. They need our help. One man who has had a great impact on me likes to imagine a neon sign above head of the lost person, saying, "Help, I'm deceived!" Many are just trying to live a satisfying life.

2. Spiritually

Praise God we've been delivered spiritually the moment we believed. According to John 17, anymore, we are not of this world anymore than Jesus was and His desire is to send us into the world like He was. 1 John 5:5 says, "Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

3. Physically

Well, we'll be delivered by death or rapture. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." We don't belong here. We belong in heaven, with a glorified Savior and glorified bodies that don't ache like these ones. Where you can sit down or stand up without your back giving out. Without that crazy sciatic nerve giving you a hard time. If we have a loved one in heaven, be glad they're home.

E. Gospel Reality #5 – All of this is God's will. (v. 4)

It's God's will for men to receive His grace and peace by accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior and being rescued from this present evil age. Elsewhere it says God is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. So I just ask, "Have you aligned

yourself with God's will by accepting Jesus as Your Savior?" It's a dangerous thing to be outside of His will.

III. OTHER GOSPEL PASSAGES: Since we're talking about the gospel I wanted to share a couple other Scriptural references of the gospel.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

This is probably the first place we should think of first when we think of what the gospel is.

2. John 3:16

This is the gospel in a nutshell. Personally, I like to combine 1 Cor. 15 with John 3:16 and say something like, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son Jesus, came into the world and died for our sins, was buried, and raised back to life three days later, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."

3. If I could sum it up in six words? (for when someone asks you how can I be saved)

By GRACE – free, unmerited, can't work for it.

Through FAITH – meaning we need to trust something; faith always has an object.

In CHRIST – that object put our faith in or trust in is Jesus Christ and his sacrificial, atoning death on the cross.

When someone asks you how many steps does it take to get to heaven? You can reply with confidence: JUST ONE. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved.

And then I just wanted to say that I put some of these gospel tract booklets on the connection center table out in the foyer. This was something I placed out in our last church and we went through quite a few there but I like to use these sometimes to share my faith. Obviously they are for anyone who wants to know more about what the Bible says about how to get to heaven but they are for you also, to use to share Christ or as a help in sharing Christ. They have a clear gospel message in them and I will keep them stocked.

IV. THE MOTIVE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY (V. 5)

In verse 5 we see our last gospel reality.

Gospel Reality #6 – Everything is for God's eternal glory. (v. 5)

"To whom be the glory forevermore. Amen." When we do the will of God by believing in Jesus Christ, and are given grace and peace, and are rescued from this evil age, God is glorified by that. I mean, that is the purpose of existence. The glory of God. He is being glorified by saving men in His grace. Romans says, "God has shut up everyone in disobedience. Why? So that He may show mercy to all." God is revealing things about Himself through His current program that was previously unknown. I always think of the angels. Can you imagine what they thought when they saw God become a babe? And then to see Him die for man's sins? What a revelation! As far as we know they never saw the grace of God like that. Angels can't be redeemed. When 1/3 of them fell away with Satan, they fell away forever. Their eternal destiny is sealed in the lake of fire. But 1 Peter says angels long to into God's work of saving people when the gospel is preached. God is revealing His loving grace right now, even to angels. And anyone who tries to work for grace, if you think about it, is working against God's purpose of existence as we know it.

If you try to save yourself by doing something, ultimately, you have no one to praise but yourself. You don't give glory to God for it. You give yourself glory. If we could earn it we would be praising ourselves for eternity. Forget Amazing Grace! Let's hear Amazing WORKS!:

"Excessive works! How sweaty the sound

That came from the god in me!
I once was bad but now I'm good
Thanks to me sincerity.
'Twas works that earned my place with God
And deeds that made Him smile.
How long I toiled and proved my worth
And trudged that second mile.
When we've been there ten thousand years
Being paid our hard-earned fun,
We've no less days to sing our praise
And boast of all we've done."

Credit: Chuck Swindoll, Romans Commentary

You see the thing about a works-based salvation is that in the end you don't praise God and give Him the glory because you worked for it and you deserve the praise. But an authentic gospel is anti-works and desires to give God all the glory and credit in salvation.

Unlike the false teachers, whose motive was to glorify themselves, Paul's motive is to glorify God. While they were trying to claim that they had the marks of faith on their body by being circumcised, Paul says in Galatians 6:17, "I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus." Paul was beat without number, five times received 39 lashes, three times beaten with rods, and one time stoned. And he did it all for Christ because He was a bond-slave of Christ. That's hard to relate to in our first world Christianity isn't it? Paul went through what he did for God's glory because God was so gracious to him. What are we willing to go through for the glory of God?

V. MAJOR APPLICATIONS

1. We have a God-given ministry! (like Paul)

We're to make disciples. That's what we are to be about! Sure, we all have different titles for work – one's a farmer, one's a rancher, one's a nurse, one's a stay at home mom, one's a waiter/waitress – But we're all disciple-makers. All fisherman. We're all fishing for men. We're all ambassadors of Christ. We represent Him in this world. We have a God-given ministry and message. We have an authoritative message, not from men, but from God and it's the most beautiful message ever told. Let's let the world know about our God who rescues sinners from their sins!

2. We are a team!

We all have a responsibility to do personal evangelism, certainly, but let's also remember that getting the message out there requires a team, a body of believers. As a body, we need each other. God has given us different gifts which we are to use to edify and build up one another. If you don't know what that gift is, remember to prayerfully and patiently discover your gifts and your part in His service.

3. REMEMBER: We've been rescued! We've been delivered!

Stand on that promise this week. We have been rescued and will further be rescued in glory so let's live like it! Live for the glory of God! Let everything we do be done with the motive of glorifying God for His saving grace.