

GALATIANS

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Galatians 1:1–5

1:1–2 *¹From Paul—an apostle [chosen] not by any group or individual but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who brought him back to life ²and all the believers who are with me. To the churches in Galatia.*

In this opening statement, Paul asserted that his apostleship was vested in him by God Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. In every letter Paul wrote to other churches, he emphatically makes this declaration as the foundation of the authority by which he directs the churches that were established under his ministry. However, unlike his other letters, he further stated that this appointment had nothing to do with any group or individual. In doing so, he set the tone for this letter. In no other letter does Paul express himself so forcefully with so much negative criticism in which he defined the Truth of the gospel message in opposition to the false gospel of the Judaizers (*Acts 15:1*). Throughout this letter, he often repeated this theme. Since the Gospel he proclaimed was God-given, not man-influenced, he confidently

told the Galatian church that his authority could not be challenged or questioned by the Judaizers or anyone else.

Once he affirmed his divinely bestowed apostleship, Paul gives his customary greeting to the Galatian church. However, unlike many of his other letters in which he named individuals who were with him, Paul mentioned no names in this letter. He simply referred to brothers who also sent their greetings to them. Pressed by the urgency of the crisis undermining the church, Paul set aside his customary practices of naming his ministry companions.

DIG DEEPER: WHAT IS AN APOSTLE?

It is not hard to know what the word apostle means, because the apostles themselves made the definition very clear. ²¹*He must be one of the men who accompanied Jesus with us the entire time that the Lord Jesus was among us.* ²²*This person must have been with us from the time that John was baptizing people to the day that Jesus was taken from us* (Acts 1:21–22). Thus, we may conclude that an apostle was one who had traveled with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. As such, an apostle was one who had heard what Jesus taught, witnessed the miracles He performed, and experienced the miscarriage of justice that resulted in Jesus' execution. An apostle would also be a witness to Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Such a man could provide reliable eyewitness testimony to Jesus' work, which provided salvation to those for whom He died.

One argument against the authenticity of Paul's apostleship appears to have been the fact that he was neither numbered among the pillars of Jerusalem (*Galatians 2:9*) nor one of the original twelve apostles of our Lord (*Luke 6:13–16*). In Acts 2:12–26, one hundred and twenty disciples cast lots to replace Judas Iscariot. The lots were cast and Matthias replaced Judas, numbered with the Twelve. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ confronted Paul as he entered Damascus (*Acts 9:1–19*), completely transforming his heart and redirecting his perspective about Jesus. A three-year sojourn in the Arabian Peninsula followed this encounter. During this time, Paul received intensive training in the truth of the Gospel (*Galatians 1:15–17*). Therefore, as an apostle "born out of due time" (*1 Corinthians 15:8–9*), Paul became the primary apostle appointed by God to proclaim the Gospel to those who were not Jews (*Acts 9:15–16*).

1:3 Good will and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ are yours!

Paul addressed the Galatians with the familiar salutation that he used in all of his letters. Addressing them as God's redeemed children, Paul assured them that God's good will, His grace, had already been given to them in the peace of their Savior Jesus Christ. In this way, Paul always greeted those he wrote with this very fundamental assertion that they were reconciled to God by and through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. Without this grace secured through God's Son, there could never be any peace or good will from the Father.

1:4 In order to free us from this present evil world, Christ took the punishment for our sins, because that was what our God and Father wanted.

Paul's salutation to the Galatians was not a casual observation about their spiritual state of affairs. Rather, it was a reassertion of the Gospel, an affirmation of the means by which their salvation was secured. Here, he reminded them that Jesus Christ gave His life by His sacrifice on the Cross to set them free from the evil of this world. How does God set people free? He sets people free by placing the burden of their sin upon Christ, Who took the punishment for man's offense.

This was no accident. Rather it was the outcome of God's sovereign plan. Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God by His Father's will, provided for salvation by destroying the forces of evil through His death and resurrection. Jesus suffered for the sake of sinners not only to give them eternal life, but also to keep them free from the evil influences of a corrupt world.

1:5 Glory belongs to our God and Father forever! Amen.

Paul concluded his salutation by offering praise "to our God and Father." Paul praised and glorified God to remind the Galatians that their salvation was given by God's gracious will. God alone, through Jesus Christ, was the only source for their salvation. By directing the

Galatians to the praise of God in this way, he essentially laid down the foundation for the rest of his treatise for the supremacy of the Gospel.

Notes/Applications

Paul's salutation reveals three essential principles concerning God's work in the lives of the redeemed. First, God appoints the redeemed to a calling that He confers upon each one's life. Along with the general call to a life of service and care, God commissions certain individual believers to specific offices of ministry. It is His prerogative alone to commission His workers to any authority, human or otherwise. The call upon the life of the redeemed is accomplished only through divine appointment.

Second, the salvation of the redeemed is secure in the finished work of Jesus Christ. God, by His sovereign and perfect will, determined that salvation would be given to the lost through the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Through Christ alone the redeemed have a secure relationship with their God and Father as His ransomed children. This blood-bought position cannot and should not be undermined by the ambitious inquiries of a person's corrupt mind.

Third, the redeemed must pay close attention to the evil realities of this world, which is governed by Satan and his evil forces. Since Satan has been given the position to rule the world for a season by God Himself (*John 12:31, 14:11*), he tries to impose his will on God's secure children. However, the redeemed have been set free from Satan's power by Christ's finished work on Calvary. Praising and glorifying the Almighty, their God and Father, believers must firmly stand upon Christ's finished work and victoriously resist the devil, recognizing that their freedom from bondage is secure in Christ and Christ alone.

Above all things God's children must fortify their hearts and minds with God's eternal truth in order to overcome the subtle deceit of the evil one.