

Galatians 1 (Part 1): 1-5 • Paul, an Apostle

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It's always fun to start a new book study. We're going to start Galatians this morning, so open your Bibles to the book of Galatians. Right after the book that we just started, or we just finished rather, which was 2 Corinthians. So here we are in Galatians.

And we're going to cover the first five verses this morning. Yep, we're going to be smoking. And here we go. It goes like this:

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead—² and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let's stop there and let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we embark on this brand new book study this morning, we just are praying here for wisdom and insight from You.

We confess, Lord God, that when we open the scriptures, apart from You they're just words on a page, but Lord, You can make them alive. And You can make them our very bread that we eat and use to nourish ourselves spiritually.

And we pray Lord that You would do that. We pray that You minister Your Word to us and that You would allow us, God, all the strength and encouragement that we need to apply the scriptures to our lives.

We ask you to be with us, Lord, in a special way, in Jesus' name, amen.

You know, in the span of about 30 years for the apostle Paul between his conversion to Christ, ultimately to his incarceration in Rome. Wow, what a life! What a life that he lived and what a work that he did. He, during that time, visited several provinces in the Roman Empire when travel was not an easy thing to do.

And wherever he went, he shared Christ and started many churches wherever he was. All of his visits were then followed up by letters to the churches, in which he would encourage them in their faith. He would also address issues and problems and concerns and stuff like that. Of all the letters that Paul wrote, we believe that Galatians was probably among the very earliest.

And he wrote it to this area, which by the way, Galatia is not a city, it's a region. It would be like the apostle Paul writing a letter to the churches in the Treasure Valley. Although at that time there were about four or five churches in the region of Galatia that would have received this letter.

In a nutshell, what had happened in the region of Galatia is much like what had happened in the city of Corinth. After Paul went there, shared the gospel, started a church and then left, people followed up behind Paul, people whom he referred to as false teachers who came and brought another message.

And essentially their message was Jesus isn't enough. They weren't necessarily opposed to talking about Jesus, per se. They weren't even all that opposed to talking about Jesus and the cross. And they would even say, we believe in all of that. They simply said it's not enough.

And they came to bring a message to the Christians there in Galatia saying that you must also submit yourself to the right of Jewish circumcision and follow the Law of Moses in order to be saved. And their line of logic went something like this:

Jesus was a Jew. Salvation is from the Jews. You must become like a Jew. You must be circumcised into the family of God so that you're a child of Abraham. And then you must submit to the Law of Moses, which every Jew has done since the Law was given. That is how you are saved.

And this is not the message that Paul had preached. And so, Paul writes this letter to speak to those issues. But he doesn't just have; he's not just speaking to the issue of the gospel and how they had perverted it.

He also has to do what he did in 2 Corinthians and that means he has to defend himself because you'll remember when we went through 2 Corinthians, we learned that when people are trying to discredit Paul's message, the best way to do that is to discredit the messenger.

And so those are the two themes that we will see throughout the course of this study. He will speak of his calling as an apostle and he will speak of his message. And he will say repeatedly, Jesus is enough. Jesus is enough. And those are the themes, and we see actually him addressing those things in just these first five verses.

Now, understand something, what you're seeing in these first five verses is a very typical way they wrote letters back in those days. Letters would begin with the author's name. You and I do it exactly the opposite. When we're writing a letter, we say, dear so and so, then we write our letter, and then at the end we say, sincerely, or yours truly, or whatever, and then we sign our name.

They didn't do that. They put their name at the top. And then they would put the audience, or who the letter was addressed to, and then they'd give a nice little greeting that would be usually— a very common thing was like Grace and Peace, then they would give a little praise like, I praise my God because of you or da, da, da.

And that is a very typical form of an early letter. Paul follows that entire pattern except for the praise. He does not give these people praise. He is very grieved about these people and you're going to see that as we get into the other verses. He's very upset by the fact that they have already moved off and away from the gospel that he preached.

Let's take a look here again at these verses. If you look at verse one again, it starts by saying, *Paul, an apostle*, but he doesn't just leave it there. He says, *not from men nor through men, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead*.

And in this initial introduction from his letter, Paul is coming out swinging as it relates to the questions that they had about him and his calling and his appointment as an apostle. By the way, he says, *Paul, an apostle*. The word apostle means 'one who is sent.' All right?

But Paul just didn't want to tell them he was an apostle. He didn't just say Paul, one who is sent. He said Paul, one who is sent, not from men, not by men, but from God. Sent by Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul's saying, my sending forth

or my commission even, my appointment as an apostle, was not because some guys got together and said, that Paul guy, he's a pretty good guy. He seems like he's got his act together pretty well. What do you guys think? Let's make Paul an apostle. Show of hands here. [Pastor raises his hands to vote yes.] Everybody think Paul should be an apostle?

You know, it wasn't a popular vote. He didn't go to college and really impress his professors. We think you ought to be in the ministry. Paul says that his appointment to his apostolic office was by God. In fact, we don't have to go very far to learn all about how Paul was first saved, and then ultimately called. It's all written down for us.

Luke, who is a master historian, wrote it all down for us in the book of Acts. So, here's what I want you to do. I want you to put your finger or something right here in the page of Galatians, and I want you to turn over to Acts chapter 9.

And we're going to read together these two aspects of Paul's life, where he was converted to Christ; or saved, and then where he was commissioned, or called. I want you to think also, while you're turning there and so forth— Acts 9 by the way. I want you to think about your own conversion to Christ.

I want you to think about: Where were you? What were you thinking at the time when you got saved? What was going on in your life? What was happening? Was something very difficult happening in your life that drew you to the gospel? Or did you hear the gospel as a child and then later on just confess Christ? Or just what was going on in your life?

The reason I'm saying that, or I'm wanting to point that out for you, is I want you to contrast that with what's going on in Paul's life at the time that he gets saved. It says here in chapter 9, beginning in verse 1, Acts 9, it says, *But Saul, (and that was his name before he changed it basically to Paul) still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, (that means Christians) went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, (and the Way was another name for Christianity) men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*”

Now you know what's going on in Paul's life, right? He's about to get saved. Here's what he's like, [Pastor growls the following] I want to rid the earth of these vermin. You know, as far as he was concerned, Jesus was a blasphemer. [growling continues] Who is this Nazarene that people think is something special? They even think he's the Messiah. How stupid can these people get?

Paul is just mad. He's angry and he's doing everything in his power to rid the world of these people. He's going out to get the high priest and says, I want orders. I want permission from you because I'm going to go to Damascus and I'm going to sniff out those Christians and when I find them, I'm going to bind them and I'm going to bring them back here to Jerusalem and they're going to stand trial and they will suffer for their stupidity. That was Paul.

He wasn't like going, oh God, if you're there, or anything like that. He was mad. That's what was happening in his life. Verse 3 says, *Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.* ⁴ *And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* ⁵ *And he said, "Who are you, Lord?"* *And He said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."* ⁶ *But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."* ⁷ *The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.* ⁸ *Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.* ⁹ *And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

¹⁰ *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias."* *And he said, "Here I am, Lord."* ¹¹ *And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,"* ¹² *and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."* ¹³ *But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem."* ¹⁴ *And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."* ¹⁵ *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."* ¹⁶ *For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name."* ¹⁷ *So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."* ¹⁸ *And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;* ¹⁹ *and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples (meaning the Church) at Damascus.*

And guess what? He wasn't arresting them anymore. He was fellowshiping with them. Right? He was worshiping with them. The man who was angry and mad and was determined to rid the world of these people was now one of them. Isn't that crazy?

That's what the Bible has to say about how the man, Paul, got saved and it was a supernatural work. I mean, okay, when everybody gets saved, it's a supernatural work, but what I'm trying to communicate is that most of the time when people get saved, they don't get saved like Paul.

I'll be honest with you, very few people are absolutely angry and really violently opposed to the gospel or Christians. And then suddenly get struck down to the ground by a flash of light that blinds them for three days and hear the voice of Christ speaking to them, saying, what in the world are you doing?

That usually doesn't happen. Paul is making the point when he talks about his calling, his appointment, he's making the point that this wasn't his idea. I didn't just decide one day, I want to be an apostle, and I'm going to take a message to these people and wow them and stuff like that. This wasn't his idea.

It wasn't his calling from that standpoint. It was God's calling upon his life. It was God's appointment. God chose this man and knocked him on his rear to get his attention. And then, if you'll turn over to the 13th chapter of Acts, we've seen his conversion. Let's look now at his appointment as an apostle, a sent out one.

Acts chapter 13, just the first three verses, go like this. *Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, (it names them there) Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and, (then what did they do) sent them off.*

That's the title; that's what "apostle" means, "one sent off." Understand something here and Luke makes it very clear by quoting this thing, it was the Holy Spirit who spoke. Again, it wasn't a man who just— they were praying and worshiping, and one of the guys just thought, I've been thinking about Paul, and I think we ought to send him out as a missionary.

It says the Holy Spirit spoke. Now, how did the Holy Spirit speak? Did they just suddenly hear a voice from heaven? No, of course not. Luke made the point, he went to trouble to tell us there were prophets there at the church in Antioch. Somebody had a prophetic gifting, and they're worshiping the Lord and they're fasting, and somebody said, hey, I got a message from God.

All right, let's hear it, and the message was, *"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* That was God's message; that was His statement, His declaration. Paul is— when he speaks to the Galatians and speaks to his apostleship— again, he's saying, I'm not self-appointed. Men didn't appoint me. God appointed me. God saved me. God appointed me. Right? All right. You can get the gist of what we're dealing with here as we talk about these things.

Back to Galatians chapter 1. Now, we've seen that Paul's salvation, or his conversion, was just an absolute work of God. We've seen that his appointment was a work of God. The Holy Spirit spoke. But also, his message was a work of God. He didn't come up with it himself.

We're not going to deal with these verses really today, just except just to read them. I want you to look down at verses 11 and 12, right here in chapter 1; 11 and 12, here's what it says:

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel, and that means good news, that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now, this is an important statement by the apostle Paul because Paul was a latecomer to the whole apostolic thing. He didn't walk with Jesus. He didn't talk with Jesus. He wasn't around. We don't know where Paul was during that time, but Paul was not a disciple of Jesus. Obviously.

How is he going to learn the gospel? How is he going to learn the way for a man to be saved? Did he sit down with Peter and John? Once he got saved, did the disciples at Damascus say, okay Paul, now that you're saved, sit down. We got something to tell you?

No. Paul says very clearly here in verse 11, he didn't receive this or— verse 12 rather, he says, I didn't receive it from any man. The gospel that I preached to you when I came to your region, I did not learn by instruction from any man. I heard it from Jesus Christ Himself. Right? And that's what I told you.

What have we laid out for you here? We've talked about his conversion to Christ. It was really just crazy. We talked about his appointment to his apostleship. Again, not his idea. The Holy Spirit spoke, and now we talk about his message. He clearly says here, I didn't come up with it; nobody taught it to me. Jesus spoke it to me through a revelation. All right? All right.

Let's stop for just a moment. Because some of you might be wondering, and rightly so, and you might be thinking to yourself, just not here... hold the phone. What makes me want to believe that Paul's revelation was any better than anybody else who comes along and says, [Pastor raises his hand and uses a self-important voice.] I've had a revelation from God.

In other words, what sets Paul the Apostle apart from someone like, say, Joseph Smith, who also claimed to have a revelation from God? Who also claimed to have a gospel. That, by the way, is vastly different from Paul's. What's the difference? What makes one of them true and one of them not? Right... depending on what you believe.

Well, it is true that both the apostle Paul and Joseph Smith claimed to have a revelation from God. But let me tell you something, that's where the similarities end right there.

In fact, when we get to Galatians chapter 2, and I won't make you turn forward in your Bible, but when we get to the second chapter of Galatians, you're going to find out Paul is going to tell you that when he began to share his gospel with people, he then went to Jerusalem to meet with some of the apostles like Peter and James, not James the apostle by the way, James the earthly brother of Jesus who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

And he sat down, and he told them what Jesus had given him as a gospel to see if he was on track. And he's going to say that in chapter two. I went to these brothers to tell them to share my gospel with them. He, and the way he words it is, to see if I had been running my race in vain.

In other words, he said I compared it to what they knew. I said, "Okay guys, listen to me. This is the gospel that Jesus gave me." And he laid it out. And you know what they said to him? "That's exactly what we've got."

Yeah. See, that's the difference you guys. It's not just one man coming up and going, okay, I had a revelation, and this is it: Da, da, da, da, da. There it is. And then people coming along and going, yeah, okay, that sounds good to me. No, no, no no, no. That's not what Paul did. He questioned whether or not what he got was real. He went to these other men and said, "What do you guys think of this?"

They said, "Yeah, that's right on. It's exactly what we've got. It's exactly the stuff Jesus gave us. Exactly."

You get it? So, that is a huge difference right there. The original apostles were in agreement with Paul because it was the same gospel that they had.

In fact, Peter went on to write about Paul in one of his epistles. And he said some pretty amazing things about the apostle Paul. This is Peter, right, who is considered to be a pillar of the Church, right? Listen to what Peter wrote. He said,

2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. (Look what he goes on to say) There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”

What are the other Scriptures that Peter is talking about? Well, the only other Scriptures that existed at that time was the Old Testament. The New Testament was still being written.

But look what Peter says. In the last part of this section, he says some of the things Paul writes are challenging to understand. And frankly, there are people out there, he (Peter) calls them ignorant and unstable, who like to twist and contort and pervert what Paul says.

But you know what he says? He says, you know what? They do that with the other Scriptures too. He didn't just say, like they do with the Scriptures. He called them the other Scriptures. In other words, Peter is likening the writings of Paul to Scripture. Already during the life of Peter, during the life of Paul, Paul's writings were considered to be divinely inspired and the Church knew it. They understood it. And Peter wrote about it. All right.

Now, as we go back to Galatians, there's one other thing that I want to bring out from verse one before we move on and just look at what else these other verses say. I want to read verse one again, okay? Follow along with me.

Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, (and here's the part I want you to see) Who raised Him from the dead. (That's important) Who raised Him from the dead.

What's he talking about? He's talking about the resurrection. Listen, whenever the New Testament writers speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, what they are speaking about is God's stamp of approval on the person of Jesus Christ and the work He did on the cross. Okay? Because anybody can come along and say, I am the Messiah. I am the Savior. And anybody can come along and say, I am going to die. And when I do, it will be for you and for your sins. Anybody can say that. So how do we know that what Jesus said and what Jesus did has been validated? The Resurrection.

You guys understand that's why the Doctrine of the Resurrection is so important. That's why Paul says in Corinthians that if you don't believe in the Resurrection, then I mean, if the Resurrection didn't happen, we're all lost. Okay? Because the Resurrection is God's validation, God's stamp of approval.

Jesus is who He said, and what He did on the cross was accepted in Heaven. It was real and valid and legit. Right? That's what the Resurrection proves for you and I. Paul is talking about the Resurrection in order to say, I have not been called by men. I have not been sent out by men. I was called and sent out by God, right, Who raised Jesus from the dead. In other words, the validating aspect of the One who called him, Jesus Christ, is validated also by the Resurrection of Jesus from the grave. So, validation upon validation, and that's what he's (Paul) saying here.

All right. Verse two, he goes on, he says— after he's already said, this is me *Paul*, he says, *and all the brothers who are with me.*

There's brothers who are aware that he's writing this letter to the churches in Galatia, and he says now, *To the churches*, notice plural, *of Galatia: Grace and peace* to you, or it doesn't say to you, just *Grace and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Again, a very common Christian greeting, and then he goes on in verse 4— and you'll notice even in this greeting, he just can't help but speak about the gospel.

Who, verse four, and he's speaking of Jesus here, *gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* Just in case there's any doubt about what Paul taught when he was there, he reiterates it here. Jesus gave Himself for our sins.

And what he's going to say to these people through the course of this letter, and you'll hear it again in the course of this study, is that Jesus was enough. Because these false teachers who came into the region of Galatia were saying, oh, Jesus is okay, but you have to add circumcision, keeping the Law of Moses, and so on and so forth.

And by the way, that's been going on for 2000 years. We've just come up with variations. And it's basically the message that yeah, accept Jesus plus this, and sometimes it's very subtle. And we even are okay, is that the real, is that a Jesus plus or is...?

Listen, anything you add to Jesus is a different gospel. And that's what Paul is going to say as we move on. We'll get into it next week. He's going to call it a different gospel when you add something to faith in Jesus Christ. And I don't, and today, you can waltz into a church and they're going to tell you, Jesus is great and wonderful, but you also got to be baptized in water. And some of you came out of that.

And some of you learned that Jesus was all great and fine, but you got to confess your sins to a priest, and you have to take communion. And that is how you're saved. And for some of you, it was something else. It was Jesus plus you got to speak in tongues, and if you don't speak in tongues, you're not saved.

And then there's this and then there's that... and this is exactly what was going on. And Paul is going to argue throughout the course of this letter, Jesus is enough! It's not Jesus plus.

I loved the old hymn we sang this morning, "It is Well with My Soul." So, I pulled up the lyrics again on my phone. And the one lyric that I love:

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

My sin not in part, but the whole thing, right, has been nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. I love that lyric because that's exactly the message that Paul is giving to the Galatians in this letter.

By the way, did you know that's that what separates Christianity from every other "world religion?" I hate that term, but you know what I mean. Every other belief system. How about that? If anybody ever comes up to you and says, okay, Christianity, so how's this so different and stuff like that?

Sum it up like this. Now, please understand that not every belief system believes in heaven, or even a life after this life. But those that do believe in a heaven and believe that there's a way that you can attain that heaven— every single belief system puts the responsibility on YOU to get it done. Except biblical Christianity.

Biblical Christianity is the only belief system that says you can't get there. You can't do it. You're not good enough. You can't earn it. You can't be righteous. You can't be good enough. You're lost, and there's nothing you can do about it, except to call upon the name of God through Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for you to pay what you couldn't pay. All you can do is cry out for the mercy of God! That's it! There's nothing else you can do.

But you know what? Christianity is alone in that message. Every— hey, you think those people that come to your door are just doing that because they like you? They are earning their way to a better heaven, a better resurrection, a better something as it relates to heaven. That's why they're coming to your door. They're earning something. They're doing it because they need to be good enough to reach a higher level. That is not Biblical Christianity.

Biblical Christianity knows nothing of that, right? We are saved. In fact, here, let me show you. Here's how Paul says it when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And it is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

“For by grace, you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It's the gift of God, not the result of work, so that no one can boast.”

You guys are getting ready, probably. You're already starting to think about Christmas gifts, I imagine, for your family and friends, right? Probably starting to, I mean, if you're smart, you're starting to think about it.

How many of you are planning to give gifts to family and friends with a little note on top saying, that'll be 20 dollars please, thank you? None of you, right? And you know why? Because then it wouldn't be a gift. What is the definition of a gift? Something that is given freely, right?

What does it say about your salvation? It says, *it's the gift of God*. Do you earn it? Do you pay for it? Do you merit that salvation? Not possible! And if you

don't get that, he goes on and says another way. It's *not a result of works, so that no one can boast*. And what he means by that is boasting in ourselves.

I think we're going to be doing a lot of boasting about Jesus at that time. We're going to go, wow, that Jesus! Woo, look what He did! But nobody is going to be in Heaven going, you know how I got here? Oh man, have I been good. Nobody is going to say that. Not one person, right? We're just going to sit up there going, man, He is good! That's all we're going to say.

When Paul wrote to Titus, he said it another way. He said,

Titus 3:5 (ESV)

...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

“He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness. (that's not how it work) He saved us rather according to His own mercy, (and that's mercy, a key word to understand salvation) by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Here's how the apostle John wrote it.

John 1:12-13 (ESV)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”

Notice he didn't start off by saying, and yet to all who kept the Law and got circumcised and lived a good life. He doesn't say that. He says, *“to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*

How were they born? Through good works? Through good merit? Through righteous living? No. He says they *were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but they were born of God.*

Listen, you were not born of you. You were born of God, for those of you that are born again in Christ. It's all Him, guys. That's the point of what is said over and over and over.

And then let me show you one more testimony from Peter. He says,

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! (he says) According to His great mercy, (not according to your good works) he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded (through your good works. Oops! That's not what it says. You're) being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Here's the reason I bring up this passage. There are people who believe that Jesus saved them by His death on the cross, but that they've got to keep it alive. In other words, they believe they're saved by grace through faith, but kept by good works, you see, so it gets a little weird complex there. How do you guard your salvation? How do you guard it? What does that passage say? Can we put it back up for just a second?

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It says at the very end that you're being, through *God's power, guarded through faith*. Faith. That's believing. Right?

That's not a good work; that's just believing. I believe. Right? So it's not something that is part of that— that you merit. So you see, again, if other religions or belief systems believe that there is such a thing as heaven or eternal life, they believe you get there by being a good person or whatever it takes.

I remember many, many years ago, I've told you guys this several times, a guy in our fellowship was sharing Christ with a young man and talking about heaven and stuff and the young guy just said, what do I need to do? But what he was asking was, give me the rules. Tell me what I need, what I need to do.

No, no, no, no. You're missing the point. It's what Jesus already did. Right? He already did it. It's done. It's finished. Isn't that the last thing He said on the cross before He dismissed His spirit? It's finished.

I want to close up here this morning in just a couple of minutes that I have left, looking at just one final point in verses 4 and 5. May I read it again for you, please? He says again in verse 4, *Who, again speaking of Jesus, gave Himself for our sins, and I want you to look at this, to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

What have you been saved from? *The present evil age.*

You and I have been saved from the present evil age. Well, what's the present evil age anyway? Well, the word 'age' in the Greek simply means time period. And we're living in the present evil age right now. And what makes it evil is two things: We're living in a fallen world with a fallen nature.

In other words, we have a nature living within us that tends towards sin and rebellion. That's just life. We're sinners. We're born that way. And we have that literally hardwired into us. That's why there's evil in the world because there's evil in our hearts. And we, before Christ, we were slaves to that, but there's also an enemy, right? There's an enemy who is ruling over this present evil age, and that's Satan. Here's how the apostle John says it.

1 John 5:19 (NIV)

We know that ... the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

We know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know that. Okay? We're not looking for this world to be the kingdom of God glorified

because this present world needs to— it's under the control of the enemy, and it's going to pass away when the rightful King comes to rule and reign.

Let me just remind you of what Paul said to you and I. *Jesus Christ gave Himself to deliver us from the present evil age.* That means from the power of the flesh, the sinful nature, and from the power of Satan to tempt and ruin your lives. He gave Himself to deliver you, which means “to set you free.”

And by the way, that's going to be a major theme throughout the rest of our study of Galatians. And if you like the topic of freedom, and I love it, we're going to get a healthy dose throughout our study of Galatians. Paul's going to talk about it, and he's going to talk about it again and again, and he's going to keep reiterating that you and I have been set free, and what he's going to say to the Galatian churches is that you are walking back into slavery by walking back and thinking that the Law can save you.

The Law was never meant to save you. And so don't walk back into deception and slavery and darkness. It's for freedom that He saved you, so be free. And we're going to talk a lot about that through the course of this study. And I trust that when we're finished with the book of Galatians, we're all going to have a better understanding and a greater appreciation for this idea of our freedom in Christ. Amen?