

# Not From Men Nor Through Man

*Galatians 1:1-5*

*With Study Questions*

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*Galatians 1:1-5*

**Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),<sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>4</sup> who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,<sup>5</sup> to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:1-5).**

**Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead) (Galatians 1:1)**

Have you ever met anybody who said they were an apostle? My advice is to either pray for, or get away from, such a person. For even though the word merely means “one sent forth” or “sent on a mission” people who use the term to describe themselves are usually trying to claim for themselves some type of authority they don’t actually have.

Robert Duval in the movie *The Apostle* actually baptized himself as an apostle. The movie was quite accurate in terms of modern self-made apostles. Paul begins his letter with a clear assertion that he was not self-appointed, nor appointed by some man or board or any other human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Apostle with a capital ‘A’ is a position which has unique biblical features and requirements; as well as a unique purpose. When Judas was replaced, the requirements were laid out by Peter:

**“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,<sup>22</sup> beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:21, 22 NIV).**

An apostle had to be an eyewitness of the works of Jesus. Even the Apostles wouldn’t make the final decision but left it up to God’s sovereignty by casting lots between Mathias and Barsabas.

A marking feature of an Apostle was the ability to perform the signs of an Apostle.

**...in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.<sup>12</sup> Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among**

**you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds (2 Corinthians 12:11, 12).**

Anyone claiming to be an Apostle must be able to perform these supernatural signs and wonders. This is the means by which God confirms His message. We read this regarding Paul in Acts 14.

**Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands (Acts 14:3).**

Paul gives a pretty strong argument for being the last Apostle when he indicates that he was born out of due time, or abnormally born.

**After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:7, 8).**

Add all this up with the many other passages and we conclude that the office of an Apostle ended in the first century. The purpose of the office was to be the foundation of the church.

**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19, 20).**

And to end with an exclamation point, Paul tells us that no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid.

**For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. <sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-11).**

All this is to say *Sola Scriptura*. The Scriptures are complete and sufficient. No other apostolic or prophetic revelation is forthcoming, or necessary.

Paul's call was not through men but through **Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead**. It is no small thing to question the authority of the Holy Scriptures. To question the authority of the Scriptures is to question Him who has the power over death itself.

**...and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:2).**

Though Paul had this apostolic authority, he didn't operate independently. His authority was recognized by the brethren who surrounded him.

The letter is written to the churches of Galatia. There is a level of apostasy where a church is no longer considered a church. And though we will read that the churches in Galatia were a bit of a mess, for false teachers had subdued much authority, they were still considered churches and had not yet descended to the level of a synagogue of Satan (Revelation 3:9).

It is interesting today that churches call themselves chapels, centers, and fellowships while cults call themselves churches.

**Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:3).**

This very common salutation from Paul contains the heart of the gospel. We are saved by grace. God's grace results in our being made spiritually alive and being granted faith which justifies us before God. Understanding justification by faith is, as we shall see, the primary goal of this epistle. We are declared righteous, not according to anything we have done, nor according to anything God has done in us, but according to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our acquittal is based upon an alien righteousness. For our peace, we do not look at the Christ in our hearts, which is so popular today, but to the risen and victorious King of kings who is presently at the right hand of the Father, as revealed in Scripture.

This grace most assuredly produces peace *with* God and, at times, the peace *of* God. Peace *with* God is absolute and something in which we can be fully confident since this peace is based upon the righteousness of Jesus. The peace *of* God can seem to be strong at times and weak at other times. It is, however, something for which we should strive as we grow in maturity and assurance in Christ.

Churches are to be a means of God's grace and peace. When churches are full of God's word, the gospel and the sacraments, they are a means of grace. The churches at Galatia had been infiltrated by those seeking to pervert the gospel. Churches are always in danger of departing from the gospel, hence Paul is always praying that grace and peace abide.

This is not grace and peace from men, from kings, or from self (as it is so popular today to be at peace with oneself) but from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Churches should be focused on a message of reconciliation between God and men.

**...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (Galatians 1:4).**

We learn here that Jesus gave Himself for our sins. Many Christians play fast and loose with this notion. What does this actually mean? It must mean everything necessary to complete that which the remaining portion of the verse indicates – deliverance. The Father gave His Son, the Son gave Himself. This includes the eternal decree before time began as well as the living of a life that fulfilled all righteousness plus the ordaining of His own betrayal, trial, and death. When we learn of Christ giving Himself, it is the full and complete work of redemption necessary for deliverance.

Why do I say this is used in a fast and loose way? Because the death of Christ is thrown around in such an indiscriminate fashion that it loses its power. The very heart of this epistle screams against such things. To say that Jesus died for everybody, indiscriminately, is to say that He didn't die for anybody effectively; He merely gave people the opportunity to be saved. The next words of Paul allow us to entertain no such notion.

He gave Himself **that He might deliver us**. He is the deliverer. A deliverer delivers. There is no chance that this deliverer would fail to deliver. The word for deliver here is the same word used by Jesus in Matthew 5:29 where He speaks of plucking your eye out. Jesus gave Himself, thus plucking us out of this evil age or world – the pool of fallen humanity.

Some might argue that this is true, but what of man's will? I have no doubt that the saved man's will, in a secondary sense, is in full agreement with the plan of salvation. But man's changed will toward God is a result of God's changing the rebellious man's heart first. Paul gives no such glory or opportunity for boasting to men. The plucking out of sinful man from darkness to the light is according to the will of our God and Father.

**...to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:5).**

And one will not travel too far through the pages of Scripture before they find what the divines of Westminster determined to be the chief end of man – to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Paul is setting the stage for the remainder of His epistle. He will seek to rescue the church from the bondage that is before them because of those who would seek to mingle the efforts of man with the power of God. But since it is God who provides the grace and power to save sinners from beginning to end, it is God who receives all the glory. Glorifying God will be the goal of the Apostle through this epistle to the churches in Galatia. And the church that glorifies God will be a church of saints who will be free indeed and who knows the grace and peace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Questions for Study

1. What are some biblical features of being an Apostle (page 2)?
2. What are some biblical requirements for being an Apostle (pages 2, 3)?
3. What was the purpose of the apostolic office (page 3)?
4. Are there Apostles today (page 3)? Why, why not?
5. Who called Paul to be an Apostle (page 3)?
6. Discuss how grace and peace are the heart of the gospel (page 4).
7. What does God's grace produce (page 4)?
8. What is the difference between peace *with* God and the peace *of* God (page 4)?
9. What results from Jesus giving Himself for our sins (page 5)?
10. Does Jesus deliver us or give us the opportunity to be delivered? What's the difference (page 5)?
11. What role does the will of man play versus the will of God (page 5)?
12. Why should churches view glorifying God as their chief commission (page 5)?