

Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers who are with us or are watching on-line. I am grateful for the love and prayers of my mother who is with the Lord now. You have such a special gift of love and grace that we so appreciate. In your love we glimpse the unconditional love of God for His children.

Before we continue in our study of Galatians, I also want to acknowledge the passing of a former pastor in this town, Gordan Storey. He was one of the pastors who ordained me so that I could begin the ministry here at Wayside. Like many pastors, he endured the conflicts of fickle congregations that he ministered to, poured out his heart and love to his congregants, and even in his retirement and with kidney failure found opportunities to preach. He has gone to his reward and is face to face with the Lord he faithfully served. I hope to see him in my welcome home group in heaven. Please remember his wife Linda and their children in your prayers.

Last week the message was an introduction to this letter explaining the situation Paul was addressing and the churches to whom he wrote. Verse one told us of Paul's unique calling after the resurrection of Jesus to be an apostle. This was something the false teachers were challenging. Paul tells us his calling was not from men, insinuating that those who brought the teaching of the necessity of works to earn salvation were self-appointed. By contrast it was the risen Christ who chose him just as he chose the other apostles, or we could say official representatives.

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:* Galatians 1:1,2 Last week we saw in verse one that Paul defended his calling as being from Jesus who is more than mere man. Regarding “all the brothers who are with me,” Paul is speaking as a member of the body of Christ. He is always with other brothers and sisters in the Lord working together. Rarely do we find him alone in ministry. He finds mutual encouragement takes place when we fellowship with any believer (Romans 1:11,12ⁱ). If you don't think you can learn something from a brother or sister, you should take time with them until you do. Those with Paul agree with the message he is writing. We don't know if he was referring to the Jerusalem council or the church in Antioch, Ephesus, or Corinth, but the point is that he is not alone in his convictions, as his opponents may have claimed.

The churches of Galatia were planted on his first missionary journey. You can read about that in Acts 13-14. That is why he feels a fiery responsibility to keep them in the truth by firmly addressing the false teaching of works-based salvation that had been taught to them by the legalists. This is an essential tenant of the faith. Jesus saves us! Period! Not Jesus plus our good works or Jesus plus anything. There was and is today no other way (John 14:6ⁱⁱ). Jesus alone was God's provision for our sins. Paul sees this as his God given message for which he feels a great responsibility to share with the world. Listen to the devotion with which he expressed this in the book of Acts. ²⁴ *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* Acts 20:24

We don't know the details of how he received this gospel of grace, but we know he had visions of Jesus. We know he spent three years in Damascus and the desert of Syrian Arabia (Galatians 1:17,18ⁱⁱⁱ). I would guess he was praying over the Scriptures and trying to understand how he had gotten things so wrong. The encounter with the risen Jesus had changed his interpretation of Scripture! What had his teachers failed to see? And then, as he explains in Romans chapters 4 and 5, it started to become clear to him that the grace of God prompted people to have faith in God for their salvation. He cites Abraham and David as examples in Romans 4:3^{iv}, 6^v.

He began to proclaim this gospel of grace that he received by revelation and had it confirmed by the Apostles in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:2^{vi}). They had been slow to understand it fully, but Peter's divine encounter with the Gentile Centurion Cornelius confirmed this gospel of grace. If the Gentiles could receive the Holy Spirit by just hearing the Word, it had to be true salvation had to be by faith alone (Acts 15:7-9^{vii}).

In Christ we are all by grace sons and daughters of God. We are equals. Your status in society makes no difference in the church (James 1:9,10^{viii}). Your calling in Christ doesn't make you more loved by God than others in the church family. You can't do anything to make God love you more, nor do your shortcomings make Him love you less. He loves you because you are in Jesus. By faith you chose His Son whom by His grace He sent to save you. All are equal at the foot of the cross, saved by grace alone through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8,9^{ix}).

Our society is all worked up about equity. In claiming to want to rectify injustice they suggest being unjust. In wanting to rid the world of prejudice, they suggest being prejudice. The only true equity in this world is found in Jesus who told us to love others, even our enemies, just as He loves us (John 15:12^x)!

³ *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,* Galatians 1:3 *Charis kai eirene* - Two of the most wonderful gifts that are ours in Christ. They are from God because God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16^{xi}). Grace is the greatest need of every human being (Romans 3:23,24^{xii}). If we could see ourselves in the presence of our holy God like Isaiah did, we would grovel in the dirt, undone, loathing ourselves, and begging for mercy as he did (Isaiah 6:1-5^{xiii}).

Oswald Chamber's devotional explains our condition: *Yield in childhood to selfishness, and you will find it the most enchaining tyranny on earth. There is no power in the human soul of itself to break the bondage of a disposition formed by yielding. Yield for one second to anything in the nature of lust (remember what lust is: 'I must have it at once,' whether it be the lust of the flesh or the lust of the mind), once yield and though you may hate yourself for having yielded, you are a bond-slave to that thing. There is no release in human power at all, but only in the Redemption. You must yield yourself in utter humiliation to the only One Who can break the dominating power, viz., the Lord Jesus Christ. "He hath anointed Me ... to preach deliverance to the captives."*^{xiv xv}

God is gracious. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9^{xvi}). He longs to redeem us and lift us to a holy life, pure, and shining with His glorious attributes. What I find amazing is that He even desires to share His glory with us (2 Thessalonians 2:14^{xvii})! Glory is the outshining of God's attributes. That is truly grace piled on grace, which is how John described the Word becoming flesh for our salvation (John 1:16^{xviii}).

Grace was the very thing that the false apostles were denying. They insisted that it was Jesus *plus* keeping the law that saves us. Paul knew from his own experience of salvation that it was the grace of God alone that called him and turned him around (Acts 26:16^{xix}). He was on his way to incarcerate Christians when the grace of God arrested him! Grace is the major theme of this letter and the answer to the legalistic Jewish Christians who had infiltrated the churches of Galatia.

Paul would have been thinking of the Hebrew word for peace, which is *shalom*. It is to have every good thing, the blessing of God, lack of fear, rest, and so much more. Through Christ we have peace with God and peace within. That result is peace with those with whom we come in contact. **Peace is a gift from God that comes to us through Jesus.** It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we are not at peace within it is usually because we have set our eyes on passing things. Our heart becomes attached to that which can never satisfy instead of the only One who can satisfy the longing in our hearts (Colossians 3:1,2^{xx}, 16^{xxi}). When you find you lack peace, check to see where your focus is placed. If it is on good works, you will find that you can never do enough. Jesus' yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30^{xxii}). Peace with God should mean we are at peace in all situations that come into our lives, for we know we are in His hands.

⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Galatians 1:4 Paul explained the source of this grace and peace. It comes from Jesus, who gave Himself for us. He took our sin debt and paid what we owed in full on the cross. That should give us a sense of how serious our sins are to God. His willing sacrifice on our behalf rescues us from the present evil age. The word that is used in ESV, "deliver," is "*used of the Israelites brought out of Egyptian slavery (Acts 7:34^{xxiii}), or Peter rescued from prison and the hand of King Herod (12:11^{xxiv}); and the rescue of Paul when a mob wanted to kill him (23:27^{xxv}).*" ^{xxvi} In Christ we escape the bondage of sin. We are *rescued* from this present evil age.

But what exactly are we rescued from in this age? An age is an epoch of time. Jews believed time would fall in two categories, before and after the Messiah. They believed when Messiah came the world would be ruled by Him, bringing in an age of peace and holiness. That is why when Jesus ascended many Jews argued the second epoch had not come. But Paul's understanding is King Jesus' rule is here now in the hearts of those who are in Christ, *and* it is coming to the world when He returns. Presently it is an evil age because fallen man reigns over the world. Selfishness is the norm. Everyone does what they desire, and fallen man's desires are evil. Jesus came to deliver us from our enslavement to the spirit of this age (1 Corinthians 1:12^{xxvii}). Our own passions have mastered us to the point that we can't break free on our own. Jesus declared that He had come to proclaim liberty to the captives (Luke 4:18^{xxviii}).

You might say, "Wait, I thought He came to forgive us of our sins so we could be in heaven with Him." Yes, that is true, but once we are forgiven, we also have the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life now (Romans 6:4^{xxix}). We no longer must conform to the world or act in our former manner of selfish desires. We become aliens here as we become citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20^{xxx}; 1Peter 2:11^{xxxi}). We enter the age in which Jesus reigns for He reigns in the hearts of those who receive Him.

In Jesus we become willing love slaves to a new Master (Romans 6:19^{xxxii}). In Him we can love unselfishly and say no to sin. We can walk in righteousness. We have a

power the world does not have, and because of that power, we are free from the present evil age and enter the age of the kingdom of God. That does not come from keeping the Law, but instead comes by the grace of God. His presence in us enables us to wholeheartedly surrender to the life of Jesus which is eternal. Our acceptance of what Jesus has done for us is sufficient to make us at peace with God's holiness.

Our western minds don't understand the Hebrew concept of the blessing of the Law. The Jews rightfully saw the laws of Moses as liberating and as an expression of the goodness of God which revealed to us how we can be blessed and have peace. But they turned it into a yoke of bondage by adding a mountain of rules around the law. Their thousands of rules made the law a burden instead of a blessing.

So it is today in the minds of some people in regards to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They think it will mean bondage and a lack of freedom. On the contrary, obedience to the Spirit gives the believer true freedom, freedom from bondage to our old nature. In Him we have a life of grace and peace. That is the will of our Creator. That is how He designed us, but our old nature demands to rebel against God's design and would conform us to the present evil age.

This rescue that came through the death of Jesus was *according to the will of our God and Father*. That is so very gracious of God. We didn't have a clue about our condition or our greatest need. But God knew exactly what we needed and planned our rescue before the world was made (Revelation 13:8^{xxxiii}). That is because He is gracious. It is because He is love (1 John 4:8^{xxxiv}). Beings who never fell would never understand the depths of His love and grace.

Notice that in these introductory verses it is the Father and the Son who have called Paul to be an apostle. It is the Father and the Son who give us grace and peace. And it was the will of the Father and the Son to deliver us from the present evil age, which means a renewal of our minds through God's Word (Romans 12:2^{xxxv}) and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who is Himself the power to live a life that glorifies God.

In this introduction we have the entire plan of God. Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins. God raised Him. God appointed apostles to tell us what God did for us in the risen Lord Jesus. The power of new life in Christ puts us in the kingdom of God which is being in Jesus whose power in us delivers us from the present evil age. Salvation is of our eternal soul, receiving God's grace, and now being at peace with Him, but it also has the effect of freeing us from the bondage of sin that is so pervasive in this present evil world, so that we live a new life. We are enabled to recognize sin and can refuse to participate in it. Instead, our entire being can become an instrument of righteousness, as Paul declares in chapter 6 of Romans (Romans 6:13,14^{xxxvi}).

⁵ *to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* Galatians 1:5 Verses 3 through 5 are thought to have made up a community prayer beginning with grace and peace and concluding with "Amen!", which was a word to declare agreement with the declaration being made. The letter concludes with a similar benediction (6:18^{xxxvii}). The false teachers had disturbed and divided the church with their insistence on obedience to the law. This common prayer and final benediction reminded the churches of Galatia and us today of the grace and peace we have in Jesus which does not bring glory to us, but rather to God and His goodness.

We must not rush past this final phrase of the greeting. It is Paul's doxology regarding what he has declared in the introduction. It means the outshining of the wonderful attributes of God are to be praised and adored throughout all eternity. This grace and peace we have from Him is to be forever greatly appreciated, along with all of God's attributes. We are to forever praise his steadfast love and faithfulness. It is only right and good to do so. Yes! It is finished! I agree! Do you?

As Calvin put it so well, "*So glorious is this redemption that it should ravish us with wonder.*"^{xxxviii}

One reason the Law may have been so attractive to the Galatians is that though they had trusted Christ, like us, they found that there was still sin in their lives. They may have thought the rules the Judaizers brought were going to help them change. But the law never made anyone perfect (Galatians 2:16^{xxxix}). Instead of striving to keep the law, the answer was to run to the Word and its many stories of grace.

Grace is the theme of Galatians but also of all of the whole Bible. From Adam to the patriarchs to Moses to David, we see grace upon grace. And all of it culminated in the grace that sent Jesus to the cross to die for our sins. That is supreme grace! And when we embrace it, we find our desires are transformed. We can't take it lightly and go on sinning, for we recognize the great cost that was paid for us to receive that grace.

This grace invites the legalist to the freedom of the Spirit. It invites the wayward to the open arms of the Father who is running to welcome them home (Luke 15:20^{xl}). It reminds the faithful why they should remain faithful. Of all the words ever uttered, GRACE is the most wonderful, the most needed, the most welcomed by those who have seen their desperate need of it.

The enemy of our souls wants us to run in shame from grace when we fail, when we doubt, when we are disappointed and discouraged. But that is because he knows the power of grace to help us grow in Christ. Be resolved that the next time you fail that instead of running from fellowship and the Word, you will run to the grace found in Jesus, in the body of believers, and in the Word of God. Let grace make every fall a fall forward.

I am going to use verses 4 and 5 and 6:20 as a benediction; *To Him who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to Him be the glory forever and ever. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen!*

Questions:

- 1 Why was Paul so upset?
- 2 What did Paul see as his life's mission?
- 3 What confirmed the gospel of grace to the Jerusalem council?
- 4 What are two wonderful gifts from the Father and the Son?
- 5 Why do we need grace?
- 6 Why should believers always be at peace?
- 7 What is the present evil age?
- 8 How do we escape it?
- 9 Who gets the glory when we are in grace and peace?
- 10 How should we react to our own stumbling?

ⁱ Romans 1:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—

¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

ⁱⁱ John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

ⁱⁱⁱ Galatians 1:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

^{iv} Romans 4:3 (ESV)

³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

^v Romans 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

^{vi} Galatians 2:2 (ESV)

² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

^{vii} Acts 15:7-9 (ESV)

⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

^{viii} James 1:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

^{ix} Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

^x John 15:12 (ESV)

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

^{xi} John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{xii} Romans 3:23-24 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

^{xiii} Isaiah 6:1-5 (ESV)

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

^{xiv} Chambers, O. (1986). *My utmost for his highest: Selections for the year*. Grand Rapids, MI: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering.

^{xv} Luke 4:18 (KJV)

¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

^{xvi} 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

^{xvii} 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

xviii **John 1:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

xix **Acts 26:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

xx **Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

xxi **Colossians 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

xxii **Matthew 11:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

xxiii **Acts 7:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

xxiv **Acts 12:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

xxv **Acts 23:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.

xxvi NAC commentary on Galatians quoting John Stott

xxvii **1 Corinthians 2:12 (ESV)**

¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

xxviii **Luke 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

xxix **Romans 6:4 (ESV)**

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

xxx **Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

xxxi **1 Peter 2:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

xxxii ⁴ *who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,* Galatians 1:4

xxxiii **Revelation 13:8 (ESV)**

⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

xxxiv **1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

xxxv **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

xxxvi **Romans 6:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

xxxvii **Galatians 6:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

^{xxxviii} Calvin CNTC 11 as cited by George, Timothy in NAC commentary on Galatians

^{xxxix} **Galatians 2:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

^{xl} **Luke 15:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.