

Galatians 1:1-5 : The Gift of Christ

Lesson for the Week

“Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead); and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia; grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” Galatians 1.1-5

The best introduction to the Bible is the Bible itself; so the only introduction necessary to this present study is to begin at once on the Epistle. One thing only would the writer say, and that is, Do not let these articles be considered as a substitute for the study of the Scripture itself. They are designed only as suggestive, to lead the student into some of the glories revealed in the sacred text. The Epistle to the Galatians is short, and as but few verses will be covered in any one lesson, it is hoped that many will study the Scripture text so carefully that they will have the entire epistle well in their minds when the studies are ended. Then they will find themselves well equipped for a thorough study of the book, which they will feel that they have just begun. We will now proceed to read—

Christ's Divinity.—The very first verse shows the divinity of Christ. Paul declares himself to be an apostle “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.” That is just as strong Bible proof of the divinity of Christ as is the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1. It is true that this truth is stated incidentally, in Galatians 1:1, since the subject is Paul's apostleship; but that simply shows how the fact of Christ's divinity is the basis of all the Scriptures. They are not written to prove the divinity of Christ; no, they are written for the benefit of men. Because Christ is divine, a thing which carries its own proof to every one who makes His acquaintance, the Scriptures point men to Him. He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

A Good Commission.—An apostle is one who is sent. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and of God, the Father, who raised Him from the dead. He had good backing. A messenger's confidence is in proportion to the authority of the one who sends him, and to his confidence in that authority and power. Paul knew that he was sent by the Lord, and he knew that the power of God is the power that raises from the dead. Now “he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” John 3:34. Thus it was that Paul spoke with authority, and the words which he spoke were the commandments of God. 1 Corinthians 14:37. So in reading this epistle, or any other in the Bible, we have not to make allowance for the writer's personal peculiarities and prejudices. It is true that each writer retains his own individuality, since God chooses different men to do different work

solely on account of their different personality; but it is God's Word in all, and nothing need be taken off from the authority of the message, and set down to the score of natural bias or prejudice.

One Mind.—In the writing of this epistle we have an example of what the apostle in another epistle exhorts us all to be: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1 Corinthians 1:10. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, but all the brethren who were with him were concerned in it, because they were led by the same Spirit. While there can be no doubt as to the fact that all were united in agreeing with what Paul wrote, it may well be that the mention of the brethren refers specifically to the greeting. They all sent greeting. Of course the substance of the epistle came direct from Paul's own heart and mind, prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Grace and Peace Be to You.—This is the word of the Lord, let it be remembered, and therefore means more than man's word. The Lord does not deal in empty compliments. His word is substantial; it carries with it the thing which it names. God's word creates, and here we have the very form of the creative word.

God said, “Let there be light; and there was light,” and so on through the whole creation, “He spoke, and it was.” So here, “Let there be grace and peace to you,” and so it is. “The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” Titus 2:11. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” John 14:27. “Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.” Isaiah 57:19. God has sent grace and peace, bringing righteousness and salvation to all men - even to you, whoever you are, and to me. When you read this third verse of the first chapter of Galatians, do not read it as a sort of complimentary phrase, - as a mere passing salutation to open the real matter at hand, - but as the creative word that brings to you personally all the blessings of the peace of God, that passeth all understanding.

The Gift of Christ.—This grace and peace come from Christ, “who gave Himself for our sins.” “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7. But this grace is “the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 2:1. Therefore we know that Christ Himself is given to every one of us. The fact that men live is an evidence that Christ has been given to them, for Christ is “the life,” and the life is the light of men, and this life-light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:4, 9. In Christ all things consist (Colossians 1:17), and thus it is that since God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,” He can not do otherwise than, with Him, freely “give us all things” (Romans 8:32). “His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” 2 Peter 1:3. Christ has, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9), so that every man in the world has received the “unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). “The grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many,” even to all; for

“as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Romans 5:15, 18

God in Christ.—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” 2 Corinthians 5:19. “When God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.” Hebrews 6:13. This oath of God was in Christ. Galatians 3:16, 17. So in the gift of Christ, God Himself is given, and “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.” Romans 11:36. Christ is “the shining of the Father’s glory, and the very impress of His substance, and upholds all things by the word of His power.” Hebrews 1:3. Therefore, since the whole universe depends on Christ, it is evident that in giving Himself for our sins, the entire universe has been pledged to man’s salvation. Sometimes people think that they are too poor, and insignificant, and worthless to be saved; well, they may be poor and worthless, but the fact is that when it comes to the matter of salvation, God counts a single soul equal in value to the universe. It would perish sooner than a single soul who trusts God’s word.

An Individual Gift.—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. The love embraces the whole world, but it singles out each individual. Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for “every man.” Hebrews 2:9. The whole of the gift of Christ is to each one personally, “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7. Christ is not divided, any more than Paul was crucified for sinners. 1 Corinthians 1:13. Some people seem to have the idea that as Christ was given for all the world He has to be divided up among all the persons in the world, each one getting only a portion. Not so; every individual gets the whole of Christ. To illustrate: Christ is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness. But light is not divided among a crowd of people. If a room full of people be brilliantly lighted, each individual gets the benefit of all the light, just as much as tho he were alone in the room. So the life of Christ lights every man that comes into the world, and in every believing heart Christ dwells in all His fullness.

Our Sins Purchased.—Christ “gave Himself for our sins.” That is to say, He bought them, and paid the price for them. This is a simple statement of fact; the language used is that commonly employed in referring to purchases. “How much did you give for it?” or, “How much do you want for it?” are frequent questions. When we hear a man say that he gave so much for a certain thing, what do we at once know?—We know that that thing belongs to him, because he has bought it. So when the Holy Spirit tells us that Christ gave Himself for our sins, of what should we be equally sure?—That He has bought our sins, and that they belong to Him, and not to us. They are ours no longer, and we have no right to them. Every time we sin we are robbing the Lord.

Deliverance.—Christ has not only paid the price for our sins, but He has accepted the goods. He has taken the sins all on Himself. He bares the sins of the world. John 1:29. “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the

whole world.” 1 John 2:2. He “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us,” and since He did not die in vain, He has delivered us. He has wrought deliverance for every soul; whether all will accept it and rejoice in it, is in their own hands. He comes proclaiming “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Isaiah 61:1. His commission was to “say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” Isaiah 49:9. Herein is the comfort of the Gospel of salvation: The Lord has taken all our sin upon Himself, having purchased it, so that we do not need to bear it. It was for our sins - yours and mine, - that He gave Himself. “Our sin” means not simply those things that we have done, but the evil things that we are accustomed to do. He has bought our wicked dispositions, so that we do not need to be burdened with them. The absence of sin is righteousness: therefore in purchasing and taking our sins, the Lord has given to us all the righteousness of God. It is much easier to bear than sin; why not accept and stand to the transaction?

“This Present Evil World”—He gave Himself for our sins, “that He might deliver us from this present evil world.” The text indicates that our sins constitute “this present evil world.” Of course, for there is no evil in this world except our sins. This present evil world is composed of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” 1 John 2:15, 16. Christ said to the Father, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” John 17:15. Men and women have gone into cloisters and convents, and have lived in deserts and in caves as hermits in order to be separate from the world, that is from “this present evil world;” but every one has found that the world went along. It was present, always present: they could not get rid of it, because it was within them. It is not our associates that cause us to sin, but the evil that is within us. No man can escape from this present evil world until he escapes from himself, and Christ gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from ourselves. This He has done, and every soul can say, if he will, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.” Psalm 116:16. Having been delivered from himself, and realizing it, he can henceforth say, “Not I, but Christ.”

He Has Bought Us, Too.—This follows from the fact that He has purchased our sins, to deliver us from ourselves. Our sins are part of ourselves; nay, they are the whole of us, for our natural lives are nothing but sin. Therefore, Christ could not buy our sins without buying us also. Of this fact we have many plain statements. He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” Titus 2:14. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.” 1 Corinthians 6:19. “Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.” 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

The Question of Acceptance.—This is forever settled by what we have already learned. Christ has bought us, together with all our sins, and has paid the price. Therefore there is no room for the question, “Will He accept us?” He has already accepted you. Why does a man go to the shop and buy an article? - Because he wants it. If he has paid the

price for it, having examined it so as to know what he was buying, does the merchant worry lest he will not accept it? - Not at all; the merchant knows that it is his business to get the goods to the purchaser as soon as possible. And here there is no room for any one to object, "But I am so sinful and unworthy." That makes no difference; a man will accept what he deliberately purchases, especially if he has paid a great price for it; and Christ "gave Himself for our sins." There is nothing in the whole universe that God desires so much as us and all the sins we have. We have only to praise "the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1.6

"Thy Will Be Done."—What has this petition to do with the text before us?—Very much. We have read of what a wonderful deliverance Jesus has purchased for us, and now we read that all this is "according to the will of our God and Father." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3. He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Ephesians 1:11. God wills our salvation; if we accept His will as ours, nothing in the universe can hinder our salvation. Therefore we have only to pray from the heart, "Thy will be done."

To God Be the Glory.—Not simply, "To Him be glory," as in the common version, but "To whom be the glory," as in the Revision. "Thine is the kingdom; and the power, and the glory." All glory is God's, whether men acknowledge it or not. To give Him the glory is not to impart anything to Him, but to recognize a fact. We give Him the glory by acknowledging that His is the power. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Psalm 100:3. "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength." Psalm 96:7. Power and glory are the same, as we learn from Ephesians 1:18, 19, which tells us that Christ was raised from the dead by the exceeding greatness of God's power, and from Romans 6:4, where we learn that "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Also when Jesus by His wondrous power had turned water to wine, we are told that in the performance of the miracle, He "manifested forth His glory." John 2:11. So when we say that to God is the glory, we are saying that the power is all from Him. We do not save ourselves, for we are "without strength." But God is the Almighty, and He can and does save. If we confess that all glory belongs to God, we shall not be indulging in vainglorious imaginations or boastings, and then will God be glorified in us.

Thus we see a little of the comprehensiveness of Paul's salutation by the Spirit. Instead of being the mere compliments of the day, it embraces the whole Gospel of God's glorious grace. It presents to us man's need, God's willingness to save, and Jesus Christ as the power of God, by which deliverance is wrought. With such an introduction, what else can we expect to find in the epistle itself than that it contains the Gospel in the clearest and most striking form that it is possible to state it? Even so shall we find it as we proceed in our study.

(Next week we will study Galatians 1:6-12)