

RESCUED AT THE CROSS

Galatians 1:1-5

Intro: In a series of messages which Dr. S. Lewis Johnson preached twenty years ago this year, he said that “Galatians is Paul’s most explosive letter. And he went on to say that if Romans teaches us what the Gospel *is*, the book of Galatians tells us what the Gospel *is not!* Of course, not everything in Romans is positive, and not everything in Galatians is negative, but generally speaking Galatians is the negative expression of the Gospel which Romans is the positive.

To say that the Apostle Paul was upset, is to state it mildly. Look verses 8 and 9 in chapter 1. (Read.) The issue before him was the nature of the Gospel, and we soon realize that Paul considered it one of the worst things that could possibly be done by any Christian, was to corrupt the Gospel of the grace of God. Teachers in the Galatian churches were doing this, and Paul was amazed at how quickly the Galatian believers had been deceived. See verses 6 and 7 of chapter 1. (Read).

Often in Paul’s epistles it is possible to tell from his greetings and introduction, what was bothering him, or the message that he wanted to get across to them. You could call it *keynoting his theme*. And this was certainly the case with this epistle to the Galatians. And when he identified himself as an apostle, this meant that he was reminding him of the special authority that the Lord had given to him, making him an apostle. As I have said before, the authority of the New Testament rested on the authority of the apostles. It was God-given authority, and stands behind every epistle and book of the NT.

A reading of verses 4 and 5 indicates that Paul was going to be writing about Christ, and particularly about the sacrifice of Christ. And so we should not be surprised that *the cross of Christ* figures largely into this epistle. Furthermore, Paul indicated that Paul was going to talk about the results of the work of Christ on the Cross, what He actually accomplished when He died on the Cross. Paul would have much to say about our sins, and even about this present age (“world”) in which they were living then, and in which we are still living today. And then we see that Christ not only gave Himself voluntarily on the Cross, but that what He did there was in complete agreement with the will of God – tracing the planning of the work to God the Father. And, therefore, the Father pre-eminently was the one deserving of the praise for all that Christ did. The way in which this verse 4 coupled with verse 5, covers so much truth in so few words, is in

itself a testimony to its divine origin. And we know from other passages that it was the Holy Spirit Who was leading the Apostle Paul in what he had to say, down to the very words that Paul used. It is truly a remarkable text.

Let us consider these two verses, 4 and 5, by looking at each part of verse 4, and there are three parts, following by the statement Paul made in verse 5.

Right away he began speaking of Christ, and this is where we always need to start especially when we are examining any doctrine which claims to be the truth of God. We must ask, *“What place does this teaching give to our Lord Jesus Christ?”*

This is the first statement:

I. “WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS” (Gal. 1:4a).

We can tell that this has to apply to Christ because He was the One Who “gave Himself” as a sacrifice for our sins.” But combining verses 3 and 4 indicates very clearly, unmistakably that Paul was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now obviously this would be a work of infinite value. Whatever our Lord would do would be perfect. And we must add that if the Lord did it, then it was absolutely necessary. It would mean that no man had the ability to do what was necessary to atone for His own sins. In addition, Paul spoke of “our sins” and of Christ in an exclusive way. We would assume from these words of Paul that whatever was required by God to deal satisfactorily with our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ did by Himself. Nothing needed to be added – no work of man, nor even of angels. And for the Lord to have given Himself means that it was voluntary, and also that it was gracious since “our sins” would merit the judgment of God, not an efficient sacrifice.

William Hendriksen, who is now with the Lord, but who did a great work on many of the books of the New Testament, gives us some more insight into the meaning of this statement we are considering, when he wrote the following:

The greatness and magnanimity of Christ’ act of self-surrender is stressed in order to underscore the grievous nature of the sin of those who teach that this supreme sacrifice must be supplemented by law-works (p. 34).

If it were necessary for Christ to come to the earth as a Man, and to suffer and die at all, why would we think that He would leave something undone since His very coming meant that we were unable to save ourselves? And the very sufficiency of what the Lord did is brought out in the next statement in verse 4. We will see this in a moment.

But notice that in giving Himself “for our sins,” would mean that by His death He not only delivered us from sins penalty, but from the power of sin after we are saved.

The NT always traces our salvation to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the salvation which we now enjoy from the penalty that should have been ours, is all because of the death that our Lord died. He gave Himself for “our sins,” the sins of the elect. It was our Lord’s purpose to offer a sacrifice that guaranteed the salvation of all of those for whom He died.

But let us go on. The second part of verse 4 says this:

II. “THAT HE MIGHT DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD” (Gal. 1:4m).

A better translation would be, “*that He might rescue us from this present evil age.*”

The language which Paul used implies that we were in trouble from which we could not deliver ourselves. We needed rescuing.

The word *age* speaks of the world from the standpoint of time. It was evil then, and it is evil now, and it was evil before the time of Christ, and it will continue to be evil until it passes away. And the word for evil means that it is a corrupting world, a defiling world, a world from a moral standpoint that will make us dirty. It is a world that is dominated by evil, and the passing of time has seen no improvement in it. And the world will not only corrupt us morally, but it will corrupt the truth and try to make us believe “another gospel, which is not another.”

So the Lord not only died “for our sins,” but He died to rescue us “from this present evil world.” If any generation should need no proof that our world is evil, it should be ours. Evidence abounds in all directions that this world is an evil place.

Now what does it mean that we are rescued from this evil world. It means that we are delivered from the power of temptation and the power of sin.

Our relationship with sin and with this evil world has been changed as a result of our salvation which Christ died on the Cross to obtain and secure for each one of us.

Dr. Johnson brought out in his message on this passage that the use of this word, although not found in any of Paul's other epistles, speaks of a deliverance *from the power of*, but NOT *from the presence* of this evil world. We are still here, but, as Dr. Johnson said, "The tense of the verb stresses the definiteness and completeness of the deliverance. From the beginning of time, based upon the work of Christ on the Cross, our Lord has been rescuing those whom the Father gave to Him from the power of sin and from the power of the world in which we live. There is a coming age when we will be delivered from the very presence of sin and an evil world, but that day has not come yet. Therefore, it is important for every Christian to know the means by which he has been rescued. It is all because of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lightfoot in his commentary on Galatians says that in these words the Apostle Paul has struck the keynote of the epistle. In his words he said, "The Gospel is an emancipation from a state of bondage" (p. 73). And he pointed out that "evil" in "evil world," or *age*, is emphatic, and that it carries with it the idea of a rescue from *all of the world's evils*. *No sin has been excluded. No sin is greater than the power of the Gospel. No sinner who has been saved has any excuse for going on in sin.*

What a wonderful truth this is! Sin has polluted us in our very characters and dispositions. It has polluted the way we think. It has polluted the way we talk. It has polluted the things that we do. But for the Lord to save us, and then to leave us in this same evil world, emancipated, delivered, rescued, set free, is a great testimony to the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All illustrations of the kind of a rescue which the Apostle Paul was defending here are not sufficient to picture the amazing work which our Lord did on the Cross. But one story has come out of Jonesboro, Arkansas this week where those two boys went on a rampage with weapons and killed four students and a teacher. Do you remember how the teacher died. She threw herself in front of a girl who would have been shot, took the bullet that was aimed at the student, and gave her life to save that girl from death. What a heroic act that was! And that girl will never forget that teacher. But that teacher could not save that girl from future bullets. Our Lord died to save us from the penalty of our sins, but He died also to rescue us from this present evil age. We go on living in this same evil

world, but no longer slaves to the evil.

What is our third statement?

III. “ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD AND OUR FATHER” (Gal. 1:4b).

What the Apostle Paul said about his apostleship in verse 1, could also be said about our salvation. It was planned and willed by God. There is no evidence on record that God was answering some man’s prayer when He planned our salvation. It was all planned before the foundation of the world, and was accomplished in the fulness of God’s time when the Lord Jesus came to earth, born of the virgin Mary, and suffered and died on the Cross for our sins and for our emancipation from this present evil world. God left nothing undone.

But have you read this statement carefully. Paul said, “According to the will of God and our Father.” We could translated it, “*According to the will of God, even our Father.*” There is a most wonderful truth conveyed in those words. We know that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but did he mean to write, “our Father.” Yes, He did! Because you see that Christ not only atoned for all of our sins, taking upon Himself the wrath that should have fallen on us, and not only did He rescue us from “the present evil world,” but by the miracle of the new birth we have been born into the family of God. He is our Father; we are His children. In Gal. 3:26 we see that Paul wrote to those Galatian believers, “For ye are all the children (lit., *sons*) of God by faith in Jesus Christ.” And this faith in Jesus Christ must be faith *only* in Jesus Christ – not faith in Christ, and faith in ourselves. And not faith in Jesus Christ plus what others might do for us. But “by faith in Jesus Christ” alone!

Look at Gal. 5:2. If we think that by adding circumcision, or baptism, or the obedience to the Law, or anything else to what Christ has done, Paul said, “Christ shall profit you nothing.”

I have told some of you that years ago Dr. William Pettingill, a great Bible teacher whom I had the privilege of hearing, wrote a book on Galatians which he called, “By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing.” Salvation is by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross, *plus nothing!* Cf. Eph. 2:8-10; John 1:11-13.

Now we come to the last statement, and it should be no surprise to us after all that we have seen.

IV. “TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN (Gal. 1:5).

The connection with verse 4 shows us that Paul here was speaking about God, our Father. This does not mean that we cannot give glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, but it does mean that we must not give one tiny bit of the glory for our salvation to anyone but the Members of the Godhead.

By the way, the doctrine of salvation which the Apostle Paul preached excluded every other religion that has ever existed, or that will appear on the scene in the days to come. Every other religion is false. There is no other Savior. All others are impostors, and can only give people a false hope. Only Christ can save us, and He died on Calvary's Cross, taking our penalty upon Himself, and securing our eternal acceptance with God. But not only that, He has delivered us from the power of evil that continues on in this world where we live, and He did it all in pure, sovereign grace! And to add to all of the other blessings of salvation which Paul mentioned here, He by the new birth has brought us into His family, and we are secure in this relationship forever!

Concl: Christ gave Himself for our sins. He has delivered us from “this present evil world,” and we have been made members of God's family. And this was all planned for us individually, for us in particular, before the foundation of the world when God determined to save us and to bring us into His family as His own dear children.

There is only one thing for us to do. Have you done it? Are you doing it over and over, day after day? What is it? Giving glory to God Who has planned it all, and secured it for us in the death of His dear Son.

We don't know all that we will be doing in heaven, but we can be sure of one thing. We will spend eternity giving all of the glory to God, thanking God alone for this marvelous salvation that we have in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We should not wonder at Paul's strong words when he was facing those who would lay their hands on this precious Gospel to rob God of His glory by teaching that you and I have a part in our salvation. It is all of grace, not by any works that we might do, and even our faith is a gift from God. In fact, if the Holy Spirit had not shown us our need, and that Christ was the only One Who could save us, we would still be in our sins.

As we sing so often, “To God be the glory; great things He hath done.”