

# Paul's Apostleship and Paul's Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] In Galatians chapter 1, we're going to look tonight at Paul's apostleship and Paul's gospel. He defends his apostleship first of all, and then he gives a summary, if you like, of his gospel. He says grace and peace is a gospel of grace and peace.

A gospel that's possible because Jesus gave himself for our sins. Jesus' death was a rescue mission. Jesus' death was according to the word of God.

We're going to think about those points tonight together. In the course of the 30 years or so between his conversion on the road outside Damascus and his imprisonment in Rome, Paul traveled widely around the Roman Empire preaching, planting churches.

And when he wasn't in churches, he very often wrote to them, wrote letters to them. His letters were greeting them, encouraging them, and at times rebuking them.

[ 1 : 21 ] This letter, the letter to the Galatians, was probably written to a group of churches in what is now eastern Turkey. Then that was the Roman province of Galatia.

Paul mentions two themes that are going to run through this epistle. The theme of his apostleship, which he had to defend, and the gospel, which he approaches.

You see, the churches in Galatia were being troubled by false teachers. They were attacking the gospel of justification by faith alone.

They were teaching that you needed to be circumcised to be a real Christian. That in some way, Jesus' death wasn't enough. You need to add to it.

Paul wasn't going to have any of that. He was correcting that. He was also, they were also attacking Paul himself.

[ 2 : 25 ] I mean, he wasn't a real apostle. A kind of Johnny-come-lately. Not one of the original twelve. And so, his teaching was not reliable. So, Paul goes to the, Paul sets out straight away to summarize what he's going to do in the whole epistle.

And he starts out, to defend his apostleship. In verse one, he says, Paul, an apostle. Not one man, not one man, not one man, not one man.

He was born from the dead. And in his opening words, he claims straight away his apostleship.

Now, if we go back to Luke 6, verse 13, we learn that the name apostle was given by Jesus to the twelve original apostles whom he had chosen, called, and sent out to Greece.

They were especially chosen by Jesus himself. Paul says, I'm an apostle too. Yeah, I wasn't there then, but I'm an apostle too.

It tells us in verse one that his apostleship wasn't given to him by man. It too was given directly by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

[ 3 : 53 ] His mind, I imagine, would have gone back to that day on the Damascus road when he met the risen Lord Jesus. There, lying in the dust of that road with the bright light in the sky, he heard a voice saying, why are you persecuting me so?

Well, that was his price to Saul. He thought he was doing God's will. He says, who are you, Lord?

I am persecuting you. The reply was, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting me. You see, Saul in his zeal was ravaging the church, and there in the dust he realized that Jesus was Lord, and he was fighting against the Lord himself, and he was stopped in his tracks.

He recognized Jesus as Lord, and he was turned straight around. In the three days before, his eyes were open because he was blinded by that bright light.

In the three days before, Ananias came to open his eyes, we're told he prayed, and very soon, he began to preach the good news that he had tried to destroy.

[ 5 : 13 ] He would have remembered that as he was pleading, presenting his case to be an apostle. But there's an important lesson for us here. First of all, undoubtedly, as Paul was persecuting the

church, he was sincere.

We learn that sincerity is not enough. Paul was sincerely wrong, sincerely wrong, because we must always measure our faith by what is taught in God's word.

We must always measure our actions by what is taught in God's word. It's not good enough to be sincere. You may be sincerely wrong if you aren't following God's word.

Paul, as we must now call him, having met Jesus and bowed to him, Paul began very quickly to preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

Incidentally, Saul and Paul are the same name. Saul is the Hebrew form of the name. Paul is the Greek. And once he became an apostle and was a preacher, Paul used the name Paul by then.

[ 6 : 33 ] What was the gospel that he was going to preach? He preached. Looking in verses 3 to 5, we read, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who 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 for ever and ever Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel, you see, is good news. The good news of the grace of God.

Grace to men and women who have no claim to anything from God. Philip Yancey in his book *What's So Amazing About Grace* calls grace the last, best word.

What he was saying is that so many words have changed their meaning over time. For example, charity. When the translators of the King James version of the Bible were looking for a word which meant the highest form of love that a man could have, they chose charity.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but I'm not charity. Charity was a wonderful thing to them. Today, this changes meaning.

[ 8 : 08 ] It means giving to the poor. someone is talking to you about some problems in his life and you look as if you're about to offer to help.

He'd say, oh no, no, no, I don't want your charity. You see, the meaning has changed. Grace still carries something of the glory of the original meaning.

I wonder if some of our young people are listening this evening. Boys and girls, young people. have you understood what grace means? When you hear the word grace, do you know what we're talking about?

An old definition of grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. God's riches at Christ's expense.

Write that down and take the first letter of each word, you get grace. So it's a good way to remember what grace is. Everything that we gain from God is at Christ's expense.

[ 9 : 20 ] Grace is God's unmerited favor. Unmerited favor means you cannot earn it, you cannot gain it.

And all the things that are ours in Christ are given freely to us who don't deserve them because grace is free. We don't earn it, we can't pay for it, it is amazing, as the great old hymn says.

We're sinners separated from Christ with nothing to offer God. Because of Jesus' death, he forgives us, he welcomes us to his family, gives us a seat at the dinner table.

Paul himself was a great example of God's grace. There he was, traveling along the road of Damascus, threats and slaughter to the church, wreaked havoc with him in Damascus, that was his plan.

But Jesus met him, Jesus turned him around, transformed him, he was a most unlikely convert. If Paul had come into church, he wouldn't have thought he was a likely convert.

[ 10 : 32 ] He said, you come to Christ tonight, he looked for trouble. It was so unlikely when God told Ananias to go and open his eyes, Ananias didn't want to go.

He said, well, this man's come to persecute us. God said, go to him, I have chosen him. You see, it was all of grace.

Paul was not worthy of God's mercy. second example, it was given by Jesus, the parable of the prodigal son.

The younger son, remember, he had asked for his inheritance, the money that should have come to him when his dad died. He said, give it to me now, I want it now. And his father amazingly gave it to him.

He went away, far country, and he lived what he thought was the high life, the good life, and all seemed to go well for him until the money ran out.

[11:38] Then, hungry, perhaps homeless, feeding the pigs, he remembers home, remembers his dad, he remembers his servants at home have more than he has, and he decides to go back and beg his dad to take him on as a servant.

At home, his dad is looking down the road. We get the feeling from that parable that his dad often looked down the road hoping his son would come home. He doesn't wait for him to arrive. He runs down the road to meet him, and the boy begins his speech. He says, look, dad, I've sinned against you. I'm not worthy to be called your son. Kick me on as a servant. His dad hugs him, takes him in, puts clean his clothes on him, wringing his thing, shoes on his thing, and has a big welcome home party.

This, my son, he said, is dead, and is alive again, was lost and is fine. Now, his father would have been just to say, well, you want to come home to you?

[12:51] You've spent all my money. You've made your bed, lie on it. He could have said that to him, off you go. You chose your life, go. He didn't.

He didn't. He welcomes him right back into the famine. This is a great example of grace. You see, mercy is not getting the punishment you deserve.

Grace is getting the good and the blessings that you don't deserve. God shows us mercy when he forgives us our sins. He shows us grace when he adopts us into his family and gives us a seed. When we buy the knee to Jesus, he showers us with mercy and with grace. In all hymn says, grace is a charming sound, harmonious to the ear.

heaven with the echo shall resound and all the earth shall hear. Grace first inscribed my name in heaven's eternal book.

[13:59] It was grace that gave me to the lamb through all my sorrows do. God made the first move towards us.

It is God who makes the first move towards us. Saul wasn't thinking about Jesus, following Jesus when he was going along the Damascus road.

God made the first move. you've ever read any of the Narnia books? Young people, children, young people, have you ever read them? Have you read the book, The Silver Chair?

There, the two children find themselves in Narnia. For Jill, the little girl, it's the first time she's been there. She meets Aslan, the great lion, who is a model of Jesus.

And he speaks to her and he says, I called you here for a job. And she says, there must be some mistake. We asked to come.

[15:01] Nobody called us here. We asked to come. Aslan replied, you would not have called to me if I hadn't been calling you.

You would not have asked, you would not have called to me if I had not been calling you. A great theological truth there in that children's book.

You see, God always makes the first move. And if you feel your heart being drawn to Jesus, being drawn to God, then it's because he's been calling you.

He's calling you. Don't close your ears to his call, his voice. He's offering you grace and peace. He's found only in Jesus.

Because there is the gospel, there's a gospel of grace. The result of the gospel is peace.

Reconciliation with God, peace with God, and peace with him.

[16:09] No longer a rebel, no longer a stranger, no longer separate from him, brought near, brought into the family. Romans 5, verse 1, tells us, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace come from God and come because the Lord Jesus gave himself for our sins. Jesus gave himself for our sins. Jesus is a sinner, was a sinner. He's a lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, your sin and mine.

John Stott in his commentary on Galatians says, the death of Jesus Christ was primarily never a display of love, nor an example of heroism, but a sacrifice or sin.

It was neither a display of love, nor an example of heroism, but a sacrifice or sin. See him hanging there and asked, why was he there?

[17:31] Why did he stay on the cross? He could have called ten legions of angels and destroyed all his enemies and left. He died to save you and me.

Why? Because he loves us. Because we cannot save ourselves. Because sin must be punished, sin will be punished by holy and just God. And we needed a sin offering.

We needed someone who would stand in for us. We could never pay them punishment for our own sin. Unless it is paid for by someone else, we are bound for eternity in hell.

Jesus has died to rescue all who believe. That's the good news of the gospel. Roll that man upon a tree, my sin upon his shoes. All my sins are there.

None is missing, not one is missing. I am free, forgiven in Jesus. It's that through their heart, Christian friend. You know, I sometimes think we forget that Jesus dealt with all our sins.

[ 18 : 40 ] And we still go around carrying the guilt of some of them on our shoulders. We think that cannot be, it's too big a sin. Perhaps it hasn't been forgiven.

All our sins were laid on him. We are free. We are free. Do not minimize the value of Jesus' death for you and for me.

The Lord Jesus gave himself a ransom. Jesus' death was a rescue mission.

In verse 4, we read, he gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

the NIV says that Jesus died to rescue us from this present evil age. Christianity is a rescue religion.

[ 19 : 45 ] A rescue religion. We're slaves to sin. The gospel is a message of rescue and freedom.

The word used here for rescue was used in the Old Testament or the rescuing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Rescuing slavery through the Red Sea. Through the Red Sea. Ours is a similar rescue from slaves to sin, held by a pitiless taskmaster, unable to free ourselves until Jesus comes and redeems us out of slavery.

slavery. It was used of rescuing Peter from prison in Acts chapter 12. You remember he was sitting there in prison.

The angel came and woke him up in the night. Rescue him. Walked towards the doors and doors opened. He was able to walk straight out of that prison. And he was rescued.

Ours is a similar rescue. We're held in the prison house of sin. We're held in the snare of the devil. Held captive to do his will.

[ 21 : 00 ] Unable to free ourselves. By his death, Jesus opened the prison doors. He did for Peter. That sets us free. When we come as sinners to the prince.

Charles Wesley wrote, Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin, and nature's night. Thine I defused a quickening ray. I woke the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee. No condemnation, now I dread. Jesus and all in him is mine.

Alive in him, my living head, and clothed in righteousness be mine. Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ my own.

Jesus' death was a rescue. We are rescued from prison house of slavery, prison house of Satan, and from slavery.

[ 22 : 10 ] Also that we are told that we're rescued from this present evil age. now what does that mean? This doesn't mean we're taken out of the world.

Definitely not. We're still in it. The Bible divides history into two ages, this age and the age to come. It tells us that the age to come has already begun, because Jesus inaugurated it when he died. In his ministry he spoke of the kingdom of heaven as a present reality.

Because Jesus' kingdom is already established in the hearts of all who love him. Your heart and mine Christian faith. His kingdom is established there.

The present age is still here. This present evil age as it is called. The two ages, if you like, they're running in parallel.

[ 23 : 17 ] We already have the life of the age to come. We are living in this present age. We are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

We are still down here. Again, to quote John Stott, he puts it like this, the Christian life is living in this age, the life of the age to come.

Christian life is living in this age, the life of the age to come. That's our challenge. That's what we should be doing.

It's to that end that Paul writes in Ephesians 3. He says we are to put off the old self which belongs to your former manner of life. That's this present age and is corrupt through its deceitful as arms.

That's the life of this present age. You have to put that off to be renewed in the spirit of your minds to put on the new self created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness putting off the old and putting on the new.

[ 24 : 31 ] In Christ we've been rescued from the devil's kingdom. We are known Jesus kingdom. Let's live it out. See that's the thing. Live out what you really are.

You are already a new creature in Christ Jesus. Live it out. How can we who have been shown such mercy and grace continue to live in the sin that put Jesus to the cross?

Let's live that new life by the power of Jesus, by his Holy Spirit in our lives. new creatures and new creatures in our lives.

Jesus died to rescue us in this present evil age, bothly and finally. I stand according to the will of God.

We read that Jesus who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present age, according to the will of God the Father. Now Judas betrayed Jesus.

[ 25 : 41 ] He did wrong. The Jewish leaders held a sham trial and handed Jesus over to death out of envy and jealousy. They did wrong. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, did not deserve to die, but he took the coward's way out and handed him over to be crucified.

He did wrong. They all did wrong. Yet in Isaiah 53, written 700 years before Christ, you read, it is the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grace. When you make his soul an offering for sin, it was God's will to crush Jesus.

It was the plan. After his resurrection, Jesus explained it to his disciples. He said, did not the Christ have to suffer these things and enter into glory?

It was necessary that I suffer. I had to do it. A bit later, Jesus told them, this is what is written, that Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

[ 26 : 51 ] So you have Judas treachery, the Pharisees hatred, Pilate's cowardice. Through it all, God worked to achieve his will and our salvation.

It was God's plan. The prophets of the Old Testament told God had planned to save a people for himself. Even before time, the plan was fixed in the mind of God.

We were there in that plan. He planned to save us. God the Father, God the Son, the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, who were working together in perfect unity to save sinners like you and me.

No division among them, but a common purpose to redeem a people for himself. We can say that God the Father sent Jesus to this world.

Jesus came and gave himself as a sacrifice. The Holy Spirit makes it real to our hearts. This new birth into the family of God.

[ 27 : 58 ] Isn't that a wonderful thing for us in when his plan, his call, all that we might know him, all that we might be his.

For the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love, who ever lives and pleases for me. my name is graven on his hands, my name is written on his heart, know that while in heaven he stands, no thumb he bid me then stay high.

This is our great salvation, rescued from this present evil age, all according to the will of God. This is also a great salvation, great news.

If anyone is listening and you don't know this Jesus as your savior, he's prepared a way for you to know him, to have your sins forgiven, to join his family.

It's a great salvation to know that, have your sins forgiven, belong to Jesus. If you hear his voice tonight, feel your heart drawn to him, don't forget it's him drawing you, to invite you.

[ 29 : 15 ] the old hymn by Lewis Hartz I hear thy welcome voice that calls me Lord to thee, for cleansing in that precious blood, Lord on Calvary, though coming weak and vile, I dost my strength assure, I dost my vileness fully cleansed, to a spotless, all impure, is not wonderful.

I am coming Lord, coming now to thee, wash me, cleanse me in the blood that flowed on Calvary. The rescue is paid for, don't turn away from that welcome loss, come and find a scene.

Finally, in verse five, it's as if Paul had got so excited and so thrilled by what he had just said, that he ends with a statement of praise.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. He is the one who deserves, who deserves our praise. He is the great and glorious one. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.