



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 1: 1-5

“Rescued”

Galatians 1

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The book of Galatians is a new series. And this morning we’re going to look at versus 1-5 of chapter 1. So hopefully you all have your Bibles with you. At Believers Chapel, we teach through the Bible, book by book, verse by verse. That’s what we do, as most of you know, but if you’re a visitor, that’s our practice. And that’s what we’re doing this morning with the book of Galatians. We look at the first five verses of this book.

And so if you have your Bibles open, we read, “Paul an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead). And all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia. Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and father, to whom be the glory forever more. Amen.” May the Lord bless this reading of his word and our time of study together. Let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father we do thank you for this time together this morning on this Lord’s day. We thank you for this opportunity we have to open the Scriptures as we’ve done and read them, and then spend time considering the meaning of the text. It is a very important thing that we do. In fact, it’s essential for us to gather regularly, weekly, and do just this – study your word. It’s how we feed ourselves spiritually. It’s how we are nourished and built up in the faith and made fit for the tasks of life that we face, the private personal issues that we deal with, the public opportunities we have to be a witness for you.

All of these things, father, every aspect of our life, is fitted in the times that we spend in your word. And this is a special time in the week where your people gather together as the body of Christ and worship and study together. So bless our time. That it would be profitable and be built up in the faith and that we would be drawn close to you. And help us to understand the great lessons of this text. Help us to understand the grace that you have bestowed upon us. And what we have in Christ and who he is and what he's done for us. So we ask you to bless us and guide us in these things.

Make us fit for the task that's before us this week and throughout our lives. And bless us not only spiritually, but materially as well, Lord. We are in a season of the year where it's easy to come down with some kind of ailments. And we know that whatever the time of the year is, there are difficulties, physically, for people within our body. We pray for those that are sick. We pray that you would give them encouragement, healing. We pray that you would bless those of us who aren't sick, keep us healthy and active. We pray for those that are struggling with various issues in the home, at work or wherever it may be, Lord. We oftentimes find ourselves in conflict. We pray that you give wisdom, that such conflicts would be resolved and give patients.

And where that is the case – where there are members of our congregation who are in very difficult circumstances – enable them to be a witness in the midst of that. Give them patients. And the midst of all the trials of life – which we must experience – still many trials that we enter into the kingdom of God, we been told. In the midst of that, give peace and give understanding and give wisdom and bless. And I pray that for ourselves as we study your word this morning, that it would impart wisdom to us. And it would ground us in this way that we'll have peace. We pray that for ourselves, and I pray in a particular way for our nation. That you bless it. That you less our leaders with wisdom.

We pray particularly for armed servicemen and women abroad. We pray that you bless them and protect them. We know that there are some there abroad who are from our congregation or they are friends or family members of members here. We pray that you would protect them. And for those who are Christians, we pray that you give them a witness in a dark place. Well as we have prayed, father, we pray that you'd fit us to be that in the place where we are, whether it's at home or at work or in

the neighborhood, that we might bring honor to you and to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so to that end, build us up in the faith. And to that end, bless us as we sing our final hymn. May it prepare our hearts for a time of worship and study together. We pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] We’re starting a new series, as I announced, in the book of Galatians. It’s a small book, only six chapters. You can read it in 20 minutes. Yet, it has an importance, as one writer said, out of all proportion to its size. It has been called the Magna Carta of spiritual liberty. We might call it the Declaration of Independence of spiritual freedom. And it is recognized as being one of the single most significant influences in shaping the history of the church, as well as the history of the Western world.

Merrill Tenney, who was for many years a professor at Wheaton College, wrote that, “But for the book of Galatians, Christianity might have been just one more Jewish sect, and the thought of the Western world it might have been entirely different.” So we owe a lot this little book. It addresses the most fundamental of issues – salvation. How do we have it? Is it through keeping the law? Or through faith in Christ? That’s the issue. Paul answers this question, and his answer is the answer of the patriarch Abraham and the prophet Habakkuk. “The just shall live by faith.” It’s no wonder that the book of Galatians became the cornerstone of the Reformation. Martin Luther was especially fond of it. He called it his wife. It is my own epistle. It is my Katie von Bora.

So the book of Galatians is an important book. Every book of the Bible is important, of course, but the book of Galatians had an unusual place in history and has had a remarkable influence. Its message is one of grace and it is one that we need continually to hear, lest we begin to forget, lest we begin to drift away from it. That is what the churches of Galatia were doing. That is who the book is addressed to in verse 2. These were churches Paul established on his first missionary journey with Barnabas, when they visited southern Asia Minor, which as I’m sure you know is modern-day Turkey, the southern portion of that country. The Romans referred to that area of southern Asia Minor as the province of Galatia. It included the cities of the city in Antioch, not to be confused with the great city of Antioch to the east, which is Paul’s home base.

The city in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derby. There was a region to the north in the central plateau of Asia Minor that was also called Galatia. And was named after the Galls who originally lived there. Paul did travel through that district on his second and third missionary journeys. And some of the older commentators believe that that was the region to which Paul addressed this book. But the book of Acts doesn't mention any churches that he established there on this visit. A consensus of modern scholars is that it was the southern Galatian churches that Paul wrote to, and that he wrote to them shortly after his return from that first missionary journey.

That would make the book of Galatians probably the first book that Paul wrote. Perhaps around the year A.D. 48. The style of the book suggests that he wrote it quickly and with urgency. He begins with a brief introduction, and then he gets right to the point. Something very alarming had happened in those churches, not very long after Paul had left the region and returned to Antioch. And it threatened the work that he had begun. Paul had labored hard there. He and Barnabas had moved through the province, city by city, entering synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. All along the way, they met opposition. Some crowds shouted them down. Others drove them out of town.

In Lystra, Paul was stoned, drag out of the city and left for dead. It had been a hard ministry, but the Lord had blessed it. A hard ministry but a fruitful ministry. All along the way, Gentiles who had been born into spiritual darkness turned from paganism to the light of the gospel. All along the way, in each of those Asian cities, small churches were established. Paul and Barnabas revisited each of them on their way home. They retraced their steps as they concluded their journey, and Luke writes in Acts chapter 14 that as they went to these various cities, they were strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.

Encouraging them to persevere in the faith. Persevere in the things that they had talked in and continue in it. But not long after returning home, Paul learned that they were weakening in their faith. A group of agitators known as Judaizers had come into the region shortly after Paul left and taught the Galatians the law in an attempt to draw them into the Jewish system of worship and religion. They claimed to be Christians. In fact, they claimed to represent the apostles in Jerusalem. But they preached a completely different gospel from the one that Paul preached.

They thought that it was necessary to undergo the rite of circumcision in order to be saved. We don't see that immediately. In fact, we're not immediately alerted to the specific problem that Paul was addressing. It's not until chapter 5 in verse 2 that that becomes clear, but that's the background. That was the issue. They said that faith in Christ is necessary – they didn't deny that – but they said was that faith is not enough. The person must also be circumcised. A person must also keep the law of Moses. Paul preached the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone.

That was the message that the Galatians had originally heard. That was the message that they had responded to. That was the message that they had believed. So this new message of faith plus works caused great confusion in these young churches. And being relatively young, and inexperienced in the faith, they were swayed by these false teachers who not only denied the gospel that Paul preached, but they denied that Paul was himself actually an apostle. And since Paul wasn't among the original 12 – since he had not walked with our Lord during his earthly ministry – they were saying he wasn't a part of that original group.

He wasn't a genuine apostle. He was a second rate apostle. He was a man who was under the authority of these leaders in Jerusalem, was actually going out on his own – he was a renegade. So there's no authority behind the message that he preached. They'd come to correct the things that he had propagated. It was persuasive, evidently, because the Galatians begin to believe these men who had come into their region, began to, as a result, drift away from the truth that they had heard from the apostle, and began to put themselves under the obligations of the law of Moses.

The message of the Judaizers is a message that has a very natural appeal to human nature. To add a work of our own to the work of Christ so that we can take some credit for our acceptance with God, that we can have some thing – maybe even a little thing – but some thing in which to boast and to take credit. That appeals to human nature. It appealed to these people. That is why the book of Galatians was so important to Luther. The official church of his day was teaching a gospel of faith plus works. Faith plus ceremonies. Different ceremonies than that which was taught by the Judaizers, but while there was a difference in the substance, in essence, it was the same message that was being taught.

All over Europe people were under the slavery of the sacraments, believing that it was necessary to be baptized in the church to be saved. It was necessary to take the Mass, to make confession to the priest, to do all of the duties that the Roman church required in order to be saved. We face the same issue today. If not from Rome, then from some other group that insists that faith is not enough. And that will always be the issue. Because the gospel of grace alone is always under attack. It may be under attack at some point in the history of this assembly, when some teacher arises that has a different gospel.

So we may confront it as a church. Or it may be that you meet this in a personal way, in a conversation that you have with a colleague at work or in the neighborhood. And you hear this other gospel and it's presented and you have to deal with it. The gospel is always under attack, and it is often an attack that come in a very subtle and very clever way. Often, if it's an effective attack – if it's an effective presentation of this other gospel – then it will be given on biblical grounds. With biblical support. It was that in Paul's day that Judaizers, as far as we know, didn't deny Christ. They didn't deny his deity. They didn't deny his resurrection. Didn't deny that he was the Messiah. Didn't deny a need for faith in him. They were just adding one ceremony to all of that. One human work. Which actually had been commanded under the old covenant.

Abraham had been instructed to be circumcised and to circumcise his children and to circumcise his servants. And Israel did that. But Paul said that that one ceremony – submission to that one right – destroyed grace and the gospel was lost. So when word got back to Paul in Antioch, he immediately answered the churches with this brief letter, which doesn't mince words. Paul calls the Judaizers “accursed”. And we can translate that “damned”. He calls the Galatians “foolish and bewitched”. His concern was like that of a parent for his or her child who was under the spell of a seducer. He responded quickly and persuasively.

The main point that he makes to the Galatians, which is the central theme of this letter, is that of justification by faith alone. And he develops that theme in three parts. In chapters 1 and 2, he defends his apostleship. In chapters 3 and 4, he defends his gospel. In chapters 5 and 6, he defends the Christian life. His apostleship is apart from men. Salvation is apart from works. And the Christian life is apart from the law. Put positively, Paul was chosen an apostle by Christ. Salvation is through faith.

And the Christian walk is by the spirit. He empowers us to live according to God’s will. It is all a free gift. Paul’s apostleship was a free gift.

Our salvation is a free gift. Our ability to walk by the spirit and do the things that God has instructed us to do – to live a wise and productive life – is all by the spirit. It’s all by grace. Grace is the key to the book of Galatians. And Paul begins the letter on that subject with a prayer for God’s grace and peace in the middle of his introduction in verse 3. First, though, in the typical letter writing style of his day, he begins with his name and with the name of those to whom he was writing, and an expression of goodwill toward them. Paul’s letters generally follow that form, but never as a formality.

We begin our letters – I guess we all begin in about the same way, in a formal way. Dear John, Dear Jane. We usually don’t put a great deal of significance in that word be “dear”. We’re not trying to express a great heartfelt emotion for those. It’s just the way we begin. It’s a formality. But that can’t be said of Paul in the way that he wrote, in the way that he addressed these people. The words that he used – the terms that he chose – all have deep Christian significance, Christian conduct, doctrinal substance. He did that here. The words that he used are very significant because they introduce us in these first verses, the first five verses, to the general themes of this letter. He begins, “Paul an apostle.”

And in doing that, he immediately answers the challenge to his authority and the credibility of the gospel that he preached. Paul an apostle. Well we might think, “Well, that’s a normal way for him to start,” but in light of the problems that he’s dealing with here, that his apostleship was being questioned, they might have said, “Well now aren’t you begging the question here, Paul? That’s really at issue. Are you an apostle?” Paul doesn’t debate the point. He simply says, I am an apostle. And so I speak with authority. Now strictly speaking, an apostle is one who is sent.

Here it has a meaning that’s greater than that. It refers to the spiritual gift in office that a particular, a select, a chosen group of men had who were authorized to preach the gospel and lay the foundation of the church. In Ephesians 2:20, the apostles and prophets are called the “foundation of the church”. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. Paul begins by stating that he was one of those apostles. He was one of those who is the foundation of the church. He says he was not sent from

men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead.

Now this is what the Judaizers had denied. In order to undermine Paul’s ministry and gain acceptance for their message, they alleged that Paul was not an apostle. It’s a very typical form of argument – called an ad hominem argument – in order to strengthen one’s case and to weaken another one’s case. Particularly if the opponent’s case is weak, the opponent will try to undermine the other man’s case by attacking his or her character. It’s an argument against the man. And that’s what they were doing. They were seeking to undermine Paul’s authority by discrediting him personally. Saying he wasn’t a real apostle.

That he was not an apostle of the first rank. Paul claimed full apostleship, full apostolic authority, derived not from men, not from those men in Jerusalem, not from the leaders there. He received his apostolic office and authority directly from Christ and from God the father. And significantly fore Paul’s authority, and for what he will say about salvation in verse 4, he places Christ and the father on equal terms. Now that’s very important in understanding the gospel because the gospel is not merely salvation through faith. It is salvation through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The object of faith is essential. Everyone has faith. Even the atheist has a. He has faith in his atheism. The issue is what you believe in? Who do you believe in? Who do you believe Christ is? And the object of our faith is a divine Christ, one who is equal with the father. And here in the way he speaks of the father, he places him on equal ground with him.

He mentions Jesus first. And then the father. And he joins the two with a single proposition. He was sent through Jesus Christ and God the father. They are joined together on equal terms. Christ holds the same status as the father. They’re equal. Christ is the son of God. Now that’s the source of Paul’s authority, the Triune God. Authority that was given to him at his conversion. Luke records the event in Acts chapter 9 when Christ appeared to Paul in a blinding light on the Damascus road and called him to be his servant.

Paul writes of that later in this first chapter when he proves his apostleship and he defends his ministry. But he introduces it here. His authority as an apostle is real and equal with the 12, therefore the gospel that he preaches is equal with the one that the apostles at Jerusalem preached. It’s a genuine message. It’s the gospel. That’s

how he begins the letter. Without apology or hesitation, he is God’s agent. Sent by the father and the son, he is Paul the apostle. Therefore he is someone to listen to. So he greets them as a true apostle, and then sends greetings to them from all the brethren who are with him. He doesn’t identify them beyond that. They are brethren. Probably fellow workers and missionaries.

Like Barnabas and the leaders, the elders, in the church at Antioch. But the effect of the greeting is significant because it shows that Paul was not alone in his beliefs, in his claim to be an apostle, in his conviction that his Gospel is true. The brethren were behind him. The apostles were, too, as Paul will later demonstrate. And he’ll demonstrate that they received him as a partner in the gospel. We received him as an apostle and they preached the same gospel that he preached. Not this new gospel that the Judaizers had introduced.

But here it is the brethren – Christians, the church – that stood with Paul. Now our authority for faith and practice is the Bible. That’s our soul authority. It is our standard. But there is something to be said for the general convictions of the church. If a person sets forth an idea that is novel, that is intriguing, that’s new, that’s unique, that’s unusual – something put forth as new undiscovered truth – that’s a red flag. And that’s what the cults do. They come along with something that isn’t held by the Church historically and they say, ‘Well we’re coming with new truth, new revelation, that we discovered on these gold tablets or whatever.

And we’re correcting the church that went bad centuries ago. It’s a new truth.” Well, as I say, that ought to be a red flag. The spirit of God gives a general conviction about the fundamentals of the faith so that the church, over time, affirms agreement on them. Now Paul was claiming that here. He had not introduced a new gospel to the Galatians. He proclaims what the church agrees is the gospel – the good news of salvation. He gives the essentials of that gospel in the final verses of his greeting. First by saluting the Galatians in verse 3 with two important words. Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words grace and peace are found in many of the greetings of Paul’s letters, but they are particularly appropriate here because it was God’s grace that was under attack and the Galatians peace that was being threatened. These are important words. And again, even though they appear in a formal greeting, we still give them their full meaning theologically. Grace is God’s unconditional and undeserved favor. His

unconditional and undeserved goodwill toward sinners. Grace is gift. And it was supremely demonstrated in the cross in the work of redemption accomplished by Christ.

Peace is the Hebrew greeting “shalom”. We’re all familiar with that. Essential meaning of that Hebrew word shalom is wholeness, well-being, complete well-being, physically, mentally, spiritually, and in regard to God and to man. So it means being in a state of peace with God, being reconciled to him, and as a result of that, being at peace with men. Because we have vertical peace, we can have horizontal peace. And not just peace with men, but peace within ourselves. And the two are connected, grace and peace. One of the commentators put it this way. Grace and peace are related to each other as root and fruit, as cause and effect.

So we lose peace when we depart from grace. When people exchange divine grace for human merit, when they seek to obtain God’s approval by personal works of righteousness, peace suffers. It is impossible to have personal peace when we believe that our acceptance with God is based on our personal performance. Because it is impossible to know when we have enough good works, and therefore when we are eternally secure. If our relationship with God is based on our performance – even partially, partially – then we can never be certain about that security and about that relationship with God because we can never do enough.

And we can ever get to a point when we say, “Well I think I’ve done enough good works. I think I’ve just about filled up the need for righteousness. I’ve reached that point. I’ve arrived.” We never feel that way. We always know there’s more to do, more to do. And we’ve not done what we’ve done well enough. And so if our relationship with God is based on our performance, then we can never have a sense of security in that relationship. We can never have peace. That was the problem in the Galatian churches. Later in chapter 5, in verse 4, Paul tells them, “You have fallen from grace.” He didn’t mean by that that they lost their salvation.

That they had fallen out of God’s hand. We know that that cannot happen. We can’t pry ourselves out of God’s hand. The Lord made that very plain in John chapter 10. But they had fallen from the principle of grace by which God deals with us. And they’d fall into legalism. So when he wrote to them, they lacked peace. And that is what he wished for them. That’s what he prayed for. He prayed that they

would have both peace and grace. Greater experience of these things. But both come to us in only one way.

Through the only mediator between God and man – the man Christ Jesus. And that must be understood. It must have a good understanding of our Lord and his relationship to us, who he is, what he’s doing, what he’s done. So Paul speaks of him and speaks of that in verse 4. “Grace and peace come from God the father and Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from this present evil age. According to the will of our God and father.” What that means very simply is salvation is God’s work. It’s not our work. The father planned it.

The son executed it. It is an accomplished fact and there’s nothing that we can add to it. Christ’s work of salvation is not incomplete. It is finished. He declared that from the cross. We can add nothing to it. That’s Paul’s point. But he developed it in terms of the father and the son’s role in our salvation by showing that God is the author of it and Christ is the basis of it. First, it all happened according to the will of our God and father. Salvation unfolded according to a plan. It is an eternal plan. That’s implied in the word God. He is the eternal one, without beginning, without end, whose thoughts and plans are as eternal as he is.

He’s omniscient. He knows everything. He always has known everything. There has never been a time when a thought occurred to God. We speak about his plans being drawn up within the Godhead, but that’s for our sake to try to understand what is ultimately incomprehensible. God’s thoughts are eternal. He’s always known everything that is, or ever will be, or ever could be. He’s always known everything. So this plan is an eternal plan. And Paul describes the plan in those terms in other places. For example, in Ephesians 1:4, he speaks of God’s choice of us, his election of us to salvation as being before the foundation of the world. Which means from all eternity. Before time was. But the name God also denotes his power.

His omnipotence. And that means that his will to save cannot fail. It must be accomplished. And he has the power to succeed, and therefore must succeed. Just the fact that it’s God that’s drawn up the plan makes that evident. God cannot be frustrated. The omniscient, omnipotent God will succeed. He will save those he has chosen to save. But he is also designated as our father. And that suggests something more than great power. That expresses the affection or the disposition of his great love. And that’s what lies behind the plan and the work of salvation.

It is the infinite irresistible love of God the father who willed to make us his children and cannot be frustrated in doing that. So to carry out this plan that will not and could not be frustrated, to accomplish our salvation, he sent one who could not fail, and that is his son, whom Paul says, “He gave himself for our sins.” Meaning he sacrificed himself for us. Because of our sins. He willingly sacrificed himself because of our sins. How did he do that? By becoming our substitute in judgment. So that he could suffer the penalty of death in our place.

The penalty that we deserved but he did not deserve. That’s how Paul explains the Lord’s death later in chapter 3 in verse 13. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us.” That is, by becoming a curse in our place, even though he was innocent. He’s our substitute. And in that way, by taking our place, he satisfied the righteous demands of God’s law toward us, the law demands death for sin. He took that death in our place. And his death was sufficient for us. In fact, sufficient for an innumerable multitude because he’s not only a true man who represented mankind, but also **very God of very God**.

And the fact that this is the Godman that deity was joined to humanity made certain that his sacrificed would succeed in paying for our sin and rescuing us, as Paul said. J. B. Lightfoot, the British commentator of almost 150 years ago, wrote one of the classic commentaries on the book of Galatians. And he called this word “rescue” or “deliver” the keynote of the epistle. It’s what the book of Galatians is about. It’s about rescue. And this word “rescue” has the idea of being rescued from danger. Luke in the book of Acts uses this word in just that way. He writes of God rescuing Joseph from his affliction in jail.

And of Israel being delivered from slavery in Egypt. And of Paul being rescued from a mob. The father sent his son into this world on a rescue mission. And the danger from which he rescued us is, Paul says, “this present evil age”. That’s very interesting. He rescued us from this world. Is that how you would describe this world in which we live? This present age of history, would you say this is an evil world and an evil age in which we live? From which I am so glad to be delivered from. I think most people wouldn’t. Or if they would, they still wouldn’t want to be separated from it.

And maybe, the truth be known, most of us wouldn’t either. We don’t want to be rescued from it. We want to be established in it. We want to have our nice things

that the world offers. And it offers so much. We want to enjoy it all. That’s how we see things. But Paul saw it differently. He saw it below the surface. He saw this world and this age in which we live at its core. Have you ever cut open a piece of fruit or a vegetable, like an apple or an avocado, and it just looks very nice on the outside but you cut into it and it’s rotten on the inside? That’s how I pick avocados. Very typical experience of mine.

It looks great on the outside, but on the inside it’s not. Well that’s how Paul saw the world. This age. He was no ascetic. He was no severe, self-denying monk who believed that pleasure in things were bad. Not at all. In fact, just the opposite of that. He condemned that attitude and those who teach do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, who make the religion a negative kind of thing of denying themselves the things of this world. Paul was not like that at all. God’s creation is good. In fact, it’s a blasphemy to deny ourselves these things and say they’re bad. What comes from God is good. But the system, or the spirit of this age, is evil because this is a fallen world.

It is under the influence of an evil spiritual being who has turned in the minds of people these good things into idols. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul wrote of the “God of this world who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving.” They cannot see the reality in which they live. In Ephesians 2:2, he describes the course of this world as being “according to the prince of the power of the air”. In Ephesians 6:12, he writes of the “world forces of this darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”. We don’t see that. It’s not how we see the world. Because these are intangible, invisible spiritual forces.

What we often see is very attractive and very alluring. And yet what is under the surface is not. At the core, and driving things, is pure evil. When God created Adam, he put him in the garden to rule as King. But when he fell, Satan picked up the scepter and has been ruling as the prince ever since. Now God didn’t lose his sovereignty. Man did, God didn’t. And the devil rules under God’s authority and power. And to get a good picture of that, read Job chapters 1 and 2. But it is the devil who is inspiring this age and its way of life. And its way of life is dominated by sin. Which is attractive and promises pleasure, promises fulfillment.

That’s what this present evil age offers. Great promises. Freedom, fulfillment, pleasure. But it never delivers. The world is a cheat. Sin always leads to

slavery and death. It's very subtle. It's very convincing. But it never delivers. This is what we have been rescued from. A world that is doomed. Christ has rescued us from that, and in its place he has given us the hope of heaven and the world to come. He's given us eternal life. And not just eternal life for the future, but eternal life for the present. As we live in this present evil age, we have eternal life.

We have new natures. We have new hearts. We have been born again. And we are new creatures in Christ. That have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. He dwells within us permanently. So we are now free from this present evil age. We're still in it. We are to remain in it. And we are to live productive lives in it. We're not to withdraw from it. But we're not to be of it. In it, but not of it. We have the power to do that. We have the power to resist and, in fact, challenge this world.

Not merely maintain ourselves within it, but challenge this world and even, to some degree, change it. Ultimately only the Lord will do that, but we can have an influence. Because of who we are. Because of what we have within us. Because of the creatures that God has made us to be. We can shine as lights in the midst of the darkness, radiate the truth of God in our lives and in the things that we say and the gospel that we give. The truth of God as it's lived out and spoken by us.

The law of Moses could not do that. Could not change us. Cannot change us. Cannot change the world. It can didn't condemn it. It can condemn the sinner, but it can't change the sinner. It can bring death, but it can't give life. It wasn't intended to do that. It was given to expose sin. And for that, it is a great blessing. But the law cannot take that sin away. Now that's not the fault of the law. That's the fault of ourselves. But for that reason – because we cannot remove our sin, because we cannot obey the law, because we are unable to save ourselves – God sent his son into this world to save us, to rescue us.

And he did that. He accomplished that work for his people. For that reason, Paul concludes his greeting to the Galatians with a doxology in verse 5. A word of praise to God. “To whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.” And you can be certain of that. The glory will be to God forevermore. That is an awful lot of doctrine packed into one brief passage. The deity of Christ in verse 2, the grace and peace in verse 3, the atonement in verse 4, the doxology in verse 5. But all of this was succinctly, briefly stated in anticipation of the main contents of the letter. Which are

about these doctrines. They are about the gift of life and liberty, grace and peace, that's in Jesus Christ.

We don't need works of the law for our salvation. We don't need ceremonies, or priests, or priest-craft to bring us to God. Christ is all we need. He is the all sufficiency. He rescued us from this evil age. At the cross where he paid for our sins in full and accomplished salvation. We can't add anything to that. All we can do is receive that as a free gift by faith and live in that freedom. That's what Paul had preached to the Galatians originally, and it's what he had to remind them of again. We all need that reminder constantly. That's what the book of Galatians gives to us. It brings us back to the essential facts of the Christian faith, the essential facts of life. About grace and faith in Christ.

But maybe there is someone here who is hearing all of this for the first time. For the first time in your life, or maybe in a long time, you're hearing that salvation is a free gift. It can't be earned, it can only be gratefully received. And if that's the case, I invite you to receive it. Recognize that you're a sinner. We all are. And to understand that Jesus Christ is the solution. He's God's eternal son and became a man and died in the place of sinners, to rescue everyone who believes in him.

Rescue them from doom, give them life. That life is in him. And the moment you believe in him, the moment you receive that gift, you're justified, you're declared righteous, you're completely and forever accepted by him. And he begins to do a work of transformation in your life. So come to him. Trust in him.

[Prayer] Father we confess that we are prone to wander, just like those ancient Galatians. Prone to listen to new messages. Have our ears tickled. Be drawn away from the truth of the gospel. The simple truth of the gospel. The glorious truth of the gospel. That it's salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone, and that all we have or ever will have is simply a gift from you.

Just to hold on to that great truth, bind us fast to yourself. We know you will. We know you'll never forsake us. We thank you for your grace. We thank you for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's in his name we pray. Amen.