Paul’s Greeting to the Churches of Galatia
Galatians 1:1-5 (NKJV)

- Many believe this letter to the churches in Galatia was the first letter that Paul penned.
- It’s a letter that he wrote to combat the false teachers who were attacking the gospel of grace.
- They wanted the churches to no longer live in liberty, but instead to walk in works—a burden that nobody could bear and only leads to burnout.
- This letter really has to do with the liberty that grace can bring to our lives.
- Let me give you an outline…

Chapters:
1&2 – Paul’s personal experience with grace
3&4 – Paul’s doctrinal instruction about grace
5&6 – Paul’s practical application of grace

- Today we take a look at the first five verses that are Paul’s introduction or greeting to the churches of Galatia where he will introduce the grace of God.

Vs. 1 – “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)…”

- Paul wanted everyone to be clear about his calling.
- It was not something he had earned as he jumped through the hoops of Bible College or seminary.
- It was not something he had applied for as he hooked up with the Jerusalem Council or the board of elders at Jerusalem.
- It did not come from man, it came from the Lord.
- Notice the phrase “not from men” meaning it did not originate from man or through men, which means there was no group of men seeking him out to give him an ordination.
- It came from God, as do all true ordinations.
You have heard me say it before, Wildwood doesn’t ordain anyone, God is the only one who ordains—we just affirm what we see God doing.

- Listen to what the Lord spoke to Ananias about Paul as he was sitting in Damascus, blind and waiting for the Lord to give him further instructions…

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ So the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’ Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’” Acts 9:10-14 (NKJV)

- Ananias is wanting to be careful here; he knew about Saul, a bitter and angry man, a man who wanted to destroy the Christian movement.
- So like most of us, he was reminding the Lord of how bad this guy was—I guess you could say he was a reluctant disciple.
- The saving grace for Ananias is that Saul was blind; the Lord would even remind Ananias that Saul received a vision of Ananias putting his hands on him and the miracle of sight would be restored.
- Notice how the Lord responds…

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’” Acts 9:15-16 (NKJV)

- Paul’s calling would be to proclaim the name of Christ and suffer for the name of Christ.
- That was the will of God for his life, that would be his calling and it came from God, even the suffering was part of the plan.
- Notice how Ananias responded…
“And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” Acts 9:17-18 (NKJV)

- What a cool way to greet this new believer; it shows a lot about Ananias that he would call him brother, not a murderer—he knew and understood the power of grace.

It’s why at the end of our services I say to those who have put their faith in Christ, welcome to the family of God! It’s the power of grace that has forgiven them, saved them, and baptized them into the body of Christ.

- Ananias embraces Saul—brother Saul.
- But then notice he says, “The Lord sent me; the one who appeared to you on the road, He has not forgotten you. He has sent me to restore you eyesight and that you might be filled with the Holy Spirit.”
- Paul had received the Holy Spirit when he came to Christ, but now he is going to receive the filling or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- As Ananias prayed, a miracle took place—Paul’s eyesight was restored.
- And he was immediately baptized, going public with his faith, no baptism class to take, no hoop to jump through, he just jumped in and got wet.
- Paul had been saved, filled, healed, and even baptized all within a few days of each other.
- And now he was being called to proclaim the name that had saved him to Jews, Gentiles, and kings.
- Where did it come from? Heaven. The calling originated in the heart of God.
- And now he is reminding the churches of Galatia of his calling, but not because of his pride or that he wanted them to lay out the red carpet when he came.
- Paul wanted them to be assured that the words he was speaking were the words of God; he wanted them to know he was accountable when he spoke and he could be trusted.
Notice…

Vs. 2 – “…and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia…”

- Paul was not writing to one single church in a single city.
- Galatia was not a city, but a region, like the Inland Empire is a region.
- The northern region was made up of farmers—hardworking, blue collar—and a lot of small cities. They had an Ace Hardware and the Kopper Kettle.
- The southern region was the big city—white collar, full of commerce. They had a Costco and a Home Depot, and ate at Chili’s.
- Notice how Paul greets them…

Vs. 3 – “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ…”

- The churches in Galatia, as we will notice over the next few months, were struggling in the area of grace.
- They were slowly moving away from the grace of God and into a works relationship with the Lord.

Grace: God’s undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor.

- We could never earn it, we don’t have to merit it, and we’re totally undeserving.
- It’s his unconditional love for us; it’s rooted in the character of God, not rooted in some quality that we have, and it’s not withheld because we lack a certain quality, it’s rooted in His great love for us.
- Notice what it brings into our lives—grace and peace.
- Grace and peace, never peace then grace because you can seek peace your entire life and you will never find it; not the peace that surpasses all understanding, not the peace that grounds us for eternity.
- Listen to what Jesus spoke to His disciples the day they were all freaked out and feeling alone…
“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27 (NKJV)

- Did you get that? Not as the world gives.
- The peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ, embracing His grace for us, is nothing like the world can give.

It’s not based on your bank account being full, even though that might give a peace of mind; the reality is we all know you can be wealthy in this world and still be totally lost and uncertain about your eternal destiny. It’s not based on having someone to spend your life with, as great as that can be, it meets a need for sure, but it can’t meet the deep need of our soul that only the grace of God can meet.

- The peace that comes from the grace of God is something the world has no ability to provide; it comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- It’s who Jesus is…

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

- The Son, the one who was given for us, is the one who’s called the Prince of Peace.
- That’s what He is for us today, that’s what He brings into our life.
- It’s not until you taste the grace of God that you will find the peace of God.
- Notice what Paul goes on to say, here is the beauty of His grace...

Vs. 4 – “…who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father…”

- It’s important to note here that God is a giver.
- And He willingly made a great sacrifice to give—the Father gave His Son, His only Son.
- Could you imagine giving your son for someone else to live?
• And the Son gave it all—He gave Himself.
• I don’t know which one is greater: the Father giving His Son or the Son giving His life. They’re both beyond my comprehension, beyond my ability to give.
• And notice the reason that he did so—He gave Himself for our sins.
• It’s the very purpose of why Christ came.

“To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.” Acts 3:26 (NKJV)

• The Father sent the Son to bless us. How? To deal with our sin.
• It’s the reason He came, it’s the reason He went to the cross, to deal with our sin.
• The Bible is very clear about our sin.

“…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God…” Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

I have yet to find a person who believes they’re sinless. We all have missed the mark of perfection it would take to be right with God. Most of us, if we’re really honest, by the time we were in junior high the sin count was off the charts! The things we said, the things we thought, the way we treated people. By the time we graduated from high school nobody had to convince us that we were a sinner.

• We have all sinned, we have all fallen short.
• The Bible is clear on this.
• The Bible is also clear on the consequence of our sin.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

• Wages are something that we get for the work that we have done.
• The wages for the work that we put into our sinful behavior is death.
• So the wages of our sin is death, and what did Jesus do? He gave Himself for our sins.
For: for the sake of, instead, in place of.

- It has the idea of substitution; the wages of our sin was death and instead of us having to pay the price of death, He did it for us—He was our substitute.
- But He wasn’t just any substitute; it would not have worked for my brother or my father to die for me, to take my place, it had to be Jesus.
- Only Jesus was the spotless lamb; remember what John the Baptist proclaimed…

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” John 1:29 (NKJV)

- The bar was so high that it could only be Jesus, that’s what makes it so amazing. He didn’t drop the bar and say it’s unreachable, or drop the bar and say Peter could have died for our sin, or John could have died for our sin.
- No one sinner could pay the price, only the Sinless One could pay the price.
- No one created, only the Creator.
- Listen to Paul describe this to the Romans…

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly…But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6 & 8 (NKJV)

- Without strength and stuck in our sin, Christ took our place.
- And then notice what he goes on to say, not only did He die for us, pay the price for us, He also delivered us from this present evil age.
- Who delivers us from evil? Jesus.

Deliver: to tear out, to release, to pluck out, to rescue.

- The cross is the ultimate rescue mission, that’s what it shouts, we were stuck in sin and without the ability to get ourselves out.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my
feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.” Psalm 40:1-3 (NKJV)

- David describes our condition well—in our sin we are in a horrible pit, something we cannot get out of.
- He also describes our condition like miry clay where our footing is not solid.
- And the Lord brought him out and placed his feet on the rock, the solid rock, and then he put a new song in his mouth.
- Praise to our God—that’s the song we sing, that’s what flows out of the mouth of the one who has been rescued from their sin.
- Listen to Peter describe the one who has been rescued…

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV)

- He called us out of darkness and into the light, and now we get to shine the light, point others to the light, and as David said, many will see it and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Vs. 5 – “…to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”