

A Convincing Salutation

Galatians 1:1-5

Today, I want to begin our journey through the book Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia. Many scholars agree that Galatians was one of the earliest of Paul's letters, likely written somewhere around 49-50 AD. This early date assumes Paul was writing to the southern region of Galatia, a Roman province, and penned the letter just prior to attending the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). If Paul wrote to the northern region of Galatia, scholars argue that Paul would not have written the letter until after his third missionary journey, somewhere around 53-56 AD.

Regardless of the timing of the letter, the purpose is clear – Paul sought to address the challenges within Galatia regarding false teaching and many of the believers there being tempted to move away from the truth of the gospel, being influenced by the Judaizers who refused to accept the gospel by grace through faith alone. While the false teachers presented an appealing message on several fronts, Paul was well aware of the dangers of moving away from the truth. Such false teaching was not liberating, but in fact, it led to additional bondage. Paul knew real liberty and freedom is found in Christ alone. The Judaizers emphasized the keeping of the Mosaic law, along with Jewish rituals and ceremonies if one was to truly please God. This was a direct attack on the liberty received through salvation by faith in Christ alone.

As we begin this informative study, I want to examine the [aspects](#) of Paul's greeting as we consider: [A Convincing Salutation](#).

I. The Apostle's Greeting (1-2a) – [Paul, an apostle, \(not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead\);](#) ² [And all the brethren which are with me.](#) As was his custom, Paul offered a greeting to identify himself as the author of the letter and establish a proper foundation for that which was to follow. We discover:

A. His Identity (1) – [Paul, an apostle](#)...Although the churches within Galatia were familiar with Paul, he reminds them of his apostleship in Christ. This was a position to be noted and respected. An apostle (“one who is sent with a commission”) was an envoy, ambassador, or messenger who was chosen and trained by Jesus Christ as His special emissary for proclaiming His truth during the formative years of the church. ¹

➤ Paul doesn't make reference to his apostleship in arrogance or to appear more righteous than those to whom he was writing, but it seems apparent he felt the need to affirm his calling. He viewed himself as an apostle “[born out of due time](#).” He was the only apostle who had not walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. This added scrutiny and skepticism that the other apostles

typically avoided. Also, as we will see, as Paul combated the false teaching prevalent in Galatia, it was important for them to receive him as an apostle of Christ.

B. His Authority (1) – [Paul, an apostle, \(not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.\)](#) While some were skeptical, Paul revealed there was no need for skepticism or doubt. He was not called or sent out merely from those in Jerusalem. While it was good to have their support and backing, Paul was sent with a commission from the risen Savior and God the Father. (Again, this authority was much needed as he sought to preach truth and combat false doctrine. He was not sharing the thoughts or agendas of men; he was preaching the gospel under the calling and authority of Christ the Lord.)

➤ The same holds true for the commission of the church. We are not merely sharing the message of men; we are proclaiming the gospel of the risen Christ, seeking to fulfill the work He has left us to perform. The world may not embrace the truth of the gospel, but that doesn't detract from its validity, nor does it diminish our calling and authority.

C. His Community (2a) – [And all the brethren which are with me...](#) While it wouldn't affect the determination and commitment of Paul for the gospel ministry, (he would go it alone if necessary) he does send greetings from the brethren who served alongside him in ministry. No doubt, this would have encouraged those who were initially skeptical of Paul to embrace his work and calling.

➤ There is great benefit to the fellowship of faith. We draw strength and encouragement from one another and we all have those whom we can influence in the faith. There can be no doubt, we are more effective together than we are alone.

II. The Audience in Galatia (2b) – [unto the churches of Galatia.](#) Paul reveals to whom this particular letter was written. In this simple statement, we discover:

A. The Recipients – Paul was writing to the churches of Galatia. This letter was unique in that it was not addressed to a specific individual or a singular church. He was writing to several churches with the region of Galatia. Many scholars agree these were churches located in the central Asia Minor cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, where Paul had ministered on both his first and second missionary journeys (Acts 13:14–14:23; 16:1–5).

B. The Region – Clearly, Paul was writing to the churches in Galatia. The region of Galatia is not in question regarding the letter, but the exact location of the churches Paul addressed has been debated. The majority of commentaries that I consulted believe these churches were located in southern Galatia, where the cities just cited were located. “The Roman province of Galatia was in central Asia Minor (modern Turkey), extending in the north from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean in the south. The Roman presence was strong in the south, where Roman legions were garrisoned, and in the early part of the first century a.d. Roman roads connected the important Roman establishments of southern Galatia. In the north the Roman presence was not so strongly felt. Roman roads were not built in the north until the 70s, and the Celtic tribes that had formed the basis of the kingdom of Amyntas, which the Romans annexed to form the province of Galatia (25 b.c.), were less affected by Roman culture.”ⁱⁱ

III. The Abundance of Grace (3-5) – [Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,](#)⁴ [Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:](#)⁵ [To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.](#) As was common with Paul, he desired much for the churches. While this is a common theme in Paul’s greetings, these were not mere words of little consequence. They set the tone for what is to follow. Consider:

A. The Grace Desired (3) – [Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.](#) Paul desired the churches in Galatia to experience the grace and peace that can only be found in the Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. As we will discover, their struggles were many and varied. In fact, one can rightly argue that Galatia was in a battle for their very souls, struggling to embrace unadulterated truth – the truth of the gospel. Paul was well aware they needed the grace and peace that only came from the Lord. (We too need His grace and peace as we walk in uncertain days filled with iniquity and constant attacks on our faith.)

B. The Grace Displayed (4) – [Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.](#) It may be difficult to remember all that we have discussed today, but this verse is quite significant in the study of Galatians. As we will discover, they were dealing with an abundance of false doctrine, particularly from the Judaizers who emphasized the need for adherence to the law, traditions, and rituals of Judaism. In order to encourage liberty in Christ, Paul reminded them of the basis of the gospel. Christ offered Himself the atoning sacrifice for our sin, delivering us from the bondage sin brings, according to the plan and will of God. Their salvation did not rest upon the works of the flesh – circumcision, adherence to the law, or keeping the rituals and traditions associated with the law. Christ fully and eternally purchased our redemption, freeing us from the bondage of sin. His work is sufficient to save, and faith in His finished work is all that is required to be justified in Him! [1 Cor.15:14-17 – And if Christ be](#)

not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. ¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. ¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

C. The Glory Declared (5) – *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* Paul concludes his introduction with a doxology of praise unto the Lord our God. Again, this foundation is key as we move through the rest of the letter. It is God who provided the means of our salvation. It is Christ who secured our salvation as He died upon the cross and rose again triumphantly. It is the Lord who gave the commission to proclaim the gospel to the lost and dying. It is God who provides the grace and peace we need as we journey through this life. He is worthy of our praise today and forevermore! “In these five opening verses of Galatians Paul covers the four stages of man’s salvation. The first stage was the sovereign decree of God to save, the second was the death of Christ for man’s sins, the third was the appointment of apostles to testify to that divine provision, and the fourth was the gift of God’s grace and peace to those who believe in Jesus Christ,” MacArthur. ⁱⁱⁱ

Conclusion: It’s interesting that Paul closes the salutation with Amen. It seems apparent that he sought to establish an attitude of worship and acknowledgement early in the letter. Such a conclusion challenges the reader to respond with Amen as well. This simple word is an affirmation of what has been said and a desire which proclaims, “let it be so!” Can we affirm the truths Paul revealed in these opening verses? Are we resting solely in the finished work of Christ for our salvation? Are we experiencing the grace and peace of the Lord? Are we committed to proclaim the truth for others to hear? Are we giving the Lord the praise and worship He deserves?

ⁱ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Galatians](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 2.

ⁱⁱ L. Ann Jervis, [Galatians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 2011), 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur Jr., [Galatians](#), 7.