

# Introduction

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Tonight we'll start our study in Galatians by looking at the first five verses.

! So let's go ahead and read those verses now. So here are Galatians chapter 1, verses 1 through 5. Amen. In these verses, Paul establishes his authority and summarizes the gospel.

That's the main idea for this section. Paul establishes his authority and summarizes the gospel.

Studying Galatians now seems appropriate.

That's because some have called Galatians the foundation of the Reformation. So starting the book in the month we commemorate the Reformation works out well. We're going to break tonight's verses into four sections.

In verse 1 through the first part of verse 2, we see the greeters. So the greeters is your first blink.

Listen to verse 1 in the first part of verse 2 again.

[ 1 : 36 ] Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead and all the brothers who are with me.

We know a lot about Paul, but familiarizing ourselves with him again helps set the context for this letter. We know that Paul was originally known as Saul, and he was a rising star in Judaism.

He was so zealous for God that he was persecuting Christians. Acts chapters 6 through 8 summarize the arrest and execution of Stephen, and we'll look at a few verses related to that because Paul is involved with that as well.

To start off here are Acts 6, 8 through 12. Again, these verses are Acts chapter 6, verses 8 through 12. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the freedmen, as it was called, and of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Sicilia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

[ 2 : 44 ] But they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly instigated men who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.

And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council. Skipping to Acts chapter 7, verses 55 through 58, we see this about Stephen.

Again, these verses are Acts chapter 7, verses 55 through 58. Talking about Stephen, it says, But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

And he said, Behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.

Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. So notice the reference to Saul there at the end of verse 58.

[ 3 : 53 ] The first three verses of Acts chapter 8 go into more detail about Saul. So let's look at Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 3.

It says, And Saul approved of his, being Stephen's, execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house. He dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Saul reappears in Acts chapter 9. So let's read the story of Saul's conversion in Acts chapter 9, verses 1 through 19. Starting with verse 1 of chapter 9, it says, But Saul, still breathing threats and

murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[ 5 : 17 ] And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.

So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

The Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.

For behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 25 ] And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, and taking food, he was strengthened. Paul's conversion changed him from being the persecutor to being the persecuted.

Meanwhile, many of the Christians were still skeptical of Paul because of his past. Barnabas' introduction of Paul to the skeptical Christians helped those Christians believe that Paul's conversion was real.

And we know that Paul and Barnabas would later begin several churches together. After his conversion, Paul wrote at least 13 books of the New Testament and possibly 14 if Paul wrote Hebrews.

[ 7 : 44 ] Some debate exists over the exact date that Paul wrote Galatians, but in chapter 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, so he must have written Galatians after that event.

Most scholars date the Jerusalem Council at about A.D. 49, so most likely Galatians was written shortly after A.D. 49. Paul summarizes his authority right off the bat.

Look at Galatians 1.1 again. He says, Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

The general meaning for the term apostle is one who is sent on behalf of another. However, the term apostle in the biblical sense often has a much more specific meaning.

Paul is using the specific meaning of the term here. And in that sense, an apostle was an envoy, an ambassador, or a messenger who was chosen and trained by Jesus Christ as a special emissary for proclaiming his truth during the formative years of the church.

[ 8 : 57 ] In its primary and technical usage, the term applied to the original twelve who were chosen at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. They were set aside to lay the foundation of the early church and be the channels through which God completed his revelation.

They were also given power to perform healings and to cast out demons as verifying signs of their divine authority. One way to attack the validity of a message is to attack the validity of the messenger.

And as we work through the first two chapters of Galatians over the next few weeks, we will see that false teachers were influencing the Galatian church. Those false teachers were attacking the credibility of Paul's message and they were also attacking the credibility of Paul himself.

Paul's apostleship would have been easier to attack than the apostleship of the original twelve because Paul was called after the original twelve. And that is one reason why Paul sometimes had to defend his authority.

One of the requirements to be an apostle in the technical sense of how Paul uses the word was to have seen the risen Christ. Jesus appeared to the original apostles shortly after his resurrection.

[10:16] And when we read the account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, we learned that Paul saw the risen Christ in a very unique way. Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus road.

Listen to what Paul told the Corinthians about his first encounter with Christ. These verses are 1 Corinthians 15, verses 3 through 10.

1 Corinthians 15, 3 through 10 say, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

[11:26] But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God, that is with me.

Paul did meet the requirements of seeing the resurrected Christ, so that qualified him to be an apostle. And in the later part of Galatians 1.1, Paul reemphasizes who gave him the apostolic authority.

There he said that he is an apostle, not from men, nor through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. So Paul says there that he received his authority from both Jesus Christ and God the Father.

In two weeks, we'll study verses 11 through 17 of Galatians 1 in depth. For now, let's just read those verses to hear how Paul summarized the source of his authority there.

So here are Galatians 1, verses 11 through 17. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

[12:36] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. We see both a reference to Jesus and God the Father in those verses. Verse 12 talks about a revelation of Jesus Christ, and then verses 15 and 16 talk about God calling Paul and revealing his son to Paul.

Paul received his commission differently than the other apostles. However, Paul's commissioning as an apostle is equally as valid as the original apostles.

Because the apostles' teaching came directly from the Lord, the writings of Paul, Peter, John, and the others are every much as divinely inspired and authoritative as the words that Jesus spoke in person during his earthly ministry.

[14:12] We see some other people mentioned in the greeting, and the other people mentioned in the greeting are listed simply at the start of verse 2 as all the brothers who are with me.

That begs the question, who were those brothers? Well, the answer is that Paul never tells us who those brothers were. He sometimes will mention the names of people with him at either the beginning or the end of his letters.

In Galatians, he doesn't do that. All we know is that some people were with him. We can be confident, though, that Paul was the only apostle writing in that group, and that makes his use of the term brothers even more significant.

Paul deliberately associated himself with fellow believers who shared with him a burden for the gospel as well as for the Galatians. At the outset, the unity of the church was acknowledged in marked contrast to the fractured fellowship that we'll see within the churches of Galatia.

Think about this. Christians are brothers as the children of the Heavenly Father, a status to which they are called and of which they are assured through Jesus Christ. They are children of the Father by virtue of rebirth.

[15:29] By belonging to one and the same Lord, they are made each other's equals. none of them is Lord over the others, not even an apostle, and that's one thing we can take from that.

So now that we have learned some things about the greeters, let's move to the second section of the lesson. At the end of verse 2, we see the greeted.

So the greeted is your second section. The end of verse 2 simply says, to the churches of Galatia. Galatia. In Paul's day, the word Galatia had two distinct meanings. In a strict ethnic sense, Galatia was the region of Central Asia Minor that was inhabited by the Galatians.

And these were a Celtic people who'd migrated to that region from Gaul in modern France. And that happened in the 3rd century B.C. The Romans conquered the Galatians in 189 B.C., but allowed them to have some measure of independence until 25 B.C., when Galatia became a Roman province.

[16:39] And when it became a province, it incorporated some regions that had not been inhabited by the ethnic Galatians. So in a political sense, Galatia came to describe the entire Roman province, not merely the piece that was inhabited by just the ethnic Galatians.

We know the area of Galatia today as modern Turkey. And if you look at different commentaries on Galatians, you'll see some debate about which specific churches in Galatia were the ones that Paul targeted with this letter.

We have enough information in the Bible, though, to narrow down the possibilities to the most likely ones. Acts chapters 13, 14, and 16 talk about the churches in Galatia where Paul ministered on both his first and second missionary journeys.

Those churches were Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. All of these were in the southern part of Galatia. And we know from Galatians that the churches targeted in this letter were churches in which Paul had personally ministered.

In Galatians 4, 11, Paul wrote, I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. So obviously, Paul had been there before. Based upon what Acts and Galatians tell us, we can be reasonably confident that Paul was writing to the same churches where he administered during either of his first two missionary journeys.

[18:10] Regardless, though, of the specific churches involved, Paul's message is equally valid, so getting more specific wouldn't add much to the study. So, so far, we have talked about the greeter and the greeted.

We'll move to the third section now and talk about the greeting. So the greeting is your next blank. So the greeting is what comes next.

And you'll notice it looks a little strange because the handout says that this section covers the space between verses 2 and 3. This might be the first time we've ever had something that mentions the space between two verses.

That's only because the scripture references we'll look at were too long to list in that one heading. It is backed by scripture and we'll talk about what that is now. At the beginning of his letters to the other churches, Paul typically mentioned the good things he had heard about them.

And to see that, let's look at the openings of a few of Paul's other letters. In Ephesians 1.1, Paul commends the Ephesians faith. Ephesians 1.1 says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

[19:33] Paul is even more complimentary of the Philippians. Listen to the first five verses of Philippians. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, for you all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Now here are Colossians chapter 1 verses 1 through 5. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to

you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Paul even complimented the church at Corinth and that church had a lot of problems. Listen to the nice things that Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 4 through 9.

[ 20 : 56 ] He said, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. With those other greetings in mind, look at verses 3 through 5 of Galatians 1 again.

Paul simply said these words, 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 forever and ever.

Amen. Nothing in the greeting mentions anything good about the Galatian churches. That's why some people say that Galatians is Paul's angry letter.

Others say that the lack of any commendation illustrates how serious the problem was and how urgently Paul wanted to get to his point. Next week's lesson we'll cover verses 6 through 7 as we go all the way through verse 10, but verses 6 and 7 tell us why Paul was so angry and why he so urgently wanted to get on with his letter.

[ 22 : 33 ] So look at Galatians 1, 6 and 7 for a preview. Paul said, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. So now that we've noted what is missing and we've seen why Paul is angry, let's move to the fourth section of the lesson and in verses 3 through 5 we see the gospel.

So the gospel is your last blink. We'll look at these three verses phrase by phrase. Verse 3 starts with grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words grace and peace are significant for multiple reasons. Grace was a traditional Greek greeting. Peace was a traditional Jewish greeting.

So by using both, Paul was incorporating both ethnicities into his greeting. More important than that though is the theological significance of the two words.

[ 23 : 50 ] Grace is the unmerited favor believers receive from God. Peace is the result. So you can think about it like this. Grace is the source of salvation and peace is the result.

So let's expand on that thought a little bit. Flowing from God's gracious character are his gracious acts on behalf of his people.

Think about what the grace of God does for us. The grace of God regenerates us, justifies us, adopts us, and sanctifies us. The grace of God is the strength and the nurture that he freely gives believers for Christ's sake so that they grow in grace and become strong in the Lord.

Paul reminds his readers of the rich benefits which God gave them and of the mercy of God which sustains them and causes them to become increasingly Christ-like. The phrase grace to you is at the heart of the gospel.

God in Christ gives to his people everything they need to live well the Christian life and then to live with God in heaven forevermore. In the gospel, the grace of God is accompanied by the declaration of God's peace and this peace is an objective peace.

[ 25 : 08 ] Before we were saved, Christians once were God's enemies and he looked upon them with a just wrath. Now God's wrath is turned away and he's reconciled to them.

And in this objective act of reconciliation, God first enables believers to turn to him in repentance, faith, and love and then God accepts them as his children.

In Romans chapter 5 verses 1 through 3, listen to what Paul said about grace and peace there. He said, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And actually, we'll stop with verse 2 and then move on to an

Old Testament reference.

Many people think that grace and peace are just a New Testament concept, but God was consistent throughout the Bible. Listen to how the concept was carried forward from the Old Testament.

[ 26 : 16 ] These verses are Numbers chapter 6 verses 22 through 26. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel.

You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

So you see both elements there in the Old Testament as well. Unfortunately, the Galatian church people were losing sight of this grace and peace.

We will see as we go through Galatians that the Galatian church was falling victim to false teachers who were teaching legalism. These false teachers taught that grace was necessary, but they said that in order to be truly saved, people needed grace plus works.

For Galatians, those false teachers taught that to be truly saved, Christians also needed to follow all the laws and customs of Judaism, and so those false teachers were referred to as Judaizers.

[ 27 : 26 ] For the Galatians or anybody who falls victim to legalism, the result is the opposite of grace and peace. People who believe they are saved through works or who have to keep their salvation through works never have peace because they can never do enough to earn or to keep their salvation.

Galatians 1.3 also reminds us of the source of grace and peace. The declaration of grace and peace comes from God, who is reconciled to us as Father and who bestows this blessing upon us.

The declaration of grace and peace also comes to us on the basis of the saving work of Christ.

Notice in verse 3 that Paul uses all three names of our Savior.

He says, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that shows the sufficiency of Christ's work. The title Christ teaches that our Savior was anointed by God as our prophet, priest, and king.

While he was on earth, he performed these offices, and now that he is in heaven, he also is performing them on our behalf. As prophet, he reveals to us God's will for our salvation.

[ 28 : 43 ] As priest, he has atoned for our sins and continues to pray for us. And as king, he rules over us and protects us. Moving on to the personal name Jesus, that name reminds us of his humanity, that he is the God-man who alone can save us.

The title Lord establishes that he is Jehovah God who is now exalted in heaven and before whom every knee shall bow. So when you think of Lord Jesus Christ, you don't want to think of it as his first, middle, and last name.

It's three different aspects of who he is and what he's done. Paul anticipated what he was going to say in verse 4 by declaring the source of grace and peace.

And in verse 4, he spells out the foundation of our salvation. Still talking about Jesus, Paul says this in verse 4. He says, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

salvation was purposed for his people by God and it was purchased for them by Christ. The phrase gave himself for our sins refers to Christ's death on the cross.

[ 30 : 04 ] Paul here is teaching the doctrine of substitutionary atonement and he reminds his readers that the Lord Jesus Christ became their substitute. Jesus offered his perfect life as the perpetuatory sacrifice for our sins and when we say something is perpetuatory we mean that Jesus Christ the pure and spotless son of God bore the wrath of God in the place of his people.

On Calvary's cross he paid the penalty of sin by suffering in his body and soul the eternal punishment due to sinners. God punished his son so that he could justly look with favor on those whose place the son took and give those people grace and peace.

In other words the grace and peace are ours because Christ offered himself as a sacrifice. When it talks about us being delivered the word deliver is a very strong word it means to rescue from bondage and slavery.

So what that tells us is that Christ is a strong savior who has done everything to deliver his people from the clutches of Satan and the power of Satan's dominion. When you look through the Bible you'll see that the Bible speaks of two ages the present age that stretches from the fall of Adam to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and then the age to come when God's people will live with him in the glorified eternal state.

We know that the present age is an evil age. I doubt anybody would argue with that these days and this age is under the prince of darkness and the people in it are in the bondage of our sins.

[ 31 : 47 ] But Christ by his perfect sacrifice has delivered his people from the evil age. He makes his people sons and daughters of God. Not only does God forgive their sins but he also makes them kings and priests unto God.

Therefore Christ in his perfect work has delivered them from not only the guilt and curse of sin but also from the bondage and dominion of sin. Christ saved his people not simply to rescue them from hell but also to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ.

Although believers are guaranteed deliverance we will only receive the full deliverance when we go to be with God or when Jesus comes again to take us to be with him.

But we see from the very beginning of Galatians Paul clearly stating the message of the gospel. It was this message that the Judaizers were changing.

The gospel centers in a person Jesus Christ the Son of God. This person paid a price. He gave himself to die on the cross. Christ paid the price so that he might achieve a purpose and that purpose was delivering sinners from bondage.

[ 33 : 04 ] Throughout Galatians Paul contrasts the freedom we have through the grace of the true gospel with the bondage or slavery that legalism brings. Here are just a few examples from later on in Galatians.

Galatians 2.4 says, Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus so that they might bring us into slavery.

Here are Galatians chapter 4 verses 3 through 7. In the same way we also when we were children were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons God has sent son into our hearts crying Abba father so you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God.

[ 34 : 12 ] Compare that to Galatians chapter 4 verses 22 through 26. Here are Galatians 4 22 through 26 For it is written that Abraham had two sons one by a slave woman and one by a free woman but the son of the slave was born according to the flesh while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Now this may be interpreted allegorically. These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery. She is Hagar.

Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem where she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother.

We see the same theme again in Galatians 5 verse 1. Galatians 5 verse 1 says, For freedom Christ has set us free.

Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians out of the liberty of grace into the bondage of law.

[ 35 : 26 ] Paul knew that bondage was never a part of the message of the gospel. Christ had died to set men free. Galatians chapter 1 verse 5 and the end of verse 4 remind us of why Christ died to set men free.

Starting with the end of verse 4 we see that Christ gave himself according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Paul reminds us that Christ acted accordingly to the eternal will of the Father.

God has eternally planned our salvation and God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world. Perhaps Paul mentioned God's unified plan of salvation to demonstrate that the Judaizers were wrong when they taught that the Jews were saved in any other way than by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul concludes his introduction with the doxology fitting for such a saving God. His motive for writing to the Galatian churches was that he might acknowledge that God is worthy of glory forevermore.

Paul's supreme purpose was to glorify his Lord and he calls believers to do everything to the glory of God. Even the last word Amen expresses the affirmation fitting the worthiness of God to receive glory for such a wondrous provision of eternal gracious salvation.

[ 36 : 59 ] Rather than maligning or misunderstanding the gospel we need to marvel at the gospel and we do that when we trust in grace. The key word here is trust and that is sometimes translated as faith.

We must believe that the gospel is free. God the Father has initiated our salvation and God the Son has accomplished our salvation wholly apart from anything we have done or would ever be able to do.

That's why the gospel is called good news. Such grace extended to unworthy sinners is worth marveling at. And such grace extended to unworthy sinners is worth our glorifying God.

God. So remember the main idea of this section. Paul establishes his authority and summarizes the gospel. In these five opening verses of Galatians we've seen the sovereign decree of God to save, the death of Christ for man's sins, the appointment of apostles to testify to the divine provision, and the gift of God's grace and peace to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

In each of those things the Father and the Son work together. Their ultimate purpose is to bring God glory. Let's think about how this fits in our day.

[ 38 : 25 ] Nobody may be telling us that we need to live like Jews to be saved, but we deal with people all the time who either intentionally or unintentionally misstate the gospel.

Think about religions like Mormonism or Catholicism that base their salvation on faith plus works. We need to clearly proclaim the true gospel to unbelievers and to members of the works-based religions and cults.

To clearly proclaim the gospel, we need to know what the gospel is, and Galatians will help us see the true gospel. Galatians also will help us as a church to stay focused on the true gospel.

gospel. That's important as well. None of God's elect will ever utterly or finally fall away, and the gates of hell certainly will never prevail against the church as a whole of Jesus Christ.

But there is no such thing as eternal security for a local congregation that has lost its first love. We see in the Bible that Jesus sometimes takes the lampstand away from churches who lose their way.

[ 39 : 34 ] Jesus makes it clear in Revelation that he will remove churches that fail to accurately teach God's word. Listen to what Jesus told the Ephesians in Revelation 2 verses 4 through 7.

Jesus said, But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first.

If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent. Yet this you have, you hate the words of the Nicolaitans which I also hate.

He who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. The Galatian church at Ephesus.

So how can it be that an apostolic church could fall so quickly? That question should remind us of the subtle ways of Satan and it should also alert us to be watchful.

[ 40 : 46 ] We tend to think that because we are true Christians and members of sound churches we and our churches are free from the danger of error. We must always be on our guard though.

We should avoid getting overconfident that Highland Park could never lose sight of the true gospel.

After all, if the Galatians and Ephesians lost sight of the gospel when they were founded by an apostle, we could too if we failed to learn it, study it, and continually remind ourselves of it.

The fact that we read Galatians today without knowing the outcome and without hearing the reaction of the original readers means that we should receive and heed its message with the same expectancy as the original recipients.

What God said through Paul to the Galatians long ago, he is really saying again to us here and now. And that's why we need to stay mindful of the gospel summary that's in verses 3-5.

Listen to those verses one last time. 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 forever and ever.

[ 42 : 01 ] Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the book of Galatians that we are beginning to study tonight.

As it reminds us of the true gospel, help us to really internalize what you are saying to us through this book. Help us to be even more joyful about the salvation you have provided through this gospel and help us to be even more willing to rescue people who are victims of false gospels.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.