

Galatians 1:1–5 — Leader / Learner Guide

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Big Idea and Context

Big idea: Paul's message comes from God, not men, and it rests on Christ's own sacrifice. That is the ground of liberty the Judaizers were trying to pull out from under the Galatians.

This first study sets up the whole letter. Galatians moves from personal defense (ch. 1–2) to doctrine (ch. 3–4) to practice (ch. 5–6).

- **Who and when:** Paul writes to the South Galatian churches of his first journey (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch), from Antioch in Syria, about A.D. 48 — before the Jerusalem Council.
- **The problem:** Judaizers taught that keeping the law was needed for salvation, and then for sanctification.
- **The answer:** faith alone in Christ alone, for salvation and for daily living.

The Ground of Liberty — Three Anchor Verses

Verse	What it says	Teaching point
1:1	An apostle not from men nor through man	Paul's authority came straight from Christ and the Father, not from Jerusalem, Antioch, Ananias, or Barnabas.
1:3	Grace to you and peace	Here grace is God's favor for living the Christian life, not only for being saved.
1:4	Gave Himself ... to deliver us from this present evil age	Salvation is a sure ticket to heaven, and also deliverance from evil now (John 17:15–17).

Why the Judaizers persuaded people: they quoted the Old Testament, appealed Jew to Jew, came from the "mother church" in Jerusalem, and offered rules — which suits human religiosity.

Romans and Galatians: Romans shows what justification by faith is; Galatians shows what it is not.

Teaching Flow

1. **Background.** Writer (Paul, 1:1; 5:2), recipients (South Galatia), date (A.D. 48, after the famine visit of Acts 11:29–30), place (Antioch in Syria).
2. **Characteristics.** Love for the believers, anger at the false teachers; a group letter; no thanksgiving; deeply personal; a unique "large letters" ending (6:11).
3. **The Judaizers.** Their message: salvation by the law (as seen in the Gospels and Acts), then sanctification by the law (as seen in the Epistles). Their appeal: Scripture, kinship, religiosity, and Jerusalem.
4. **The Writer and Readers (1:1–2).** "Apostle" means one sent — the question is, sent by whom? Paul answers before it is asked.
5. **Greeting, Source, Basis, Purpose (1:3–5).** Grace and peace from the Father and the Son, grounded in a voluntary, total sacrifice ("gave Himself"), aimed at present and future deliverance, ending in a doxology.

Clarify While Teaching

- **The greeting:** it is in verse 3, not verse 2.
- **Lystra:** Luke says the crowd stoned Paul "supposing him to be dead" (Acts 14:19). Avoid saying Luke declared him dead.
- **James before the Council:** Galatians 2:12 says men came "from James," and Acts 15:24 says the Council never authorized them. Scripture does not say James himself taught law-keeping.
- **"Went out from us" (1 John 2:19):** John wrote this of antichrists. Applying it to the Judaizers is Sellers' own suggestion, so present it as such.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:** "to the glory of God the Father" is Philippians 2:11. Cite Philippians only.
- **Dates:** A.D. 48 and 49/50 follow a common conservative chronology; some date the letter a year later.

Discussion and Close

1. Why would attacking Paul's authority be easier than answering his doctrine? Where do you see that tactic today?
2. What "rules to keep" are most tempting for you to add to grace, either for salvation or for daily living?
3. How does knowing that Christ "gave Himself" fully change the way you face this present evil age?

Close: Point ahead to 1:6–10: Paul skips the thanksgiving and goes straight to the problem — a different gospel. "Let us hold fast to grace, that we may serve God acceptably."

Full study: [The Ground of Liberty — Galatians 1:1–5](#) · Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers, SellersBibleInstitute.com