

## ***"Introduction to Galatians"***

### **Christian Liberty**

Galatians 1:1-5 - Lesson #1

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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**Bruce:** Don, do you want to set the mood for us, buddy? *(Music.)*

Gracious and merciful Lord, for all the things that we are and you are not, forgive us. For all the things that we think that You don't think, forgive us. For all the activities that we do that You are not involved in, would You forgive us? Father, we just desire to get to know You more deeply, more clearly, more understandingly and more intimately. And so we're absolutely dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that for us, because we cannot consider anything as adequate coming from ourselves. Our adequacy comes from You, and our confidence comes from You. Would You, Lord, this day be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake? Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Now men, we're going to begin a new series today, as you go in your handout, looking at the book of Galatians. It's going to be a very exciting study for us.

I'd like to read the first chapter of the book of Galatians, if you'd be kind enough to turn in your Bibles, please, to Galatians chapter 1. Let's listen to the word of the Lord.

*"Paul an apostle, not from man 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, 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 to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of God our Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*"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. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed! For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? For if I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

*"For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel, 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, where I persecuted the church of God violently, and tried to destroy it. For 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 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 to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit*

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*Cephas and remained again fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. And what I am writing to you before God I do not lie.*

*"Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. For I remember hearing it said, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God because of me." This is the word of the Lord.*

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** As I begin the book of Galatians, men, it's going to be a very exciting study for us—a wonderful exhibit of God's grace and mercy. Martin Luther said of the book of Galatians that he considered Galatians the best of all books in the Bible. It has been called "the battle cry of the Reformation", "the great chapter of religious freedom", "the Christian Declaration of Independence." It's such an important book because it answers the age old question, how can a person be content? How can one obtain peace, tranquility, contentment and freedom from fear?

Consider the other epistles of Paul. They were written from prison. Philippians is a love letter containing the thanks of joy. Romans reflects a master theologian teaching the doctrine of grace. Ephesians is an uplifting commentary on the whole body of Christ. And the Corinthian letters deal with the triad of faith, hope and love.

But when you start looking at Galatians, there is something different that you first notice. From beginning to end, in these six chapters with 149 verses, we see a combination of passion, sarcasm and some anger in Paul's writing.

Now there are times of great tenderness. In chapter 4 verse 1 he calls them his beloved children. So there is a degree of tenderness. But there is something strikingly different about this particular epistle that Paul is writing.

Paul was extremely filled with anxiety and concern because his spiritual children were about ready to commit spiritual suicide. He was perplexed by their departure from the true gospel of Christ. He heard these stories about them moving away from the gospel of Christ and he actually thought that they were bewitched. And so you'll notice what he tells them in chapter 3, verse 1. He says, "*O foolish Galatians!*" You see, he was concerned about the fact that they were moving away from the real gospel of Christ.

So Paul begins to defend himself and his message and begins to deal with this. And the whole message of Galatians is going to be Christian freedom. So let's examine this as we go through it.

First of all, *grace is declared through Paul's message.* From beginning to end in Paul's letter to the Galatian church, you can tell immediately that something is wrong and something is missing compared to all the other epistles that he wrote. Most of the time, in the other epistles, he gives them a great greeting and a blessing, and gives the thought of prayer for them. But in this one he doesn't do that. Paul is ready to go into battle for something that is very concerning, because he was aware of the fact that his Galatian friends in the churches he started in Galatia were moving away from the gospel. And he didn't sit back and do nothing. He takes the issue right on. And that's the whole story of the book of Galatians.

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So he describes his own ministry. You see that in verses 1 and 2. At the very beginning, Paul is very, very careful to let him know that the authority that he has from Christ is the reason he can preach the gospel and deal with these issues. In the early days of the church God called special people for special tasks in the church. Among them were the apostles. There was a whole group of people known as "the disciples," the *learners*. And then he selected the apostles from those learners. You can read about that in Mark chapter 3.

Later one of the requirements to be an apostle was that you witnessed the resurrection of Christ. And of course Paul himself did not see that. And so that was one of the issues that he had to deal with, because people said that he wasn't a true apostle because he didn't meet the requirements. And so one of the first things that Paul does is to make sure that we understand where he gets his authority. This is not just something that he is choosing to make up himself, but he has been given the authority of Christ by revelation.

And Paul's miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus and his call to apostleship created some problems. Most people thought that he was not an apostle. So they said, "How can we really trust someone who used to persecute the church? How can we trust him now when he is now talking about the gospel of Christ?" So there is a great deal at issue.

So Paul had the ministry of an apostle. And specifically, as the founder of the Galatian churches, he had another reason to deal with this particular group of people, and that was because he founded the churches. So his point is this. He was an apostle appointed by Jesus Christ. He didn't get this apostleship appointment from men. It was a divine appointment.

And the second reason that he could write this letter to the churches at Galatia is because he was the founder of the churches of Galatia. He was very concerned because the spiritual people that he had founded in the church who were in Christ were being led astray by a false gospel that mixed the law and grace together. And he was very concerned that they were going to commit spiritual suicide. And so Paul takes on this problem right from the very beginning and begins to deal with this issue.

So here is another reason he gave his authority. Not only was he appointed by Christ Jesus Himself, but notice his message. You'll see that in verses 3-5.

From the very beginning, Paul clearly states the message of the gospel. He centers on the Person and work of Christ. He doesn't beat around the bush. He immediately says that the gospel is centered around the Person and work of Christ. It's not about what God does for you. It's about what God did for you in the Person and work of Christ. And so the centrality of the gospel must be a message centered on the Person and work of Jesus Christ Himself.

Now notice what he says. Christ died to set men free. Now what's the best way, if somebody is dealing with error, what's the best way to confront somebody dealing with error? One might say, "Well, I'm going to take on all of the errors and describe all the errors that they're making a mistake out of." Is that the best way to do it?

Paul demonstrates a better way of doing it. He basically says this. You're about ready to commit spiritual suicide. The gospel is about the Person and work of Christ. Let me

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talk to you about the Person and work of Christ. The best way to take on and expose error is to deal with truth. You don't find out error by dealing with it. You expose error by truth. And so Paul begins right away to talk about the gospel of Christ, which we're going to discuss today.

When I was in England studying, I came across a conversation of a couple of Puritan pastors. And one of them was preaching on error, taking on the errors of the culture every day. There were a lot of errors going on in the culture at that time. And so there was one preacher who was always taking on the errors. And his pulpit ministry was taking on all the errors and all that was wrong with society.

Thomas Brooks was asked one day, "Why don't you take on errors? You never deal with all the errors of our society. Why don't you deal with those?"

And this is what he said. "I do preach against them most effectively. I carry a crooked stick about, and when I look to show how many crooks there are in it, we need not do anything except look at the straight one down by the side of it, and the crookedness of the stick will be detected."

Now he's basically saying this. I'm not going to deal with the errors of society. We're not going to talk about abortion. I'm not going to talk about global warming. I'm not going to talk about all the other things that are going on.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** I'm just going to preach Christ and Him crucified, and you'll see what the real answer is. You'll discover the error by realizing what is true.

Now I have a friend who played football at the Naval Academy. He'd become an FBI agent, and he became a \$100-bill expert in counterfeit activities. I was talking to him several years ago at a football reunion. I said, "What type of training did you go through? How can you recognize a bogus \$100 bill?"

He said, "Well, all we need is that for six weeks we study a legitimate \$100 bill. You see, we put acid on it. We went over it with cards. We tasted it. We lit it and set it on fire. We put water on it. With anything we could do we wanted to find out what was the true \$100 bill."

Now you can take my friend Bill and put him into a room and give him ten \$100 bills, and he'll find which one of the ten that is false. You know how he can do that? By studying that which is true.

Now men, we're not going to find out and deal with the errors of our society by preaching against errors. We're going to find out what the errors of our society are by preaching Christ and Him crucified. That's the message that Paul has. Paul doesn't deal with all the error that's going on. He basically says, "Let me start off with the true rod, and that would be the Person and work of Christ. And the more you understand the Person and work of Christ, the more you're going to reveal the errors of the times. It's a great message for us, as we understand that error is discovered by comparing it to the truth, not studying that which is false.

That's what Paul does in these early verses of Galatians chapter 1. He teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus he exposes all the errors that are involved in the church of

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Galatia. He introduces what he has to say concerning all these errors because it's based upon the standard of the Person and work of Christ, which is the centrality of the gospel.

Now there are a couple of insights that I think we can gain from these early passages, men, that I would like to deal with. First of all, notice this. *He died to save us.*

Before these statements about the Person and work of Christ, he says, *"Grace to you through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches in Galatia. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* Now notice this. *"Who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the power of this evil age, according to the will of God."*

Let's take a look at that sentence. Three things we can extract from this. First of all, this: that *Jesus died for our sins.* The Scripture says this. *"Who gave Himself for our sins."*

Now that's the wonder of Christ's death—that our sins could not be put away, could not be removed, except by the fact that Christ died in our place. He died for our sins. There would be no expiation of our sin, no satisfaction of God's law, and consequently no deliverance from the condemnation of our sin unless Christ died for us. He died for our sins.

Also this. What is one of the motivators for Paul to preach the Person and work of Christ? Take a look at Romans chapter 1 for a moment. Paul says this in chapter 1, verse 16. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of salvation to all who believe."*

Now look down at verse 18, because this is why he was motivated to preach the gospel of Christ and the centrality of the Person and work of Christ alone. Notice verse 18. *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."*

What was his motivation? He wanted to preach Christ because that's the only way we can be rescued from the wrath of God. The wrath of God is a present tense reality. It's going on right now. Anybody who is doing unrighteousness is under the wrath of God. And Paul is saying this. The only way to be relieved and rescued from the wrath of God to come is through the Person and work of Christ. That was his motivation. He wanted people to realize that you can be rescued from God's wrath by teaching the gospel of Christ. But you've got to make sure that it's the right gospel. And that was his concern with the church at Galatia. They were being led astray.

But one of his motivations was this. That is the only way you can get out from under the wrath of God. It's to preach the gospel of Christ.

We talk about being saved. What are we being saved from? We're saved from ourselves. We're saved from the system of this world. We're saved from the power of the devil. And we're saved from the wrath of God. Paul's motivation was to preach the gospel because that's the only way we could be rescued from the wrath of God. And so that's why his heart is beating so for the people of Galatia, because they're about ready to be deceived and to commit spiritual suicide.

So the first thing that Paul says is that Christ died to save us, He who gave himself for our sins.

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Look at 1 Corinthians 15:3. *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture."*

We saw in 1 Peter 2:24 that *He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."*

Do you realize this, men? There would be no satisfaction for God's law if Christ had not died in your place. That's the point Paul is making when he says, very simply, that the gospel is this: that Christ died for our sins. He died for our sins. That's the first point he wants to make.

How about Matthew 26:28? *"For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* Paul tells us in the gospel that the first thing that Christ did for us was that He died for our sins. *"He gave Himself for our sins."*

How about Revelation chapter 1 verse 5? *"To Him who loves us, and has freed us from our sins by His blood."* You see, men, the gospel of Christ deals first of all with this. Christ died for our sins. *"He gave Himself for our sins."*

Now in creation God shows us His powerful hand. In sacrificing Himself He shows us His merciful heart. He died for our sins as an act of mercy toward us.

The second thing Paul reminds us of would be this. He not only died for our sins, but He died for our sins for the removal of the *condemnation* for our sin. *"Having borne our sins in His own body on the tree,"* Christ has forever freed us from the penalty that was due because of our sinfulness. Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

There is therefore now no condemnation. You see, with sin comes condemnation. When Christ removed our sin, He removed the what? He removed the condemnation. *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

Paul says it this way in Romans chapter 8, verse 34. *"Who is to condemn?"* Who can condemn you now? If you're in Christ, who can condemn you?

**Participant:** No one.

**Bruce:** No one, because that was removed because of the death of Christ. *"Christ Jesus is the One who died, more than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."*

You see, men, not only did He die for our sins. He also took away the condemnation that was associated with our sin. We can no longer be condemned anymore.

That doesn't mean that we don't deserve it. It just means that you don't get exposed to it because Christ has paid the penalty. That's the gospel of Christ. We still deserve it. But He's interceding for us. He paid the penalty of that condemnation. So now we don't have any condemnation. Even though we deserve it, we're not exposed to it anymore because of the death of Christ. Paul wanted the people of Galatia to be reminded of that.

How about John 3:18? *"Whoever believes in Him is not condemned. But whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*

Now men, the word *believe* is a very active word in the Greek. It means to rely upon, depend upon, trust and adhere to. It doesn't mean to give mental assent. You don't just sit on your haunches and just believe something. It's not just giving mental assent. It's a very

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active verb. It's depending upon Christ. It's adhering to Christ. It's relying upon Christ and it's trusting in Christ. (*DART*) That's the person who is no longer condemned, because Christ has died for our sins. He has removed that condemnation, and now you are trusting Him.

And the person who is trusting Him is not condemned. But the person who does not trust Him is condemned already, because he does not depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in the Person and work of Christ.

Condemnation, brothers, is removed from us. Don't let the world condemn you. The world is going to try to condemn you all the time. And you need to say, "Lord, remove that thought from my mind, because I am no longer under condemnation." You've got to believe that men, and act on it. That's what it means. When you believe and trust in the work of Christ, that condemnation has been removed! The world can't condemn you anymore! So we don't need to act like it.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** He died for our sins. He died to remove the condemnation from us.

How about John 5:24? "*Truly, truly, I say to you: whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment*"—will not be condemned,—"*but has passed from death to life.*" No condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.

You see, that is why this is a book of basic Christian liberty. We're free from all the world's condemnation. Yes, Thomas?

**Tom:** A lot of times we tend to think of being free as not having to follow the law, because the law is past. But what you are saying sounds like being let out of jail. I'm free from that. The burden is gone.

**Bruce:** The burden is lifted. Sin has been paid for, and you cannot be condemned.

How often do we try to condemn each other, just in the system of this world? We cannot do that to one another, because Christ has paid the penalty and removed the condemnation from our sin when He gave Himself for us.

How about Romans 5:18? "*Therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men,*"—that's the sin of Adam—"so one Man's act of righteousness"—the act of Christ—"leads to justification and life for all men." One act led to condemnation. One act led to righteousness. In dying for our sins, God was pleased that we are subject to no condemnation.

The third thing I would offer for your consideration would be this. Not only did He die for our sins. Not only did He remove the condemnation from us. But I think that another consequence of Christ giving Himself for us is this. *It changes our view of sin.* It makes sin hateful to us. In other words, when you understand what has happened—that Christ has paid for our sins and that the condemnation has been removed—it changes your attitude and your view toward what sin is and its danger, and how heinous it is. Realizing that my sins were the ones that sent Christ to the tree, how can we enjoy that which pierced Christ? How can we enjoy things that sent Christ to the cross? How can we enjoy that? Yes, Don?

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**Don:** Yes, and I was going to say that a lot of times people will have a false view of liberty. They believe that liberty or freedom means that now I am free to do anything that I want, whether it be good or bad. You brought out that the freedom that we have in Christ is the freedom, now that the burden of sin has been lifted off of us, now we are free to serve Him.

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Don:** And that's a joy. You said it right there. It makes us hate our sin all the more.

**Bruce:** Yes. When you understand the implications of the cross, what Paul is reminding us of is this in these verses. If it was sin that sent Christ to the tree, to the cross, including my own, how can I love those things that pierced my Savior's side? How could I love those things? It's got to change your attitude toward sin and our participation in it.

Look at Psalm 119:104. *"Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."* I hate every false way! Do you really hate sin? You see, if you understand the implications of the Person and work of Christ at the cross and the Crucifixion, one of the implications is going to be this. It's going to change your attitude toward sin.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** That's something that the Holy Spirit does when He regenerates us. How about Proverbs chapter 8, verse 7? *"For my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips."*

Proverbs 8:13: *"The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate."* Perverted speech I hate? What comes out of our mouths? What do we talk about? It's a reflection of what's going on inside your heart.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** And the degree to which you and I understand this—that Christ gave Himself for our sins—will be the degree to which we're going to understand and clean up the language we speak, because we are to hate evil speech. We ought to hate that speech which is an abhorrence to Him, using foul language. That's something we just don't do anymore, because our lives have been changed by Christ.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** John Flavel said this. "Christ is not sweet till sin be bitter in us"—when I realize the heinousness of my sin.

Thomas Brooks said it this way. "No man begins to be good till he sees himself as bad."

So first of all, Paul reminds us of this: that Christ gave Himself for our sins. That includes several different things.

Now the next point he begins to teach us is this. He not only gave Himself for our sins, but *He now lives to sanctify us.* You'll see that in this phrase in chapter 1—"to deliver us from this present evil age." That's a current response, a current activity, active verbs going on in the present tense. This is present tense reality—"to deliver us from this present evil age."

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Remember what Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 2? *"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling with His blood."* Sanctification means to set you apart to be holy. Christ not only died for our sins, but also, in the current life, you and I can live a holy life because He gives us the will to be willing to be obedient. That's sanctification. Yes, please?

**Participant:** Yes. This just reminds me, and this is something that I struggled with early, when I came to accept Jesus. But, you know, we talk about how as believers that we're not under the law. But Jesus came to fulfill the law.

**Bruce:** That's right.

**Participant:** And He sent the Holy Spirit who dwells within our hearts. So that law is in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

**Bruce:** Absolutely. We are under the law because Christ fulfilled it. And how do we fulfill the law? By trusting Christ. Christ is the One who fulfills the law in us. So we're under the law, but Christ fulfilled that. We are under the law because we are in Christ Jesus. And therefore He fulfills all the law within us. So He gives us the will to be willing to want to be obedient to the law. He fulfills it in us. It's no longer us fulfilling it externally. He fulfills it internally in us because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, Jay?

**Jay:** His Word says that *"If you love Me, you will obey My commandments."*

**Bruce:** That's right—John 14. You see, obedience is a love response.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Obedience is a love response. We talk about it as a duty. Yes, there is a duty to it. But it's better if you look at it as this. It's a love response. Jesus says this. *"If you love Me, you will obey My commandments."*

When you and I are obedient, (give me for a little bit of leeway here), Jesus says to the Father, "Father, he's just saying that he loves Us, because in that fight, that difficulty that he had, he said no to the system of this world. Father, he's just saying that he loves Us. Let's bless that man because he loves Us." So he gives us the willingness to be willing to obey.

So He lives to sanctify us. How about John 17:17? *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."* Remember, the word *sanctify* means to set apart to be holy. Where are we going to discover what it means to be sanctified? In the truth. You study the good so that you learn the bad. You study the good so that it exposes the evil.

1 Corinthians 1:30. *"And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."* Jesus is our sanctification and we are in Christ Jesus. He is setting us apart to be holy. Christ not only died for our sins, but He lives for our sanctification. That means that the present reality of your salvation is worked out in the holiness of your own life.

Philippians chapter 2. *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."* It's an effort. It's a work. But God is at work in you. That's what it means to be living in our sanctification. Christ gave Himself for our sins. But He is also living for us in our sanctification. That's an active thing that God is doing through the Person and work of Christ. He is helping us live out our salvation by delivering us from the present evil age.

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The second thing I think we can notice about this fact that he delivered us from this present evil age would be this. *He delivers us from the world's condemnation.* The Lord desires that we should be so clear of this world system that we can be in it but not a part of it. We are in the world, but not of it. We will not share in the condemnation of the world.

Now what he is talking about is this. The world is condemned. The Lord is going to return in all of His glory one day, and creation will experience a lot of its condemnation and all of the people in it. But Jesus died for our sanctification so that we are not exposed to the condemnation of the world when He returns. When Jesus returns in all of His glory, we will not be exposed to that condemnation which everybody else will get, because of the Person and work of Christ. This is a reference to the end times. The world is condemned. But we're free from that. We won't be exposed to that condemnation because of the Person and work of Christ. That's part of the gospel's implications in our lives, when Christ delivers us from the present evil age.

What are the signs of the present evil age? What does the world think of us? Look at John 15. *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*

We just need to realize this: that the world does not look at us too favorably, because we are in Christ Jesus. If they hated Him, they're going to hate us.

How about John 17:14 again? *"I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

1 John 3:13. *"Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you."*

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** So we're delivered from the world's condemnation. Next, we're also delivered from *the world's condition*, the condition of this world. Christ came to gather a people for Himself, to create a holy race of people, who would be a part of this world but not be of the world. He has been lifting up men and women out of the filthiness of life in which we'd been wallowing in the conditions of this world, and He makes them truly holy and makes them pure. And He makes them exercise self-control, hating all that which is evil in God's sight.

That's part of being removed from the world's condition. The condition of this world is going to be anti-Christ. He has delivered us from that exposure.

Paul says it this way in Ephesians chapter 6. *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

2 John 2:15-17. *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride and possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever."*

I'm just giving you these verses, men, to support what Paul is saying, and to help us to understand in greater detail what Paul is reminding the Galatians of—the centrality of the

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gospel and the Person and work of Christ. And we need to understand not only who He is, but what He has done for us. That's why I'm going through this with you so much in depth.

Also, notice this. You see, you and I have been delivered from the condition of this world system. We've been delivered from that. We are free from that. We're no longer exposed to its condemnation or to its conditions.

Now I'd also like to go over one more thing that we're free from, and that would be *the world's customs*. Not only the world's condemnation, the world's condition, but also the world's customs. It means it's activities. Christ has come for the purpose that we may not conform to the sinful desires of the flesh any longer, but that we may have a way of life that becomes His way of life, that we would become followers of Christ and demonstrate His holiness.

James 4:4 says it this way. *"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."* Being a friend of the world would mean following the customs of this world, the things that the world teaches us to do to follow the system of this world. We've been set free from living according to those customs, because everybody who loves this world, the system of this world, James says, is really an enemy of God.

That means the customs we have. What are some of the customs we exercise in our lives today? We've been set free from toying around with those customs and the system of this world. We don't have to do those anymore. We've been set apart to be holy. Yes?

**Participant:** Can you elaborate on that, Bruce? Can you give examples?

**Bruce:** Yes, sure. What are some of the world's customs? Well, all right. There is great freedom in Christ. But some of the customs we have are activities in which we don't take the Sabbath seriously. That's a custom that I think we have to take seriously. We need to honor the Sabbath.

Now I realize that the Sabbath is every day of our lives because we are free in Christ. Every day is the Sabbath. But there is one day where we need to have fellowship in the body of Christ and be in church. I think that one of the customs says that you don't need to do that. I think that's a violation of our Christian customs, how we treat the Sabbath, the things that we do or don't do on the Sabbath.

Now I'm not being legalistic and saying that you can't do certain things, because the Sabbath is free every day because Christ is our Sabbath. But I am saying this. There are certain times that I think the customs of this world have gone so far that we just violate the Sabbath Day, the Lord's Day, and we don't take it seriously. We don't take worship seriously. That's a custom of this world. We don't take it seriously. Does anybody else have a comment?

**Participant:** People don't like the length of a service.

**Bruce:** Sure.

**Participant:** My gosh, even in good evangelical churches, they'll say, "The preacher has really gone long today. I mean, the service is an hour and fifteen minutes."

**Bruce:** Right. Jay?

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**Jay:** I have a friend of mine, and within the last week he asked me last week if my kids were interested in playing football. And he said that the only thing is it's Sunday during the worship service. And so I talked to him. But it's just that I believe in regard to the world, that the evil one is infiltrating and doing everything that he can to prevent us from worshiping on the Lord's Day, when that should be the most important thing to us.

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Participant:** The thing I realized this morning when we were talking, Bruce, is that as a young man I embraced the gospel, because in the '60s it seemed very radical to the system of the world. And I didn't know enough of the system of the world. So I wanted to fight my father, or fight the principal of the school and have an alternative, to have something to come back to him with. But then I started making money, and you realize, you know, that Christ is kind of a nice thing, you know. Why am I fighting the system of the world? But when I got older, I realized that money didn't do a lot for me. It didn't give me meaning or hope. As soon as I got older, I began to realize that the systems of the world were kind of empty. So I think that what you're saying is that as young men we embrace it because it is different. But if you're engrained in the system of the world, it does take a supernatural thing to get you out of that, to see it differently, to embrace it. I mean, only God can do that, obviously. But there is something about the system of the world that's so subtle that we don't see it.

**Bruce:** That's really true. Yes, please?

**Participant:** TV, movies,--

**Bruce:** Entertainment.

**Participant:** You know, the great majority of all of these in our American society are anti-Christ. And it's very easy to get caught up in that because everybody else listens to it, watches it. But it takes us in the wrong direction.

**Bruce:** You know, the Scripture says that the sins of the spirit are more heinous than the sins of the flesh. Let's take some customs of our culture today that are internal.

How about a lack of respect?

**Participant:** Oh, man!

**Bruce:** That's a custom of this world. We respect nothing. There are six key relationships in which the Scripture says we need to show respect. And a culture or a system or an organization or a country that does not participate or show respect in these six key relationships is an insidious cancer that will destroy our culture from the inside out. The worst cultures in the history of the world, anthropologically, have been destroyed because of the cancer known as lack of respect.

Here are the six key relationships. First of all, *respect for authority*. That's respect for position. That's authority. You may not agree with them. But authority is what holds us together. We need to show respect for position.

Next, *respect for parents*. You don't stop honoring your father and your mother when you're forty.

Next, *respect for people*. That would be the elderly. We don't respect the elderly. Contrary to popular belief, the future of America does not rest with the next generation. It rests in the wisdom that this generation has given to the next generation. It's the wisdom

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of this generation given to the next one. If you don't respect the elderly, you're never going to learn from them.

So it's position, it's parents, it's the elderly, it's people. It's *peers*, people with whom you associate on a daily basis. Show them respect.

Next would be your *possessions*, the things that you own. You and I are stewards. Money doesn't kill; ownership does. You and I are merely managers of something that somebody else owns. That's what a steward is. God owns all the things that He gives us. They include my life, my wealth, my house, my car, my whatever else it is. We are stewards of the possessions that we have. We need to show respect for the possessions that we have, because it is honoring our stewardship activities.

And lastly, *property*, other people's property. We have a total disrespect for other people's property.

I saw something interesting today at one of the Trump rallies in Los Angeles. There was another riot going on. People were just getting upset, rioting again and destroying cars and burning cars. This time they took on the police.

That's the condition of the world, men. You and I don't need to do that. That's a custom of this world. It's expressing my anger in a way that is showing disrespect for other people's property. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Yes. And the gentleman behind me was mentioning the influences of TV and things like that, and what they are proclaiming today, the whole immorality that we see now that is so rampant in the world, where we don't even know if we're male or female anymore.

**Bruce:** Right.

**Don:** It's insane!

**Participant:** Speak for yourself! *(Laughter.)*

**Don:** Well,-- Never mind. *(Laughter.)*

**Bruce:** Let's be respectful. *(Laughter.)*

**Don:** I'm just kidding.

**Bruce:** Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** A lot of this is encouraged by our whole view of religion, which tends to be very individualistic and self-centered. Right now I'm reading kind of a definitive biography of Thomas Cranmer. It's six hundred pages long. And the thing I'm struck by is the sense that people in the sixteenth century had about their duties and their obligations to people in authority. We would say, "Oh well, we can't respect them. They're not teaching the right things, so I won't respect them."

**Bruce:** Right. That's right.

**Ted:** You know, I kind of think that during the Revolutionary War, I would have sided with King George III and not with the Revolutionaries because of the whole idea of submission to authority and those in power.

**Bruce:** Show respect to these six relationships. Teach it to your children. Respect for position, parents, people, peers, possessions and property.

**Participant:** I think that another aspect of our society today can be summed up in the words, "I deserve it."

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**Participant:** Uh-huh. Right.

**Second Participant:** Entitlement.

**Bruce:** Entitlement. That's a custom of this world. We think we're entitled to things.

Let me wrap this up by looking at the last phrase of this particular passage, *"according to the will of God the Father."* Paul is teaching that this revelation comes from God the Father. This is not something he's making up himself. He's talking about the Person and work of Christ, which is the central theme of the gospel.

Let me read something from Charles Spurgeon. He obeyed the Father. Christ died for our sins. He lives for our sanctification. And He obeyed the Father. Those are the three insights we get from that particular passage.

Listen to what Spurgeon says about that particular verse. "I do not believe that there ever would have been a man delivered from this present evil world if it had not been according to the will, the purpose, the predestination of God, even our Father. It takes a mighty tug to set a man apart from this world. It is a miracle for a man to live in the world, and yet not be in it. It is a continuous miracle of so vast a kind that I am sure that it would never have been accomplished if it had not been according to the will of God our Father. Yet so it stood in the divine decree, that there should be a people chosen from among men, from the system of this world, a people who should be called out from among the mass of the ungodly, who should be drawn by supernatural power, to follow after that which is right and godly in honor, who should be washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit in the spirit of their minds, and henceforth should be a peculiar people and a holy people in the world. But hereafter, forever and ever, I delight to remember this—that is the will of God, even our sanctification, our separation."

He's basically saying this. If it were not for the will of God the Father, we would be lost. That's the point of what Paul is teaching us right now. Without the will of God the Father, what God decreed in eternity past, the Brave Men here would all be lost.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Because it's according to God the Father. And notice what his salutation is after that. The final phrase is this. *"To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."* I can't improve upon that, men.

Christ died for our sins. He gave Himself for our sins. He delivers us and lives for our sanctification. It's all according to the will of God the Father. *"To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."*

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Let us pray. Father, You've just pricked our hearts today and our spirits by the preaching of truth from Your gospel. Help us remind ourselves, Father, that Christ died for our sins. But He also lives for our sanctification. May it be so that You be glorified by our applying that which we've learned today, for Your glory. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!" (*Applause.*)