

Galatians 1:1-5

¹Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

³Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

How does the apostle begin a letter that is combatting the idea that we can contribute to our salvation, or that rituals like circumcision have in themselves the power to make us better? With an introduction that highlights a ministry that comes only from God, by a power that belongs only to God, to give blessings that come only from God, according to a plan that was devised exclusively by God, all unto a glory that belongs only to God.

A ministry that comes only from God. There were others who claimed to be apostles, but had not been sent out as apostles by Christ. Perhaps there were some who thought this was true of Paul as well, but he reminds them that Christ rose from the dead—that it was the risen Christ who ordained Paul as an apostle.

A power that belongs only to God. There is a second reason for mentioning that Christ has risen from the dead. We can’t do that. Only God can do that. When the work of God in salvation requires the exercise of resurrection power, we have no business trying to add any power of our own to “help”!

Blessings that come only from God. Grace: blessings for those who deserve only curse and strength for those who have only weakness. Peace: God making us who were enemies into His own dear children, and giving us peace in our hearts and minds as a result. Both of these are blessings that by definition cannot come from us.

And, indeed, v3 reminds us that they must come from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot come from us or from this world. As sinners, apart from Him, we would be members of this present evil age—the very thing from which He delivers us! How, then, could we contribute to that deliverance? What we contribute is our sins. Only He Himself could atone for us, and only He Himself can give Him Himself!

A plan devised exclusively by God. v4 tells us that our deliverance is something that is “according to the will of our God and Father.” It has been planned in advance, and planned by God Himself. It is not open to revision, addition, or enhancement by anything that we invent or do—no matter how much we may suppose that it will help.

A glory that belongs only to God. It is to our God and Father alone that glory belongs forever and ever, Amen! Ultimately, if any goodness or power came from us, it would rob God of some of this glory. God forbid!!