

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson
September 13, 2015
Galatians 1:1-5 “A Message from God!”

Memory Verse:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
Galatians 1:3-5 NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: The sermon will be the first in a series of expository sermons on Galatians. Galatians 1:1-5 will be studied in both Sunday School and in worship both this week and on September 27. Homecoming falls in between those Sundays and we will have a special lesson next week for that day.

Sunday School Scripture: Galatians 1:1-5

Sunday School Title: *“A Message from God”*

ESS: God speaks to us about important things that we should receive from His authorized messengers! Today we will focus on remembering that the Bible is God’s message to us!

Presentation

When was the last hand written note or letter you received? Was it important to you? How did you feel when you saw your name on it and that it wasn’t mass produced “junk mail”? Why are personal hand written letters or notes more important to us than email, texts, or junk mail?

This morning we are talking about the truth that God speaks to us through His word the Bible and that it came to us through His Apostles. There is no more important truth to learn and remember than the fact that God has a message for His church!

Read

Galatians 1:1-5. *If possible, read from more than one version/translation of the Bible.*

Galatians is a letter. It has an audience, and author, and a purpose! It was written in the common letter form of Paul’s time period. A Graeco-Roman epistle had parts just like our letters today. They customarily had an opening (sender, addressee, greeting), a statement of praise or thanksgiving to the gods, the body, and the closing. Paul’s writings in the New Testament often follow part or all of this pattern. Today we are examining Paul’s opening to the Letter to the Galatians.

Who was the author?

Look back at verse 1-2 and identify the sender of the Letter. We see that Paul wrote this letter but verse 2 also mentions that he writes on behalf of other unnamed brothers and sisters with him.

Why do you think it important that Paul mentions these other brothers?

Consider that the Truth God revealed to Paul and that Paul shares in this letter was not a “personal” or “private” Word from God for Paul alone. Paul had not received a mystery that belonged only to him. This would be spiritual

elitism and is very divisive today as it would have been then. God's message was to be shared and had been shared already with other people.

Who are these brothers and sisters?

Although we don't know exactly who these people were, Paul often mentions others in his letters. Timothy and Titus, and Barnabas all traveled with Paul on occasions. Paul's message from God was firmly anchored within God's church and all of God's church received it as truth. These unknown people were simply fellow believers following the same message from God.

But to whom was this letter addressed?

It was addressed to Christians in Galatia around the towns of Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. They were likely converted during Paul's first missionary journey. This is recorded in Acts 13:4-14:28. You may refer to it if you have time. They received this letter sometime between 48-52 AD. Galatians was written after the Thessalonian letters and likely before the Corinthian Letters. Use a map from a Bible dictionary or in your Study Bible to find the area.

While we really can't know more about those other brothers and sister that were with Paul when he wrote Galatians, it is important to know more about who Paul is and what it means when he claims to be an apostle!

Brainstorm the facts you know about Paul!

- Refer to Saul's conversion found in Acts 9. Read this or a portion of it if time allows.
- Refer to the change in Saul from being a persecutor of the church to a proclaimer of the gospel. Even his name changed!
- Refer to the fact that although he had been a devout Jew, now Paul is an apostle to the Gentiles. He is a missionary of Jesus Christ. But more specifically, he is a missionary to the Gentile world. This new Gentile mission causes church problems that are recorded and resolved in Acts 15. The Jerusalem church endorses Paul's evangelism after an investigation of it. Issues related to this apparent Jewish/Gentile conflict in early Christianity seems to lie at the heart of the Galatian Letter as well.

Read

Romans 11:13 – *"I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry"*

Galatians 2:8 – *"For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles."*

How did God use Paul's Gentile mission?

The gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond Judaism.

Much of this Letter will include a tense defense of Paul's authority in proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus. Paul is able to write to the Galatian church and tell them how to live and teach the gospel because he claims to be an Apostle.

What does the word "apostle" mean?

It literally means a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders. It is used in reference to and as a descriptive title for the twelve apostles of Christ who had been his disciples in Matthew 10:1-4. Acts 1:13 contains a list of the twelve disciples. All of these became apostles except for Judas Iscariot. His replacement is named in Acts 1:26 in the choosing of Matthias. These Apostles were looked to as the obvious leaders of the Church.

Note: Paul was not one of them but, as we have discussed, was their opponent at the beginning.

- Do you think this caused people to doubt and distrust Paul?
- What kind of ammunition would this be in the hands of and rivals?
- Do people have to overcome a spirit of rivalry in the church today? How so?

According to Galatians 1:1, what does Paul base his claim to Apostleship on?

- He is not called by a group of men, or by human being at all!
- Rather, he is called by God in Jesus Christ!

He is not called by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, but he is called by the founder of the church in Heaven!!!!

What power does this give to the message Paul writes?

As an Apostle, Paul isn't writing in his own behalf although the Letter bears his name. He isn't writing on behalf of those who are with him although they believe his message is true. Paul is writing on God's behalf. And because of that we, today must listen and obey the message of God in the Galatian Letter.

Apply:

- Do you seriously look to Bible as God's message to you? Or do you ignore it through neglect or dismiss its teachings as too hard or irrelevant?
- How will knowing this is God's message change your relationship to the Bible this week? Will you commit to reading God's message this week? Commit to working on the memory verse!
- God still calls people today! Has God called you to do something for Him? Tell somebody this week what God is calling you to do!
- Have you noticed an attitude of rivalry in your heart or in a relationship? Confess that to God and commit to partner with that person in your mind. If needed, seek reconciliation with that person.