

* DAY 1 *

Sent by Jesus

GALATIANS 1:1-5

We begin by tucking into the work of Martin Luther on Galatians – ‘my dear epistle’ as he called it.

Read Galatians 1:1-5

Why do you think Paul insists so strongly that his ministry is ‘not from men’ (verse 1)?

Does Paul mention his status for his own glory or for some other reason, do you think?

Paul's calling

When Paul so highly commends his calling, he is not seeking his own praise. But with a necessary and a holy pride he magnifies his ministry. That is to say, *I want people to receive me, not as Paul of Tarsus, but as Paul the apostle and ambassador of Jesus Christ.* And he does this to maintain his authority, that the people, in hearing this, might be more attentive and willing to give ear to him.

This is the first assault that Paul makes against the false apostles, who ran when no one sent them. Calling, therefore, is not to be despised. For it is not enough for someone to have the word and pure doctrine, but they must also be assured of their calling. So our fantastical* spirits at this day have the words of faith in their mouths, but yet they yield no fruit, for their chief end and purpose is to draw people to their false and perverse opinions.

The seriousness of word ministry

This then is our comfort, that we who are in the ministry of the word have an office which is heavenly and holy. Being lawfully called to this, we triumph against all the gates of hell. We see then how good and necessary Paul's boasting is.

In times past when I was a young theologian and teacher, I thought Paul was unwise to glory so often in his calling in all his epistles. But I did not understand his purpose. For I did not know that the ministry of God's word was so weighty a matter. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith, because there was then no certainty taught either in the universities or churches, but all was full of the clever subtleties of academics. And therefore no-one

was able to understand the dignity and power of this holy and spiritual boasting. True and lawful calling serves, first, to the glory of God and, secondly, to the advancing of our office. Moreover, it also serves to the salvation of ourselves and of the people.

Apply

Would it be right to think of Paul's letters as 'just his opinion' or as simply a record of his experience of the grace of God? If not, why not?

Given that they are not apostles as Paul was, how should we think of those who teach and preach the Bible today? Do you think Luther is right to draw some comparisons between them?

Pray

Pray that you would listen attentively to Paul's teaching from Galatians, as a gift to us from God.

Pray too for those who preach and teach in your church, that they would know the weightiness of their calling, and do everything for God's glory.

