"The Gospel of Grace and Peace"
(Galatians 1:3-5)

I. Introduction.
  A. Orientation.
    1. This morning, we considered what Paul's letter to the Galatians is all about.
      a. It's all about God's plan of salvation.
      b. It's about how He did everything to make that salvation possible in Jesus Christ.
      c. It also shows us there is nothing we can do to add to that salvation, and if we try, we are actually destroying the grace of God.
        (i) Paul wrote this letter against the Judaizers.
        (ii) The Judaizers taught that to be saved you must first become a Jew:
          (a) You must be circumcised.
          (b) You must keep the Law of Moses – not just the Moral/Ten Commandments, but the Ceremonial Law as well.
          (c) But by saying you must do these things to be saved, they were adding works to salvation.
          (d) Every system of belief that makes salvation depend at all on our works, destroys the grace of God.
          (e) As we'll see in a moment, grace by definition is something freely given to a person who doesn't deserve it, who hasn't worked for it, who even deserves the opposite.
          (f) If you add works to grace, it is no longer grace.

    2. We also considered what Paul had to say about himself.
      a. That he was an apostle:
        (i) Not one of the original twelve, but chosen by Jesus Christ to take the place of Judas who betrayed Him.
        (ii) That he had the qualifications of an apostle:
          (a) He saw Jesus on the road to Damascus.
          (b) He was sent by Jesus to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.
          (c) And how God showed that Paul was His apostle by allowing him to do the miracles that would prove that what he said was from God.

      b. The point was that since he is an apostle, we should listen to him.
        (i) What he wrote in this letter to address the churches of Galatia was not simply kindly advice.
        (ii) It was God's authoritative Word.
        (iii) It was His Word, not just to them, but to His church throughout all the ages.
        (iv) And since it is His Word, we must judge everything we believe by it.

  B. Preview.

1. This evening, we come to Paul's apostolic greeting.
   a. Usually, Paul opens his letters to the churches with this salutation, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*E.g.* Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2, *etc.*), or something very much like it.
   b. But in his greeting to the Galatians, he expands it a bit:
      (i) "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen." (1:3-5).
      (ii) Why did he add these other statements?
         (a) It was to emphasize whose work it was that saves us: Not our works, but Christ's.
         (b) And it was to show who deserves the glory/credit for our salvation:
            (1) Since we didn't earn it, we don't get the credit.
            (2) God did this, so He does.
            (3) This is the difference between Biblical Christianity and every other man-made religion in the world: All other religions leave room for man's work to earn his salvation: Christianity does not: It is by God's grace alone through faith alone.

2. This evening, I want us to see three things:
   a. That God is the source of all grace and peace.
   b. How He has provided this grace and peace for us in Christ Jesus.
   c. And finally, how He should receive all the glory and honor for the salvation He has provided in Jesus Christ.

II. Sermon.
   A. First, God is the source of all grace and peace.
      1. He is the One who provides grace.
         a. Very often, we forget what grace is.
            (i) We think of it as though it's a substance:
               (a) Something we have more or less of.
               (b) Something that helps us serve God, that helps us to love Him more.
               (c) And it's true: grace is something that does help us do these things.

            (ii) But we mustn't forget that grace is personal: it's the Spirit of God working in us to make us love Jesus Christ and submit to His will.
               (a) Without Him, we wouldn't love God at all.
               (b) Without Him we can't do anything pleasing to God.
               (c) God is the One who gives us His help.
               (d) And we don't deserve it, which is why we call it grace.

         b. But grace can also mean something else in Scripture:
            (i) It can refer to the basis upon which God gives us His Spirit, His Son, communion with Him – in a word, His salvation.

(ii) Grace also means God's unearned, undeserved favor.
(iii) We don't deserve that God would send His Son into the world to save us.
(iv) We don't deserve that God would give us His Spirit to give us the love we need to embrace Jesus Christ, and to love and serve Him.
(v) What we deserve for all our sins – for even our good works, which are still sinful in God's eyes – is hell. Isaiah writes, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isa. 64:6).
(vi) The fact that God gives us salvation when we deserve damnation is grace.
(vii) And grace only comes from God.

2. God is also the One who brings peace.
   a. When we think about peace, we often think about it in our relationships.
      (i) I'm not fighting with my family or my neighbors.
      (ii) We're not at war with another country, but we're at peace.
      (iii) The Gospel can bring this kind of peace.

   b. But there's another peace we don't think about as often: peace with God.
      (i) Paul wrote, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).
      (ii) Before coming to Christ, we were at war with God, and He with us.
      (iii) This was the result of the Fall.
      (iv) But when we trust in Jesus, He takes away all of our guilt/sin, and reconciles us to God, so that there is no more war, only peace.
      (v) We can't negotiate peace with God by ourselves.
      (vi) He won't receive us on any other terms.
      (vii) He will only do so in the way He has provided.
      (viii) God gives peace.
      (ix) God is the source of all grace and the source of all peace.

B. This brings us to the second point: How has He has provided this grace and peace?
   1. First, this was His plan: "According to the will of our God and Father" (v. 4).
      a. In the Bible, God's will can mean two things:
         (i) His commandments: what He wills we would do.
         (ii) His eternal plan: what He has planned will actually take place in this world.

      b. In this case, it refers to His plan.
         (i) His plan includes everything that ever happens.
         (ii) Everything is taken into account, from the Fall of man to the Eternal State.
         (iii) Certainly, how we get from the Fall of man, and the ruin of all Creation under sin, to the redemption of man and the Creation is included.

2. How did God plan He would do this? He planned to do it through Jesus Christ.
   a. His plan is that He would send His Son into the world to give Himself for the sins of His people.
      (i) And He did: the eternal Son of God became a man.
         (a) He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.
         (b) In the womb of the Virgin Mary.
         (c) And born of her, yet without sin.

      (ii) As a man, He obeyed His Father perfectly: from birth to death – He never sinned.
      (iii) And as a man, He gave His life for those who would trust in Him.
         (a) He died on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins.
         (b) If you're trusting in Jesus this evening, He gave His life for you.

      (iv) Jesus has earned the Spirit, the giving of the Spirit, and peace for His people through His life and death.
      (v) God gives us grace and peace through Jesus.

   b. By sending His Son, the Father also delivered us from this present evil age: from the power of the evil one: the devil.
      (i) This reminds us that there is no salvation from the guilt of sin, unless the Lord also breaks its power.
      (ii) Paul tells us that before we came to Christ, we were going the same way as the world: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph. 2:1-3).
      (iii) But God changed that for us: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (vv. 4-7).
      (iv) He did this entirely by His grace – a free gift – as we already saw: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (vv. 8-9).
      (v) He not only saved us from the consequences of sin: He also saved us from being slaves to sin and made us the slaves of righteousness: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (v. 10).

(vi) In other words, Jesus not only frees us from the consequences of our sin – hell – He also frees us from the power of sin.
(a) So that we will no longer live as rebels against His authority.
(b) But become obedient children.

C. Finally, why did God do it this way?
1. Why did He make it so that He would be the source of grace and peace?
a. Why did He work out this salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ?
b. Why didn't He arrange it so that we could save ourselves?
(i) By good works.
(ii) By giving all we have to the poor.
(iii) By strict obedience to His commandments.
(iv) By performing some great act of self-sacrifice.

2. There are several reasons He didn't do it this way:
a. Our obedience could never be good enough: we fall short in every area.
b. Even if we could obey Him well enough, we still couldn't pay for the sins we have already committed against Him.
c. He was the only One who could have saved us.

3. But the overarching reason is this: He did it this way so that we might depend entirely on Him for our salvation, that He might receive all the glory for it.
a. He doesn't want us to take any of the credit for ourselves.
b. As we already saw in Paul, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, *so that no one may boast*" (vv. 8-9).
c. God doesn't want us patting ourselves on the back for our salvation.
d. He wants us to praise and honor Him for it.
e. Any system of religion that gives any credit to man seriously dishonors God, takes away from His glory, and destroys His grace.
f. Understanding this, let's not take away His glory, but give Him glory.
g. As Paul writes, "To [Him] *be* the glory forevermore. Amen" (v. 5).
h. Let's pray.