

# He Gave Himself

*Good Friday Service*

By Don Green

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**Bible Text:** Galatians 1:1-5  
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Well, if you've never been to a communion service here at Truth Community Church, this is the way we do it basically. We like to sing brief songs that put our attention on Christ and have a reverence about the memorial that we are about to partake of with Christ having commanded us to do so. This is what we do. Communion is a time to remember Christ and he appointed it on the night before his crucifixion, that this would be the way that his people would remember him going forward. This is not a time where the juice and the bread turn into the literal body and blood of Christ, that has nothing to do with what Scripture says about communion. They are mere symbols to help us remember the body and the blood that were offered up to God as an offering for sin on our behalf. He gave himself for us and we believe that it's important to approach this time with reverence and with a sense that we are coming to a time that is holy because it's a time that Christ has appointed for his people to remember him by and what it represents, the accomplishment of our eternal salvation is something of high and lofty character that we want to remember with reverence and so that's what we're going to do today.

We're so glad that you are with us to join us for this time and later on I'll remind you that this is the Lord's table, it's not the table of Truth Community Church. If you are a Christian, if you are here and you have repented of sin and given your life to Christ, you're welcome to join us at this table whether or not you're a member of our church. But what we like to do and what I want to do is to just take a few moments to look at this passage that I read earlier just to kind of prepare our hearts and to give us a sense of fresh remembrance from God's word about exactly what Christ did for us and we turn to this text in Galatians for our meditation. Look at the first few verses of Galatians 1 with me, if you would. We're not looking to do a full exposition of this passage, we'll leave that for some time in the future, but just enough to put our minds on Christ in a very focused and laser-like way to remember our blessed Redeemer and the work that he did on our behalf.

In the first two verses it says,

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

Galatia being a region in the general area of modern day Turkey is where this letter was destined, and you see from these opening verses that Paul was writing as a commissioned apostle. He was an authorized representative of Christ who was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was giving us a thoroughly trustworthy, God-inspired account of the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ when he wrote these words that we now have before us in our English text.

Being an apostle, Christ chose Paul, Christ appointed Paul and delegated full authority to Paul to go out and speak on his behalf. In 1 Corinthians 14, the Apostle Paul says that, "what I write to you is the Lord's commandment." So when we read Scripture, when we read the writings of the Apostle Paul, we're not reading the speculations of man, we are reading the clear and authoritative word of God that tells us exactly the truth about Christ and about salvation and that very word "salvation" immediately opens up doors of things that we need to remember as we come to the table here tonight. We need to remember that there is a problem with man. If you wanted to take notes, this would be the first point: the problem with man. Why is it that Christ came? Why is it that we talk about a Savior? Why is it that we talk about redemption? It's because man is lost and when we say "man," we mean every member of humanity. Every man and woman, boy and girl that has ever been born has been born into sin since the fall of Adam. Man is lost.

If you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, you are lost whether you realize it or not. As we gather together as believers, we remember that we once were lost as well and this table is a remembrance that deliverance and rescue has been provided for us and that is worth remembering, it's worth celebrating as Christ commanded us to do, but what does it mean that man is lost? Well, this is basic, in one sense, but it is so essential for us to remember because you and I, you know what our problem is, we're prone to forget and this is why we have a memorial, this is why we have a remembrance, it's because we're prone to forget. And as we remember the body of Christ and the shed blood of Christ, it points us to Christ, of course, but beyond that it points us to why he needed to do this in the first place and it's because you and I were desperately lost. You were a sinner separated from God.

Let's look at a couple of passages just to refresh our thinking. Look at Ecclesiastes 9, just after the book of Proverbs, and in Ecclesiastes 9 Solomon writes words of great import, of searching significance that remind us of what we once were. He said in Ecclesiastes 9, "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men," meaning that all men are going to die. "It is appointed for man once to die and after this comes judgment." And why is there death? Why do we not live forever just on our own? Why is it that more or less 70 years are appointed for us and then we will go the way of all flesh? It's because of sin. It's because man has a problem.

Look at the rest of verse 3 with me there. Solomon says, he also writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead." Scripture does not flatter us in our humanity. Scripture does not commend us for being born good and having sparks of divinity within us as though we are people who are able

to live basically good lives and find our way inevitably into heaven on our own account. Scripture says the exact opposite about you and me; it says that our hearts are evil; that they are dark apart from Christ; that indeed it's insanity that dwells within our hearts. It's insanity for a man who has the testimony of creation all around him, it's insanity for a man to have a Bible and to not seek for God and yet this is what all men do. There is none who seeks for God even though there is an unbroken testimony from creation and from Scripture that testifies to the reality of this holy God. How could it be that a man would not seek him? It's insane. It's crazy and that's what dominates every heart that has not been the recipient of a work of the Holy Spirit. And sin, this problem with man is no minor matter, beloved. Your sinfulness that Christ saved you from was not a trivial matter at all, it was something of great eternal import.

Look at Isaiah 59, if you would. The condition of man in sin is one of separation from God, of God having closed his ears and refusing the prayers and the efforts of men because God cannot be approached with blood on your hands, with sin on your soul, with insanity in your heart. God does not receive us like that. Look at Isaiah 59:2, "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness." Whether it is simply the insane thoughts of the human heart, the wicked words, the defiled words that come out of your mouth, the sinful deeds of your hand, we were all thoroughly corrupt, thoroughly in need of judgment, thoroughly unfit for the presence of God. That's the testimony of Scripture about the nature of man. "The heart is desperately sick, wicked above all else," Jeremiah 17:9 says.

So there you were, a sinner separated from God. Not only that, the Bible tells us that you were like this as you were living in an evil system, an evil world system that belongs to the devil. Look over at 1 John, if you would, in the New Testament after the book of Hebrews, James and Peter. 1 John 2:15 and 17. What I want you to see is that it wasn't simply your own condition but it's the system to which you belonged as an unregenerate man, as an unsaved man. 1 John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world nor 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 lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Then look at chapter 5 of 1 John in verse 19 as the apostle says, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

You see, your condition apart from Christ was so desperately bad, beloved. You were in such a miserable state whether you realized it or not. You were a sinner separated from God, first of all. And again, I hasten to make the distinction between those who are in Christ tonight and those who are not. If you're not a Christian, everything that I describe is past tense for believers and is a present tense reality for you. This is so serious. You are a sinner, a guilty sinner separated from God, having no claim on him whatsoever and you lived in a world system that was dominated by Satan, not just in the sensuality of the world but in its philosophies and in its anti-God sentiments and the whole way that the

world thinks trapped you. So you were like a rotten fish swimming in a sewer with no way out and Scripture says that man is guilty before God and the man that dies in that condition is on an icy slope into judgment, into eternal hell and destruction. The Bible says that the unsaved will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

You know, beloved, those of you that are Christians here tonight as we contemplate the table, as we glance back through Scripture to see what our condition was like, there are a couple of things that should occur to us. 1. There should be a complete denial of self. There should be a complete repudiation of yourself that says, "There was no good thing in me before the Lord saved me. There was nothing good about me. I was headed for judgment. I was in great danger." So that we come with a sense of humility to the table as we remember it. The problem with man was a problem with you in your own heart before Christ.

So when we talk about the table, when we talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, beloved, let's say it this way: your estimate of Christ and the esteem with which and the affection with which you hold the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be directly proportionate to the extent that you received the testimony of Scripture about your unsaved condition. Someone who understands that he was a guilty sinner before God, he was enmeshed in a world system dominated by the devil and completely unable to do anything to save himself, a person who understands that that is the truth about him testified by the inerrant word of God, is going to look at Christ, look at the cross, look at salvation and say, "This is one great and magnificent gift that has been bestowed upon me. This was an act of undeserved favor and kindness from God because I deserved nothing from him. I deserved judgment from him and here I am in a state of grace."

Well, when you understand that, then you treasure Christ, don't you? You love him. You hold him in high regard and you worship him as the one who alone could save you from sin, and only that mindset gives you a proper perspective for the taking of communion. We're not casually remembering an incidental event from 2,000 years ago, we are remembering that act which alone could save you from eternal damnation. So of course we esteem Christ and of course we approach any remembrance of him with reverence, with fear, with trembling, and yet with a sense of love and devotion and appreciation for what this one did for us because he dealt with the problem with man.

Now, let's take a look at Christ from the passage that I read earlier. Turn back to Galatians. We saw the problem with man, he's a sinner separated from God, trapped in a world system that is evil and deceitful, and if he dies in that condition, he will go to eternal destruction. That's a pretty big problem and yet the problem sets the stage for us to see the answer in Christ. Isn't it amazing, you know, we should never get tired of this, we should never get so familiar with this that in that condition the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling the will of God the Father, brought us grace and peace.

Look at verse 3 of Galatians 1. Paul says,

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

What is this? What is this fresh drink of water being given to the thirsty sinner? What is this offer of pardon, of favor from God, of kindness and mercy and love and the ministry of the Holy Spirit? What is this given to those of you and those of us that were dead in our trespasses and sins? How can it be, beloved, how can it be that those of us who had nothing but undeserving demerit on our account found ourselves to be on the receiving end of grace and peace? Grace communicates the idea of undeserved favor. Peace refers to spiritual well-being that flows from a right relationship with God. What Paul here as he writes to the churches in Galatia is saying, he opens up with this greeting and, in a sense, prays for them to know the reality of the grace and peace of God on their lives. The fact that any grace, that any peace is available from God is a testimony to the greatness of his mercy, the greatness of his grace, and the overwhelming indescribable love and the well-intentioned goodness of God toward you. That's what we remember at the table.

You know, grace was necessary because you were separated from God in sin and under the bondage of Satan. 2 Corinthians 4, I believe it is, it says that the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so that they will not see the Gospel of Christ. You see, it's not just that you were guilty, it's that Satan was actively working to keep you from a knowledge of Christ. He was blinding your eyes to the Gospel. That's why for so many of you, your testimony is, "I heard the Gospel so many times and I have never understood it. It never registered with me until one day the Lord opened my eyes." Well, why was that? Well, you were dead in sin and Satan was blinding your eyes and there was nothing that you could do about it. You see, beloved, you have to have an appreciation for how spiritually helpless you were apart from Christ. You had no ability to understand. Scripture says there is no one who understands, Romans 3. You were not seeking for God because no one seeks for him. You had no ability, no capacity to receive truth and there was nothing that you were able to do of your own strength and of your own merit in order to commend yourself to God. You were lost. You were miserably, hopelessly lost and there was no way to find yourself out. If you can remember being a kid, being lost in a department store not being able to find your mother; being lost in the woods and turning around and, "Where do I go? I don't know where I'm at." That's a small measure, a small sense of where you were at spiritually.

When you look at verse 4, if you would, Paul mentions the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of verse 3 and he can't help himself but he goes and expands on who Christ is and what he did. And in verse 4, having said, "the Lord Jesus Christ," verse 4, "who." And so in this relative clause, Paul is going to describe the Lord Jesus Christ by what he did for us and it's such sweet words in verse 4. Look at it with me, he says, "the Lord Jesus Christ, who," what did he do?

4 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,

In this verse, Paul describes two aspects of the work of Christ that answer the problem with man, the problem of man, and these are going to be simple things that are not

anything new for you to hear but, in a sense, it's always fresh to the believing heart. This is the fountain of life for us, the things that we're about to see here from verse 4.

What did Christ do? What's the answer of Christ to the problem of man? Well, first of all, Christ took the penalty of your sin. Christ took the penalty of your sin. He paid it. And beloved, you have to understand something, something really basic, really fundamental. I love to speak in first principles, in those things which are essential and by which everything else is determined. There is a way of salvation that God has provided. God has provided a way of salvation but you must understand that it is not God's will for you to try to earn your salvation with your good works, by trying to be good, by trying to cover up your sin and balancing out the scale by deeds of charity or trying to do good things or going through religious rituals or giving money to a church or promising to do better or weeping tears of repentance that are separated and divorced from any faith in Christ. You cannot cry enough tears to wash away your sins. You cannot give enough money to buy yourself out of the devil's domination. There was nothing for you to do and that is not God's will for you to be saved by anything done by your hands.

Look at chapter 2, verse 16. Three times in this single verse, Paul says that your works cannot save you. In verse 15 we can start at, "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man," here it is, the problem with man, "a man is not justified by the works of the Law." To be justified is to be declared righteous in the presence of God, for God to declare you righteous. That's the idea, it's a legal term. A man who is justified is one who is declared to have met the demands of the law and what this verse is saying is that you do not obtain that righteous standing by your obedience, by the things that you do. That is not God's will rather it is "through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ." Faith in Christ. Believe in Christ. Faith in Christ. That alone can save you. And Paul goes on and repeats the negative aspect of the equation, "and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

You know, when you realize that you have this spiritual problem, this spiritual alienation from God, when that starts to settle in on your mind, you must realize that there is nothing that you can do to save yourself from that dilemma. You must realize that Scripture says again and again and again, "Not by works. Not by what you do." Ephesians 2:8 and 9 would reinforce that. And it is not God's will for you to be saved by any good works. Beloved, only the death of Christ can wash away your sins. Only the death of Christ atones for sin and that's what Paul is saying in verse 4 of chapter 1 when he said Christ gave himself for our sins.

Look at chapter 3, verse 13 of Galatians where Paul says, Scripture says, the Bible says, God says. Those are all equivalent phrases when you're dealing with the Bible. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'Curse is everyone who hangs on a tree'--in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The answer of God to the problem with man is the death of Christ where he became a curse on our behalf. That is the only thing that answers the judgment of God.

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, he was acting as a substitute for sinners. He voluntarily – watch this – he voluntarily absorbed God's wrath against our sins and that should make Christ very precious to you, precious beyond any human relationship, precious beyond any earthly possession, precious beyond life itself. That is how precious Christ is to you, to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, the holy sinless Savior gave himself. No one could take his life from him, he said in the Gospel of John, but rather he laid it down on his own initiative. Not because he was obligated to you, Christ was not obligated to you, he was not obligated to me. He was under no compulsion from man in order to lay his life down on the cross. He was under no obligation formed by anything that man had done in order to do what he did.

No, Christ gave himself. He voluntarily laid his life down on the cross in order to save us from our sins and what Scripture says is that God accepts that sacrifice of Christ on the cross, he accepts it as the payment for your sin when you put your faith in him. When you put your faith in Christ for salvation, Christ will save you. That is why he came. It is God's will for you to be saved from sin by putting your faith in Christ, by trusting him. By how can we define faith? I like to define terms. You know that about me. To say that when we call a man to put his faith in Christ, we are calling him to receive Christ as his personal Lord; to receive him, to yield to him, to confess him as God Incarnate, as the one who alone was the sin-substitute on the cross. To receive him in that way and to welcome him and to welcome his authority over your life, to embrace his cross work as the only means of your salvation, and having done so, this blessed word, to rest in him. To rest in him. To look for no further things from your own hands, to look to no other, to rest in Christ and say, "The work was finished at the cross. There is nothing left for me to do. Jesus paid it all." So you abandon any efforts at trying to justify yourself, at trying to do good to earn God's favor. You realize that Christ and Christ alone accomplished it at the cross on your behalf.

So for us that have trusted Christ, do you know what that means? It means that all of your sins are forgiven; that God will not hold any of your guilt against you, indeed, the guilt has been removed from your account and God has deposited, as it were, he has credited to you, he has imputed to you the perfect righteousness of Christ and it is on the basis of the death and righteousness of Christ that you have a perfect relationship with God now. He receives you fully. Beloved, it's a bold statement but it is true to say that you have as much right to be in heaven now as Jesus Christ does because Jesus Christ is the basis upon which you approach God and that perfect righteousness has been given to you as a gift. That's why Ephesians 3:12 can say you have bold and confident access to God through faith in Christ.

He took the penalty of our sin. We remember that tonight in communion and, beloved, beloved, I think that if we're approaching communion rightly, we're approaching it with a great sense of reverence and devotion and affection for Christ, and that affection flows from realizing that you have this blessing of salvation. Why? Because Christ gave himself for you. He gave himself. He gladly, voluntarily handed himself over to the cross that you might be saved. What a blessed Savior.

In Mark 10, Jesus himself said that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. When we remember the cross, we remember that Christ was serving us there and giving his life as the ransom which could deliver us from sin. So our hearts are drawn to love him, drawn to obey him, drawn to worship him, for he did for us what we could not do on our own when he gave himself for us. We remember that tonight in communion.

Christ did more for us. Go back to Galatians 1. He not only took the penalty for our sin, he has also delivered us from the world. He has delivered us from the world. This godless world in which we live corrupts men and salvation addresses that also. Look at chapter 1, verse 4. Paul said speaking of Christ, "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age." He gave himself for our sins as our substitute and he did that with a purpose in mind to rescue us from this present evil age. To rescue means that he took you out of a danger from which you could not deliver yourself. He delivered you from a bondage when you did not have the keys to the lock on your chains, the chains of your sin, the chains of your self-deception, the chains of the false philosophies that you had drunk in from the world and that was all energized by dark demonic forces in order to seal you and secure you in your deception so that your soul would end up in a final perdition.

You were blind to it all and what did Christ do? He rescued you from it. The purpose of the cross included that purpose of delivering you out from under the bondage of Satan and the bondage of lies and delivering you into the kingdom of Christ and into the kingdom of truth. And Christ did that for you voluntarily when he gave himself for you. He delivered us from bondage and brought us to freedom. Instead of being under the malignant power and domination of the devil, you are now under the good and gracious kingship of Christ who loves you, who keeps you, who directs you, who has said, "No one will ever pluck you out of my hand."

How great is he? How wonderful is this salvation that brings full and free forgiveness of all of your many sins and has delivered you from a wicked foe who would not let you go so that you could be under the gracious hand of a good and holy God who always intends your good? Colossians 1 says that Christ "rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Beloved, do you understand that? There is no credit for you to take for your salvation. You were unable to save yourself, you were unable to cleanse the guilt of your sin from your own soul, and furthermore, beloved, and this isn't as often talked about, there was absolutely nothing that you could do to get yourself out from under the power of Satan. You could not get out from that. You were a slave, lost and bound to him, Scripture says blinded to do his will. And so to be a Christian, then, is to be on the receiving end of a miraculous work of Christ to save you and bring you out from that; a gracious work that cleanses you from guilt; that forgives your sin; and that powerfully delivers you from the kingdom of Satan who did not voluntarily let you go. Satan did not voluntarily surrender you to the kingdom of Christ, but Christ voluntarily surrendered himself to the cross so



that you could be, so that that would be guaranteed so that he would accomplish your redemption.

And beloved, he did all of that 2,000 years ago. He secured and made certain your redemption 2,000 years ago before you were even born. And in time, God brought you into the world, in time the Spirit worked in your heart and applied this to your soul, applied it to your heart, opened your eyes, opened your heart so that you would believe, but all of it guaranteed by a prior choice of God, a prior work of Christ, because Christ gave himself for you. That's what we remember at communion tonight. Your works did not deliver you from this satanic world, our Lord Jesus Christ did.

One final thing that we can say from this passage. We've been saying it all along, really. This great salvation, beloved, oh, the simplicity of God's word and yet the profundity of God's word. This great salvation was God's idea, it wasn't yours. God planned it from the start.

Look at verse 4, Christ "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." Christ was carrying this out according to the will of God, according to a predetermined plan and purpose of God, that you would be included in a future eternal kingdom where you would be part of the bride of Christ with him forever, enjoying his blessing by the will and the purpose of our God and Father.

Here's the last thing I want to say before we turn to communion. Those are famous last words. Beloved, you should never think of Christ and his work as reconciling you – watch this – as though Christ were reconciling you to a reluctant Father, as if God the Father really didn't want this to happen but the Son prevailed upon him. The whole plan was from God the Father. Their purpose was one and the same. John 3:16 says that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." This whole thing was the will of the perfect Triune God. And yes, our Lord laid his life down but he did so according to the will of our God and Father. They were on the same page all along. God loved us in that way and for that we give the glory to him.

Look at verse 5,

according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

He gave himself for us. He took the penalty of your sin. He took away the guilt of your sin. He delivered you from this wicked evil world and he did it voluntarily when he gave himself for you. And beloved, we gratefully remember that love and that voluntary sacrifice as we come to the table tonight.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Our gracious Lord, we thank you for this day and for this ordinance that you have given to the church by which we might remember you in a fresh and yet familiar way. Thank you, Lord Christ, for giving yourself for us, for laying your life down on our behalf. Our Father, we thank you that you planned this and this was according to your will that you delighted in the obedience of your Son which saved us. And blessed Holy Spirit, we thank you for bringing this and applying it to our hearts through your ministry while Christ is risen in heaven. So as we come to this table, we come with a sense of joy, with a sense of immense gratitude and a spirit of humble worship, realizing that you have done this for us despite our undeserving and for that, our Father, we give you all of the praise. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

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