

## Lesson 1 – Galatians 1:1-5

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### Title and Author

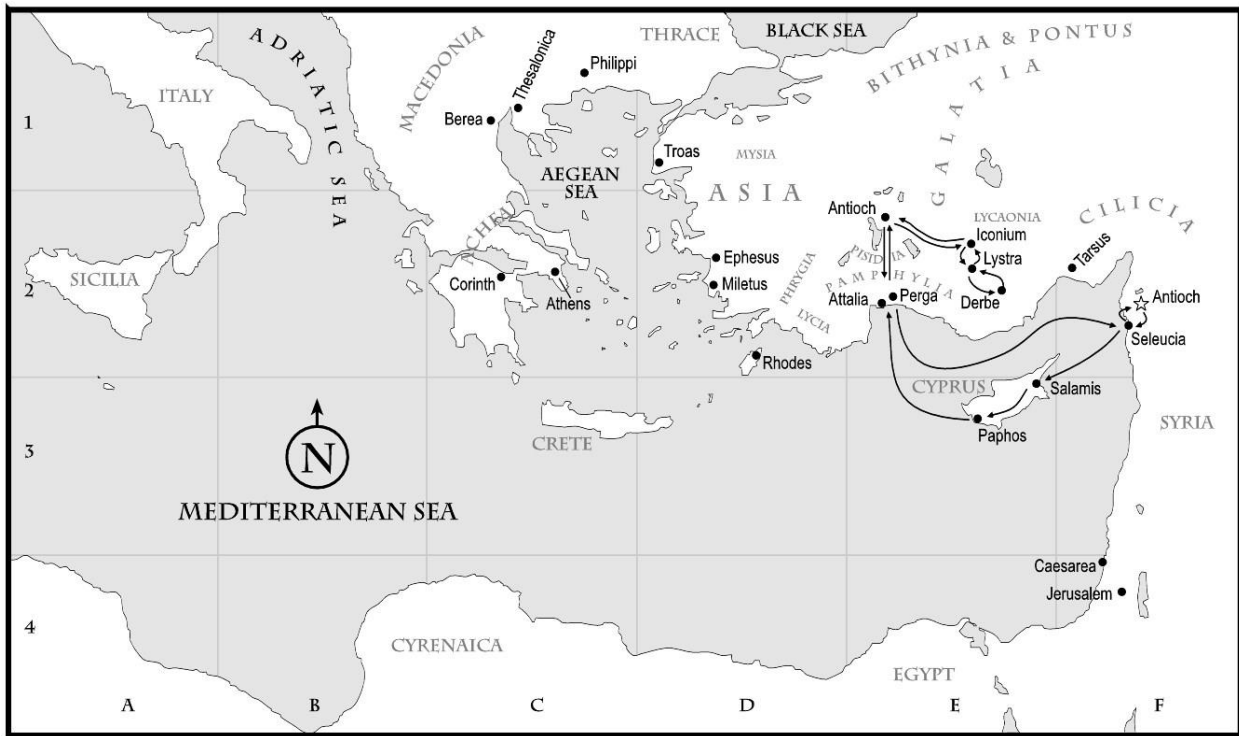
Galatians derives its title from the region in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) where the recipient churches were located (Galatians 1:2; 3:1). Southern Galatia, where Paul ministered during his first missionary journey is most likely this region.

The authorship of the apostle Paul is undisputed (Galatians 1:1-2; 5:2)).

### Date of Writing and Introduction

Acts chapters 13-14 records Paul's ministry in Galatia during his first missionary journey (AD 48-49) where he ministered in Cyprus, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe. In Galatians 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council, so Galatians was most likely written shortly after the Council in AD 49-50 after his return home to Antioch.

Date	Event
Sun, 24 May 33	Pentecost (Acts 2)
33	Peter's second sermon before the Sanhedrin (Acts 3:1-4:31); Death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32-5:11); Peter brought before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:12-42); Seven men of good reputation selected (Acts 6:1-7); Saul stoned Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60); Saul's persecution of the church (Acts 8:1-3); Philip's ministry in Samaria & Judea (Act 8:4-40)
33/34	Saul encounters Jesus on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-21)
33/34	Saul went away to Arabia to be with the Lord (Gal 1:17)
36/37	Back in Damascus preaching Jesus (Acts 9:22-35)
36/37	Saul Goes to Jerusalem to become acquainted with the apostles (Acts 9:26-29)
37	Saul Goes to Caesarea, then to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)
~41-43	Barnabas and Saul minister in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:19-26)
44	Apostle James martyred under Agrippa's persecution (Acts 12:2)
44	Epistle of James written by Jesus' brother
47	Barnabas and Saul take the contribution for the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:30)
47	Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch with John Mark (Acts 12:24-25)
48-49	First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
48	Ministry in Cyprus; Saul referred to as Paul (Acts 13:4-12)
49	Ministry in Galatia: Perga (John Mark leaves), Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra (perhaps Timothy converted), and Derbe (perhaps Titus converted) (Acts 13:13-14:20)
49	Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)
49/50	Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)
49/50	Paul took Titus to Jerusalem (Gal 2:3)
49/50	Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 15:30-34)
49/50	Epistle to the Galatians written from Antioch
50-52	Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
50	<sup>4</sup> Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. (Acts 16:4-5)



The First Missionary Journey (From classic.net.bible.org)

## Context

The church was born in Jerusalem and spread throughout Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the known world. The first converts and most of the early leaders were Jews who accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. They obviously struggled with their dual identity: traditional Jewish teaching driving them to strictly obey the law versus newfound Christian faith inviting them to celebrate freedom from the law. Also, what about the Gentiles? How could they possibly become a part of the kingdom when they did not know God's Messiah in a Jewish way?

Keeping this controversy alive were the Judaizers, a group of Jewish false teachers in the church who were determined to undermine the doctrine of justification by faith. They taught that Gentiles had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions in addition to believing in Jesus to be true Christians. To the Judaizers, it was Christ plus something else.

What shocked Paul most was that the Galatians bought into this heresy. Many of them left sound doctrine to follow these teachings. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to refute this teaching and call believers, both Jew and Gentile, back to the pure gospel – justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Galatians is the only epistle Paul wrote that does not contain a commendation for its readers. That obvious omission reflects how urgently he felt about confronting their defection and defending the essential doctrine of justification.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Paul's Defense of His Slavery to Christ (1:10-2:21)
- III. Paul's Defense of Justification by Faith (3:1-4:31)
- IV. Practical Application of Justification (5:1-6:10)
- V. Conclusion (6:11-18)

## Introduction – Greeting (1:1-5)

### 1. Paul's Authority (1:1-2)

<sup>1</sup>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), <sup>2</sup>and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

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<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— <sup>2</sup>and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: (ESV)

In standard written form, Paul begins with a salutation introducing himself. His salutation is also an initial attack on the false teachers who are bringing a corrupt gospel to the Galatians.

Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). He was extremely well educated under one of the leading rabbis, Gamaliel (Acts 5:33-40; 22:3). He spoke Greek and Hebrew (Acts 21:37, 40). He was the Jew of Jews. He was “zealous for God” (Acts 22:3). He found his purpose in being religious. That sounds like many people today – zealous for religiousness.

<sup>4</sup>although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. (Philippians 3:4-6)

<sup>13</sup>For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; <sup>14</sup>and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, **being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.** (Galatians 1:13-14)

#### ❖ **Do you derive your purpose in religiousness or your relationship with Christ?**

Paul's religion was works plus nothing. Yet, when he encountered the living Christ, everything changed. When God supernaturally intervened in his life, it became all about Christ.

<sup>10</sup>**But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain;** but I labored even more than all of them, **yet not I, but the grace of God with me.** (1 Corinthians 15:10)

<sup>7</sup>But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>**More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,** for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup>and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, (Philippians 3:7-9)

#### ❖ **What is your life all about?**

Paul had ministered in Galatia for a year. On the way home he revisited the churches and appointed elders in every church.

<sup>21</sup>After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup>strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>23</sup>When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

Those elders would have been teaching Paul’s teaching. At the writing of Galatians, he has only been gone for a year. The point is that many of the Galatians (at least the church leaders) know Paul. He does not need to provide an introduction more than his name, but he does. This is a reminder for those that know him and a rebuke for those that oppose the true gospel.

He calls himself an apostle. “Apostle” literally means “sent one”. It designates an individual sent from someone else with the sender’s commission and authority, necessary credentials, and the implicit responsibility to accomplish a mission or assignment.

In a broad sense this can refer to all believers. But the term is primarily used as a specific and unique title for the thirteen men (the Twelve with Matthias replacing Judas and Paul) whom Christ personally chose and commissioned to authoritatively proclaim the gospel and lead the early church. The thirteen were all called directly by Jesus and were witnesses of His resurrection, Paul having encountered Him on the Damascus road after His ascension.

❖ **Do you view yourself as a “sent one” with a mission (Matthew 28:19-20), an “ambassador of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20)?**

Paul was “not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead”. Paul’s apostleship is not his own doing or some other person’s (even apostle) doing. We will see later that the gospel he received is not his own doing either.

Paul is writing to refute false teaching from those who self-identify as having authority in the churches. False teaching is allowed to exist and remain in a church because:

1) the elders do not fulfill their mandate

<sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. <sup>10</sup>For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup>who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain. (Titus 1:9-11)

2) the members of the body do not fulfill their mandate

<sup>11</sup>Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.** (Acts 17:11)

Paul did not “self-identify” as an apostle. He did not derive his authority from himself or some other people, but from the Trinity; from the power of God Himself. He was an apostle “by the will of God”. Therefore, what the Lord’s apostle says is authoritative. His apostleship gave him the right and responsibility to instruct the Galatians even from afar.

Paul adds “and all the brethren who are with me” in his salutation. This is not just Paul, or Paul the apostle, but the “brethren” in the church that had sent Paul to them in the first missionary journey – Antioch. Antioch was the first mixed Jewish/Gentile church. The body universal and specifically the church that had the same issues as the Galatians believes what Paul is going to give them.

<sup>30</sup>So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. <sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. <sup>33</sup>After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. <sup>34</sup>[But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] <sup>35</sup>But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. (Acts 15:30-35)

### ❖ What is your connection to the body?

#### 2. Paul’s Message (1:3-4)

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>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,

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<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (ESV)

Paul gives his standard greeting (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4). Some say that “grace” was the Greek greeting and “peace” the Hebrew greeting.

The following definition of grace is derived from a study by Abner Chou at the 2019 Shepherd’s Conference. Grace is one of the most overused and misunderstood words in the evangelical subculture vernacular. We call grace “unmerited favor” or “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense (GRACE)” or God’s “kindness”. These are true, but incomplete.

John says that Jesus is “full of grace and truth”. This parallel’s what God said about Himself to Moses. The NT writers viewed the Greek word grace as the equivalent of the OT word “lovingkindness”.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full of grace and truth**. (John 1:14)

<sup>5</sup>The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in lovingkindness and truth**; (Exodus 34:5-6)

When we look at the use of lovingkindness in the OT, it refers to God’s sovereign, omnipotent intervention (e.g., Genesis 19:19; Exodus 15:13; 2 Samuel 22:51; Ezra 7:28; Psalms).

Of the 150 times “grace” is used in the NT, 100 are Paul’s. Paul used the word as connected to the entire aspect of God’s powerful, saving and sanctifying work.

<sup>1</sup>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:1)

<sup>9</sup>And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup>who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14)

Even in context, why would Paul wish what they already had on the Galatians (i.e., unmerited favor)? He is greeting them with a prayer for something more.

So, here is a definition based on the context of NT grace and OT lovingkindness.

Grace is God’s omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory.

We need God’s omnipotent, unilateral intervention in the hopelessness of our own efforts in both salvation and sanctification.

❖ **Do you recognize this need and run to the only One who can meet it?**

“Peace” is the result of grace. It describes the situation where two things come together and there is nothing in between to cause friction. There is no longer a barrier between the two. This is peace with God (Romans 5:1) and obtaining peace from God (Romans 8:6).

Paul goes on to give a summary of his message, the gospel: from eternity past God the Father sovereignly chose those whom He would save from sin. At His perfect time, He sent Jesus into the world who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. This is all to God’s glory!

This is so much different from the works salvation that the Judaizers were pushing.

❖ **Do you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are saved?**

3. Paul’s Motive (1:5)

<sup>5</sup>to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup>to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)

God’s sovereign work is for the ultimate purpose of His glory. The glory of God is Paul’s life purpose. But, what does it mean to glorify God? God is infinitely glorious in nature, so there is nothing we can add to Him. His glory is never diminished, so it does not have to be replenished or bolstered or somehow helped along by His elect.

To glorify God is to display His character and goodness in your life and therefore bring Him honor. It is to show His character in your motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. You glorify God when you live in a way that those around you can look at you and see what God's character is like (Exodus 33:17-23). You glorify God by placing His attributes on display in your life by walking in the Spirit and progressing in sanctification.

When a Christian lives a life that brings glory to God, they are fulfilling their purpose (2 Peter 1:5; Isaiah 43:7). Glorifying God is the believer's highest calling. We can do it every minute of every day no matter what our circumstances because we have access to power through the Spirit. We can glorify God at home, school, church, community, work (whether we enjoy it or not); with family, coworkers, brethren, or strangers; at rest, at leisure, in any marital status, whether married to a wonderful or horrible person, i.e., all the time.

### ❖ **Do you make it your purpose from morning to night to glorify God?**

Here are several ways to glorify God.

1. By believing what God says, trusting Him to fulfill His promises.

Abraham's example... <sup>19</sup>Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; <sup>20</sup>yet, **with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,** <sup>21</sup>and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. (Romans 4:19-21)

When we do not trust God, we make him out to be a liar (1 John 5:10).

### ❖ **Are there areas of your life that you do not trust God to handle?**

2. By confessing sin, agreeing with God that you have sinned.

Achan gathered part of the spoils after the fall of Jericho (Joshua 7:1) which was direct disobedience to God's command (Joshua 6:17-19; Leviticus 27:28; Deuteronomy 20:17).

<sup>19</sup>Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, **give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done.** Do not hide it from me." <sup>20</sup>So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, **I have sinned against the LORD,** the God of Israel, and this is what I did: (Joshua 7:19-20)

### ❖ **Are there areas of your life that you "keep secret" from God or your brethren?**

3. By bearing much fruit, doing good works.

"Good works" are love (for Christ and people) motivated acts with accompanying words that fulfill the believer's mission of disciple making (Matthew 28:18-20).

<sup>8</sup>"My **Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit,** and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:8)

<sup>16</sup>"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may **see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** (Matthew 5:16)

Remember, the reason for doing good works is out of gratitude for all the God has done for us in Christ and to glorify God – NOT to get something.

**<sup>28</sup>Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; <sup>29</sup>for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)**

❖ **Are all your good works driving toward fulfilling your mission?**

4. By serving Christ's church (in our case VBC).

We each have special gifts that we should be using to serve. Even by simply making body involvement a family priority and faithfully attending and participating, you are present and, therefore, add to the body.

**<sup>10</sup>As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things **God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, **to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.** Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)**

- Sunday worship and Sunday school (two services)
- Growth Group (foundational)
- Age-specific ministries (AWANA, children, JH, HS, college, career, senior, etc.)
- Gender-specific ministries (various men's and women's activities)
- Mission ministries – Evangelism training, missions and local outreaches
- Administration and maintenance
- By serving in any area of need
- By an attitude of serving the brethren when present

We each have something to offer, but we must be present to offer it!

❖ **How are you serving the body?**

5. By humbly attributing success to God, by making sure He gets the credit for the good things that happen in your life.

King Herod did not do that... <sup>21</sup>On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. <sup>22</sup>The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" <sup>23</sup>And **immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory**, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Acts 12:21-23)

<sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, **yet not I, but the grace of God with me.** (1 Corinthians 15:10)

<sup>23</sup>**"He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;** And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23)



Have you ever done something well and someone else gets or takes the credit for it? How do you feel? Think about how God feels – we are taking the credit for what He has done. What should He get credit for?

**<sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,** with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

❖ **Inwardly or outwardly, do you take credit that belongs to God?**

The bottom line: <sup>31</sup>Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.** (1 Corinthians 10:31)

❖ **Are you living for your highest purpose?**

### **Conclusion**

Paul is writing to the Galatians who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Are you at danger of that also?

### **Additional Study**

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today's Questions
  - Think about your salvation. How do you describe it – “I believed” or “God saved me”? Which gives God the glory?
  - When considering life's difficulties, do you view them alone or with “all the brethren who are with me”?
  - Name as many ways in your life that God's omnipotent, supernatural, intervention (grace) has been and can be seen.
  - Think of the amazing love that Christ has for you in that He “gave Himself for your sins”. Spend some time thanking Him for that.
  - Contemplate the ways in which you can glorify God. Pray for ways in which you can glorify Him more/better. How might you “excel still more” at glorifying Him?