

UNIT 1: WORK AND REST

Lesson 4

June 28, 2026

Only One Gospel: The only Gospel is about Jesus Christ.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses a critical issue within the churches of Galatia, where believers had been misled by a false gospel. After a brief greeting, Paul addressed the matter directly, emphasizing that the message he preached was not of human origin but was divinely revealed by God. To counter the false teachers who questioned his authority, Paul argued that his calling and message were directly from God, not self-derived or dependent on human approval. He further highlighted that the Apostles in Jerusalem acknowledged and affirmed his divine calling, reinforcing the legitimacy of his ministry and the truth of the Gospel he proclaimed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Some Jewish teachers in Jerusalem desired to accept Jesus as the Messiah, but they struggled with the inclusion of the Gentiles into the faith. Their resistance seemed rooted in the belief that Gentiles could not receive salvation without following certain aspects of Jewish law. Commonly referred to as Judaizers, these teachers would go into newly established churches after Paul left, claiming to have additional information concerning the Gospel. Also, they would claim to come from the leaders of the Jerusalem church, who, they said, were superior to Paul. They pointed out that Paul had not followed Jesus during His earthly ministry. Paul addressed this in this letter.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. CHRISTIAN GREETING: Galatians 1:1-5.

- A. From Paul to Churches of Galatia, (1-2)
- B. Grace and Peace From God, (3-5)

2. THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL: Galatians 1:6-12.

- A. Paul's Curse on False Preaching (6-9)
- B. Paul's Preaching of the Gospel (10-12)

3. CALLED AND TRANSFORMED BY GRACE: Galatians 1:13-24.

- A. Paul's Testimony, (13-17)
- B. God Glorified Through Paul's Conversion, (18-24)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. CHRISTIAN GREETING: Galatians 1:1-5.

A. From Paul to Churches of Galatia, Galatians 1:1-2.

Paul opened his letter with a distinct and purposeful greeting that set the tone for this message. He asserted his apostolic authority, stating, “Paul, an apostle, (not men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)” (v. 1). His opening remarks established that his calling and mission were divinely ordained, not man-made, which was crucial given the challenges to his authority in the Galatian churches. He also tied his identity and message to the work of Christ and God the Father, emphasizing the divine origin of the Gospel he preached. By referring to Christ’s resurrection, he pointed to God’s power and authority as the foundation of his ministry.

In verse 2, Paul extended his heartfelt greeting on behalf of “all the brethren which are with me,” emphasizing that the other members of his ministry team fully supported his ministry and message. This collective endorsement highlighted that the broader Christian community affirmed Paul’s message. By including this detail, Paul emphasized the shared nature of the Christian faith, reinforcing the legitimacy of his mission. His opening greeting blended both theological and personal elements, reflecting his role as a spiritual leader and a caring mentor. It not only established his apostolic authority, but also declared the divine origin of his message, emphasizing that it was not of human invention but inspired by God. This introduction also served as a foundation for addressing the doctrinal challenges and confusion that had arisen among the Galatian churches. By doing so, Paul set the tone of his letter, preparing to confront and correct the issues troubling the believers while reaffirming the core truths of the Gospel.

B. Grace and Peace From God, Galatians 1:3-5.

In verse 3, Paul gave this blessing: “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace and peace are gifts at the heart of the Christian faith. Grace reminds us of God’s unmerited favor, freely given through Jesus, while peace speaks of the deep rest and reconciliation we have with God because of Christ’s sacrifice. In verse 4, Paul emphasized the self-giving nature of Jesus, highlighting His voluntary act of laying down His life for humanity’s sins. This reveals the depth of Christ’s love and the redemptive purpose behind His crucifixion. Paul drew attention to the selfless act of Jesus, who gave Himself to rescue us not just from sin but also from the brokenness of the world.

The passage concludes with a short doxology (statement of praise) in verse 5, stating, “To whom be glory for ever and ever.” This redirects our focus to God’s sovereignty and eternal worthiness of praise. These verses serve as a concise summary of the Gospel – God’s grace, Christ’s redemptive work, and the ultimate aim of glorifying Him. They root Paul’s message in the transformative power of Christ’s cross. Paul was not seeking glory for himself, but always directed it back to God. God’s grace had found Paul and put his feet on the path to God’s peace, something Paul never forgot.

Sometimes, when we’re sharing the Gospel, someone will challenge us with the classic question, “Who do you think you are?” They may try to intimidate us because we didn’t get our PhD in Biblical studies or a master’s degree in theology. Even Paul, who was basically a walking

Bible encyclopedia, was challenged for not being one of the disciples who walking with Jesus during His ministry in Galilee and Judea. But Paul did not throw up his hands and say, “You’re right. I have no authority to teach you.” Instead, his attitude was, “Listen, I’m not here because I’m the best theologian or because I was one the Twelve. I’m here because God called me, and that’s what matters.” So, the next time someone questions your “credentials,” remember it’s not about the resume, it’s about the power of the Gospel.

2. THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL: Galatians 1:6-12.

A. Paul’s Curse on False Preaching, Galatians 1:6-9.

Paul marveled that the Galatians had “so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (v. 6). His tone was firm, emphasizing the seriousness of abandoning the message of grace through Christ. This passage reveals Paul’s unwavering commitment to the purity of the Gospel and his warning against false teachings. Paul’s reference to “another gospel” (v. 6) does not suggest there is more than one valid gospel, but emphasizes that any deviation from the original message is a perversion. Verse 7 expresses Paul’s concern about the distortion of the Gospel by others who were confusing the Galatian believers. It serves as a reminder of the importance of staying true to the core of the Gospel – salvation through grace and faith in Christ alone. Paul’s tone here reflects both urgency and care, as he desired to protect the church from being led astray by teachings that compromised the truth. This verse encourages us today to be discerning, to test what we hear against Scripture, and to hold fast to the purity of the Gospel. It’s a warning from Paul to prioritize God’s truth over human opinions, remembering that even subtle changes to the message can have significant consequences.

In verse 8 and 9, Paul passionately warns against deviating from the Gospel of Christ, emphasizing the seriousness of preaching any false message, even if it comes from an angel or himself. His warning emphasizes the importance of unwavering faithfulness to the truth of the Gospel. His repetition of “let him be accursed” – stating that even an angel or himself would be accursed for preaching a false gospel – demonstrates the seriousness of being faithful to God’s truth. We must stay grounded in Scripture and discern teachings carefully, ensuring they align with God’s Word. We must evaluate our own beliefs and practices, guarding against anything that might distort the good news of grace and salvation through Jesus. Paul’s boldness here was a call to prioritize truth over popularity, encouraging us to remain steadfast in our faith while sharing it with love and integrity. Paul’s words remind us that faithfulness to the Gospel is not optional; it is essential. In an age where competing ideologies abound, this text challenges us to remain vigilant, testing all teachings against Scripture to guard against spiritual deception.

B. Paul’s Preaching of the Gospel, Galatians 1:10-12.

Paul asked, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men?” (v. 10). He emphatically stated that his mission was to not please people but to serve Christ, which expressed the incompatibility of allowing human expectations to take priority over being a servant of Christ. Paul challenged believers to examine their motivations, urging them to focus

on divine truth over socially accepted views. Paul asserted the divine origin of his message, declaring that the Gospel he preached was not a product of human invention or tradition but a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (vv. 11-12). This reinforced the authority and authenticity of his teachings, setting them apart from any man-made doctrines.

These verses also remind us of the power of divine revelation to change one's life. Paul's emphasis on receiving the Gospel directly from Christ illustrates the personal and spiritual nature of his calling. It also invites us to reflect on journeys of faith, encouraging us to seek God's guidance rather than relying solely on human wisdom. Ultimately, this passage emphasizes the importance of unwavering commitment to God's truth, even in the face of opposition, and call us to anchor our faith in the Gospel's unchanging message.

There are times when we can compromise on nonessential matters in life – even in the church. For example, we might consider different opinions on how often to observe Communion in the church. The Bible doesn't set a specific schedule, but says that as often as we do it, we should do it in remembrance of Jesus (Luke 22:19). We can have different opinions without sacrificing unity in the church. However, Paul stated that there can be no compromise regarding revealed truths in God's Word, and anyone who distorts God's truth stands on dangerous ground. With regard to anyone perverting the Gospel, Paul emphatically stated twice, "let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9).

3. CALLED AND TRANSFORMED BY GRACE: Galatians 1:13-24.

A. Paul's Testimony, Galatians 1:13-17.

Paul reflected on his dramatic transformation from a zealous persecutor of the church to a devoted apostle of Christ. He openly acknowledges his past, emphasizing how deeply embedded he was in Jewish traditions and how passionately he opposed the early Christian movement. This honesty about his former life testifies to the radical nature of God's grace that had truly transformed him. Paul's testimony underscores that no one is beyond redemption and that God can use the most unlikely individuals for His purposes.

Verse 15 highlights the profound sovereignty and grace of God in calling individuals to His purpose. Paul reflected on his life, acknowledging that his calling was not based on personal merit but on God's divine will and plan, established even before his birth. Paul articulated the concept of being set apart for God's work, emphasizing that our salvation and purpose are initiated by God's grace rather than by human effort. It also serves as a reminder of God's ongoing involvement in our lives, orchestrating events to fulfill His greater purpose. Paul's transformation from a persecutor of the church to an apostle exemplifies the power of God's calling to redeem and repurpose lives for His glory.

Paul's insistence that his calling came directly from God and not through human influence is striking. He did not consult anyone or seek approval; instead, he withdrew to Arabia, allowing time for personal revelation and growth. This shows the importance of a personal relationship with God and the power of His calling to provide focus and purpose in our lives. Trusting in God's timing and direction can be challenging, especially when it means stepping away from the

familiar. However, Paul's journey illustrates that God's plans often defy human expectations yet can lead to a life of significance and impact.

B. God Glorified Through Paul's Conversion, Galatians 1:18-24.

Paul recounted his early interactions after his conversion, emphasizing his limited contact with the Apostles and the churches of Judea. After three years, he visited Peter in Jerusalem, staying with him for fifteen days, and briefly with James, the Lord's brother. Paul stresses his independence from the other Apostles, asserting that his Gospel message was not derived from them but received through revelation from Christ.

Paul's commitment to authenticity in his ministry and his intentional separation from human influence in developing his message are emphasized. His limited contact with the Apostles reinforced his claim of divine commissioning. Additionally, the churches in Judea glorified God because of Paul's transformation, recognizing the profound work of grace in turning a former persecutor into a preacher of the faith. Therefore, those claiming to come from the churches in Jerusalem to call into question the authority or authenticity of Paul's teaching were exposing themselves as frauds.

Sometimes, sharing our personal stories about how God turned our lives around can do wonders when talking about the Gospel. Memorizing key verses of Scripture is important – think of them as spiritual flashcards – but maybe we shouldn't lead with, "Hey, here you're a sinner going to hell." Instead try, "Here's my testimony: I was a lost sinner, but now I'm redeemed." Even Paul, a persecutor of the church who became an apostle, admitted that people initially only knew him as that guy who was harassing Christians. But once they heard his story, they thought, Wow, God's really out there doing miracles! (see Galatians 1:24). Let your testimony be the salt and light that leads people to look to Jesus for redemption.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus told His disciples to make disciples by teaching others His commandments (Matthew 28:19-20). We need teachers, but we also need to allow the Holy Spirit to bring revelation into our lives.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

Paul said that when the churches in Judea heard his testimony, they celebrated what God was doing in him. We need to find ways in our churches to celebrate what God is doing in people's lives.

Where Were “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2) Located?

The letter to the churches of Galatia is the only one of the Apostle Paul’s letters in the New Testament addressed to all the churches in a geographic area. The rest of Paul’s letters were addressed to individuals or to Christian congregations in cities.

The simple answer to where these churches were located is that they were in Asia. But Asia, in the New Testament, never means the continent of Asia we know today. The word “Asia,” found 14 times in Acts and 6 times elsewhere in the New Testament, always means “Asia Minor,” a geographic area now occupied by Turkey, or the Roman Province of Asia in south-central Asia Minor.

So, the churches of Galatia were in Asia Minor, but where in Asia Minor? There are two opinions about this, one being that they were located in north-central Asia Minor, the other being that they were in south-central Asia Minor.

The majority opinion among Bible scholars today is that the churches of Galatia were located in the Roman province in south-central Asia Minor. There is no evidence in the accounts of the Apostle Paul’s travels in Acts, or in Paul’s letters, that he ever ministered in northern Galatia. (The history behind northern Galatia will be on the FYI sheet for lesson 5.)

During his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1 – 14:26; AD 48-49), Paul and Barnabas ministered in Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, all cities located in the Roman Province of Galatia in Asia Minor (Acts 13:14; 14:1, 6).

During his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36 – 18:21; AD 50-52), Paul, accompanied by Silas, ministered again in the churches of Asia Minor, including the Roman province of Galatia (Acts 15:36; 16:1).

To the average reader of the New Testament, where the churches of Galatia were located is not of critical importance, but for Christian teachers and preachers, this knowledge is critical to knowing the history of Paul’s life and ministry.

WORKSHEET

Another Gospel?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ‘gospel’ as ‘the message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation.’”

This is the meaning implied in today’s lesson title, ‘Only One Gospel.’ This message is found in the first four books of the New Testament, which are called “the Gospels” – the Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Another dictionary meaning of ‘gospel’ is ‘the message or teachings of a religious teacher.’ While we, as evangelical Christians, believe the message of Christ is the one true gospel, various religious teachers present other teachings as truth.

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, what three things did the Apostle Paul warn against?

- Another _____.
- A different _____.
- A different _____.

Writing for the Center for Faith & Culture, Steve Madsen described three false gospels thriving in America:

- The *prosperity gospel*, which teaches that all Christians who live by faith will be healthy, wealthy, and wise.
- The *self-help gospel*, which focuses on the audience. Self-help preaching sounds more like a motivational speech than the declaring of God’s Word.
- The *political gospel* causes some people to put their faith in a particular political party or system rather than in Christ.

Why are such gospels dangerous?