

Galatians 1:1–24

The Gospel of Grace: Its Origin, Defense, and Transforming Power

Introduction: When the Gospel Is at Stake

Galatia was not a single city, but a large region in what is now modern-day Turkey. During his missionary journeys, Paul established several churches throughout this territory. After he moved on, other teachers followed—men who claimed spiritual authority yet subtly altered the message Paul had preached. They did not deny Jesus outright. Instead, they added conditions to faith, placing believers back under legal obligations and religious performance.

Paul writes this letter because the gospel itself is under threat. The word *gospel* means good news. The message that God forgives sin and declares a person righteous through faith in Jesus Christ is truly good news. But the moment additional requirements are imposed—rules, regulations, or obedience to the law as a means of righteousness—the good news becomes a burden no one can bear. Paul writes to rescue the Galatians from this bondage and to reestablish them in the freedom of grace.

1. Apostolic Authority Comes From God, Not Man

Galatians 1:1–2

Paul begins by addressing a common tactic of false teachers: discrediting the messenger in order to undermine the message.

“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).”

Paul’s authority did not originate in human appointment, institutional approval, or apostolic succession. His calling came directly from Jesus Christ and God the Father. The resurrection is central to this claim. God validated Jesus by raising Him from the dead, and the risen Christ personally commissioned Paul.

Throughout history, people have asked the same question: *By what authority do you do these things?* Paul’s answer is simple and decisive—his authority rests in God alone. Human ordination may recognize a calling, but it cannot create one. What matters is not what people say about a minister, but what God has done in calling and sending him.

2. Grace and Peace Flow From Christ’s Sacrifice

Galatians 1:3–5

Paul offers a brief but profound greeting:

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Grace always comes before peace. Peace with God is the result of grace received, not effort exerted.

Paul immediately anchors grace in the cross:

“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. His death was voluntary, purposeful, and sufficient. This present world system is under the influence of evil, yet God’s will is to deliver His people from its grip. That deliverance is both present and future. Believers are no longer controlled by this world, and one day they will be completely removed from it. The resurrection declares that Jesus Christ is God, Savior, and Lord, and guarantees the success of this deliverance.

3. A Shocking Departure From Grace

Galatians 1:6–7

Paul moves quickly to the heart of the problem.

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.”

To abandon grace is not merely to change doctrine; it is to turn away from God Himself.

“Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

A message that adds legal requirements to grace is not another gospel—it is a corruption of the true one. The law reveals sin, but it cannot make anyone righteous. Legalism produces guilt, fear, and frustration, not life.

4. No Other Gospel, No Higher Authority

Galatians 1:8–10

Paul speaks with unmistakable clarity.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Truth is not determined by charisma, credentials, supernatural claims, or popularity. Even an angelic messenger does not have authority to alter the gospel.

Paul repeats the warning for emphasis:

“If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

Paul is not trying to please people.

“If I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Faithfulness to Christ often brings opposition, but compromise would mean abandoning the very calling God had given him.

5. The Gospel Revealed, Not Invented

Galatians 1:11–12

Paul now explains the source of his message.

“The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This gospel is not a human philosophy or theological system. It is divine revelation. God uniquely prepared Paul for this task. He had pursued the law with unmatched zeal, obeyed it outwardly, and still found no peace. Because he followed legalism to its furthest extent, he could testify with authority that it could not save.

Grace did not come to Paul as an excuse for failure, but as the answer to sincere obedience that still fell short.

6. From Persecutor to Proclaimer

Galatians 1:13–17

Paul reminds the Galatians of his former life.

“I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”

He advanced in Judaism beyond many of his peers, driven by zeal for tradition. Yet zeal without truth produced violence, not righteousness.

Then grace intervened.

“But when it pleased God... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.”

Paul did not immediately seek instruction or approval from others. Instead, he withdrew into Arabia, spending years alone with God. There, the Lord personally instructed him in the gospel of grace. What Paul preached was not borrowed from Jerusalem; it was revealed by Jesus Christ Himself.

7. Independent Calling, Unified Testimony

Galatians 1:18–24

Years later, Paul briefly met Peter and James, the Lord’s brother. His contact with the Jerusalem leadership was limited, and many believers knew him only by reputation.

“He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.”

Their response was not suspicion, but worship.

“And they glorified God in me.”

The ultimate evidence of genuine ministry is not personal acclaim, but a transformed life that brings glory to God.

Practical Application for Believers

- Guard the gospel of grace from subtle additions
- Remember that righteousness is received, not achieved
- Value God's approval above religious systems
- Walk in a loving relationship with God, not a legal one
- Test every teaching by Scripture, not tradition or personality

A Challenge for the Church

Legalism promises holiness but produces bondage. Grace produces obedience that flows from love. Having begun in the Spirit, do not attempt to mature by the flesh. Stand firm in the freedom Christ has provided.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to save sinners. He rose from the dead, declaring victory over sin and death. He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You cannot earn forgiveness. You cannot improve yourself into righteousness. You must receive salvation as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ.

Turn from sin. Trust in Him. Receive His grace—and you will be saved.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the gospel of grace. Keep us from trusting in our works, our traditions, or ourselves. Teach us to rest fully in what Your Son has accomplished. May our lives bring glory to You alone. Amen.