

# Galatians

Week 2 – Chapter 1



## What are the standout words when you read Chapter 1?

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### Chapter 1:

The word 'gospel' appears 13 times in 11 verses in the book but 6 of those times are in chapter 1 – Gospel is why Paul is writing!

But what is the gospel?

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***Good News About What?***

If Paul's statement in verses 2-5 constitutes the good news, then what is the news and why is it good?

1. The story of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, is a story leading up to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the climax.
2. This story was to climax in the renewal of the lost kingdom. Mt 21:42
3. Mt 22:29, Mt 26:54, Mk 12:24, Mk 14:49, Lk 24:27, Lk 24:32, Lk 24:45, Jn 5:39,
4. Jesus' death came about because of the rebellion humans chose to be in towards God.
5. He really died, the tomb was empty.
6. Our decision in regards to these events has significant consequences.
7. His resurrection was a historical event and he was raised bodily and visible.

This definition of the Good News must fit within Mark's opening statement in 1:14 "Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News."<sup>1</sup>

Tom Wright "What is the Gospel?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWoezpvIEz4>

Scot McKnight's "What is the Gospel?" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vgkfx1QMqA&index=2&list=PLF09FNd-pDxjaQ0\\_L0ZNGwibjcvNNYbqq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vgkfx1QMqA&index=2&list=PLF09FNd-pDxjaQ0_L0ZNGwibjcvNNYbqq)

Tom Wright puts it this way:

It (*The Gospel*) meant that the Scriptures had been fulfilled, that the kingdom of God had arrived, that the new age had broken in to the midst of the present age, and had dawned upon a surprised and unready world. It all happened "according to the Scriptures"; which, as I have argued elsewhere, does not mean that Paul could find a few biblical proof-texts for it if he hunted hard enough but

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<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), Mk 1:14.

that the entire biblical narrative had at last reached its climax, had come true in these astonishing events.<sup>2</sup>

## The Gospel under fire?

Paul is writing because some people are trying to preach another gospel to the Galatians.

### *An apostle – one sent with divine authority, v1*

What is an ‘apostle’?

In 1<sup>st</sup> century culture the apostle or agent become the very representations of the person who sent them, much as international ambassadors are official representatives of the national leader himself.

With this in mind, we can clearly see that Paul saw himself as *an official representative of Jesus Christ*. He knew he had been called by Jesus Christ and been appointed an official apostle of Jesus Christ, and he knew the implication of being called an apostle.<sup>3</sup>

1:16 and 2:7 reveal that Paul is the official representative of Jesus to the non-Jews, the Gentiles.

His greeting in verse 3 Paul speaks of ‘grace and peace’ a very Christian greeting.

### *Rescued from this evil age, v4:*

The word for rescue here is ἐξαιρέομαι (*exaireomai*). It is an aorist verb. It comes from a root word meaning to gouge out and is used when both Peter and Paul speak of the ‘rescue’ of Israel from Egypt. Even here Paul is inclusive. The rescue is of both Jews and Gentiles; “us”.

With Paul distress over the way the Galatian Christians were giving up on the gospel that he taught them, Paul’s comment on the present evil age maybe connected with his disgust at their actions.

### *A turning away, v6-8*

The change that the Galatians were tempted to take was not just a theological change but a relational one. They were turning from God.

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<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 142.

<sup>3</sup> Scot McKnight, *Galatians, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 48–49.

The move of the Galatians was not one of those views of legitimate Christian differences; it was total and devastating. Paul counters here any suggestion of simple Christian differences. When the gospel of grace in Christ is supplemented with the system of Moses, the result is not a perfected, fully mature gospel; rather, it is a gross perversion and a totally different message.<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Plumbline, v8-9***

The gospel that Paul preached and that the Galatians first accepted is the measure by which all other ‘gospels’ are to be measured.

### ***Not from Man, v10-12***

Paul spends significant time establishing his ‘credentials’ which may suggest that other people were endeavouring to undermine Paul’s influence within the churches in Galatia.

### ***A Change of Direction, v15-24***

Paul now describes his history with the Christian message.

Such was the state of Saul of Tarsus before his conversion. He was a bigot and a fanatic, whole-hearted in his devotion to Judaism and in his persecution of Christ and the church.

Now a man in that mental and emotional state is in no mood to change his mind, or even to have it changed for him by men. No conditioned reflex or other psychological device could convert a man in that state. Only God could reach him—and God did!<sup>5</sup>

After his commissioning Paul does not seek council from either another apostle nor from the mother church in Jerusalem but rather spend time ‘processing’ the experience he had on the road.

Paul thus argues, in context, that his gospel came from Jesus Christ directly and that it was derived neither from human teaching nor from the Jerusalem-Judean churches. His argument thus for the need to listen to him and not to be corrected by the Judaizers holds up.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 51.

<sup>5</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 31–32.

<sup>6</sup> Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 73.

Paul tells his life story in such a way as to not only establish his credentials but also his independence.

***Prescriptive or Descriptive?***

An interesting question to consider when reading about Paul's conversion is to ask is it prescriptive or descriptive? How this is answered will have a strong influence on how we value and perceive people's conversions.

Prescriptive – this is an example of how it should happen

Descriptive – this is just how it happened in this case.

What if there is no 'Damascus road experience?' how might we know the will of God for us?

Scot McKnight suggests the following;

I believe there are three dimensions to discerning God's will. (1) We need an inner conviction that such a pursuit is what God wants for us. We see this in Paul, who says that God revealed his Son "in me" (v. 16). (2) We need the wisdom of our church leaders and elders. (3) We need the feedback and evaluation of experts who observe us in the ministries to which we think we have been called.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 79.