



- **TWO ESSENTIAL PIECES OF THE GOSPEL PUZZLE**
- **PAUL PREACHED WHAT HE RECEIVED**

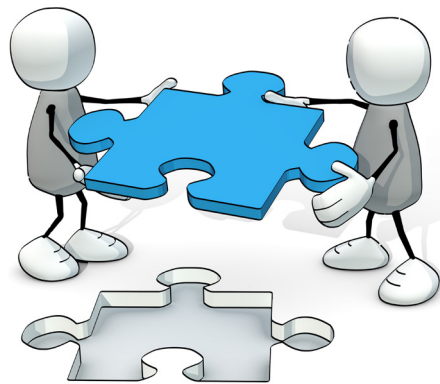
The Common Thread in Paul's Gospel: Preaching & Receiving

- (Galatians 1:8–9 ESV) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

The only gospel is the gospel that Paul preached. Paul identifies his gospel as the one that he preached—the one that they received. The spiritual dynamic involves preaching and receiving. Any gospel that is contrary to the one that Paul preached is a false gospel. Any gospel that is contrary to the one the Galatians had previously received is a false gospel.

- (Galatians 1:11–12 ESV) For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The gospel that Paul preached is not man's gospel. Here is our dynamic again. Paul received his gospel from Jesus Christ, not from any human. The conclusion that we must draw here is that humans have no part, so we need to reject any additions or modifications to the gospel as people trying to please people. The modifications to the gospel are often the result of a person's confusion or frustration or both.



The Distinguishing Trait of Paul's Gospel: Grace

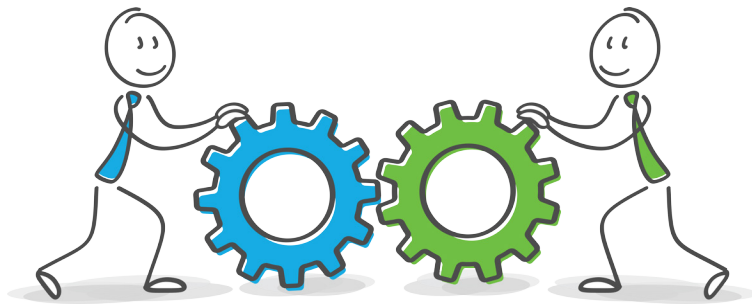
- (Galatians 1:15–16 ESV) But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

Saved by grace, called by grace—Paul was called by grace to preach Christ. The true watershed for the gospel is a biblical understanding and acceptance of grace. When you find grace, you find the gospel. When you find the gospel, you find grace.

- (Galatians 1:13–14 ESV) For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

Paul violently opposed the gospel, but when grace and truth knocked him flat on the road to Damascus, he had met his match. Grace and truth won the victory. God had his man. And Paul's former enemy became his savior.

- (Acts 9:1–6 ESV) But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”



The Essential Content of Paul's Gospel

- (1 Corinthians 15:1–4 ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.
- (1 Corinthians 1:21–24 ESV) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The content of Paul's gospel is extremely exclusive—restricted, limited, succinct. Paul preached what he had received from Jesus Christ. His top priority was to deliver to them only what he had received from Christ.

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received ...”

1. That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,
2. That he was buried,
3. That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

These three things make up the essential content of the gospel. He delivered what he had received from Christ. Three elements—he died, he was buried, he was raised on the third day—all in accordance with the Scriptures. This is not merely a good starting point, not something to build on. This is it—death, burial and resurrection. This is the gospel that Paul preached.

- (1 Corinthians 1:17 ESV) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Paul was called to preach the gospel, not to baptize. Paul makes no mention of baptism in the gospel that he preached and delivered as God's messenger. I think we must draw two strong conclusions from the above references: 1) To baptize people was not part of Paul's calling. 2) Baptism was not part of Paul's gospel.