

S T U D Y G U I D E



NO

PAUL'S LETTER

OTHER

TO THE GALATIANS

GOSPEL

D E R E K W . H . T H O M A S

S T U D Y G U I D E

No Other Gospel

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Derek W.H. Thomas



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Introduction

Christians must hold fast to the truth of the gospel. When false teachers were distorting the gospel among the churches in Galatia, the Apostle Paul wrote an impassioned letter in order to defend the message of God's grace in Christ. In *No Other Gospel*, Dr. Thomas walks us through the background, teaching, and importance of the letter to the Galatians. He encourages Christians to stand firm and rest in Christ for their salvation.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind you of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p>How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging with its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p>How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p>How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *No Other Gospel* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 16-Week Plan	Standard 14-Week Plan	Abbreviated 7-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1 & 2	1–4
2	1	2	3 & 4	5–7
3	2	3	5 & 6	8–10
4	3	4	7 & 8	11–14
5	4	5	9 & 10	
6	5	6	11 & 12	
7	6	7	13 & 14	
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10	11		
12	11	12		
13	12	13		
14	13	14		
15	14			
16	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

The Only Gospel

INTRODUCTION

The grace of God in the gospel is central to the Christian faith. No sooner had the message of the gospel taken root in the churches of Galatia than false teachers began to disseminate a false gospel among new believers. In response, the Apostle Paul zealously defended the truth of the gospel for the preservation of Christianity. In this lesson, Dr. Thomas introduces us to the background and key factors involved in the Galatian controversy, along with the Apostle Paul's zeal to defend the gospel.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Define the gospel in accordance with the definition that the Apostle Paul gives in Galatians 1
- Identify the essence of the doctrinal error that Paul is addressing in this letter
- Understand why false gospels are destructive and why we must oppose them

KEY IDEAS

- The gospel is the proclamation of what Jesus has done on the cross to atone for the sin of His people and deliver them from the present evil age.
- The gospel was in jeopardy in the churches of Galatia because of a false gospel that the Judaizers were propagating.
- The Judaizers taught that gentile converts needed to believe in Jesus and keep the ceremonial law of Moses in order to be justified before God.
- The Apostle Paul pronounced the strongest possible imprecation on the false teachers who were spreading a false gospel among believers.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- Why are you interested in undertaking this study of the book of Galatians?
- How familiar are you with the doctrine of justification? Can you define it? What impact does the doctrine of justification have on your daily relationship with God?

Scripture Reading

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 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.

—Galatians 1:6–8

- What does this passage reveal about the degree to which we should be committed to defending the purity of the gospel?

During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

Defining the Gospel

0:00–11:00

- What significant role did the book of Galatians play in the Reformation?
- What is the heart of the message of Galatians?
- How does Dr. Thomas define the gospel in this lesson?

Distorting the Gospel

11:00–18:03

- Who were the Judaizers? What was the essence of the false gospel that they were propagating among the members of the churches of Galatia?
- What important qualification did the Apostle Paul make after expressing surprise that many professing believers were turning to another gospel?

Discerning the Gospel

18:03–23:12

- What pronouncement did Paul make against those who preach a false gospel?
- What conclusion were the members of the church to come to about the nature of the Judaizers in order to stand against their false teaching?

After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- Which person of the Godhead initiated the plan of salvation?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss how they tend to view the role that God the Father plays in the work of redemption. Consider asking questions such as these: Why do you believe that we have a tendency to think about the Son as the One who makes the Father willing to be gracious to us? How does a right understanding of the Father's role in initiating the plan of salvation magnify the grace of the gospel?

- Why is the insistence that one has to observe the Jewish law in order to be right with God destructive of the true gospel?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss the various ways that we may subtly fall into the trap of adding something to the finished work of Christ for a right standing with God. Consider questions such as this: Do you ever think or act as though your standing with God were based on something other than or in addition to Christ?

- How can believers be zealous to maintain the truth of the gospel?

If you are in a group, have each member discuss the importance of preaching the gospel to himself or herself. Consider asking questions such as these: How often do you purposefully preach the gospel to yourself? What practical benefit is there to preaching the gospel to yourself?

PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for revealing the truth of the gospel of God's grace in Christ to you.
- Confess the ways in which you have acted as though your acceptance with God were based on your attempts to keep His law.
- Thank God for the perfect work of Jesus Christ in atoning for your sins and providing you with a perfect righteousness.
- Ask God to help you see your continual need for the gospel.

REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. Which theologian wrote a commentary on Galatians that fueled the Reformation?
 - a. John Calvin
 - b. John Bunyan
 - c. Martin Luther
 - d. Martin Bucer
2. What problem does the gospel primarily deal with?
 - a. Our unhappiness
 - b. Our discontentment
 - c. Our sense of acceptance
 - d. Our sin
3. To what does the phrase "the present evil age" refer?
 - a. The first-century world under Roman rule
 - b. This fallen world in contrast with the world to come
 - c. The Judaizing culture in Jerusalem
 - d. The twenty-first-century world
4. What did the Judaizers say that gentile converts needed to do to be justified?
 - a. Observe the moral law of Moses
 - b. Observe the ceremonial law of Moses
 - c. Observe the civil law of Moses
 - d. Observe the entire Mosaic law

5. What phrase did Dr. Thomas use to summarize the Judaizers' false gospel?
 - a. "A matter of second principles"
 - b. "A damnable plus"
 - c. "The circumcision party"
 - d. "Moralistic therapeutic deism"
6. What does the word *anathematize* mean?
 - a. "To accurse"
 - b. "To publicly denounce"
 - c. "To debate"
 - d. "To reconcile"

Answer Key—The Only Gospel

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- What does this passage reveal about the degree to which we should be committed to defending the purity of the gospel?

The surprise expressed by the Apostle gives us a sense of the degree to which we should be concerned about the purity of the gospel. Paul uses the strongest possible language in order to defend the gospel in the letter to the Galatians. He writes this letter to repudiate any attempt to substitute the true gospel with a false gospel and calls the members of the church to be discerning whenever someone comes to them with a substitute for the gospel that they had received from him.

During the Video

Defining the Gospel

- What significant role did the book of Galatians play in the Reformation?

Paul's letter to the Galatians played a significant role in the Reformation because Martin Luther wrote a highly significant commentary on it. Luther's commentary helped set the Reformation on the trajectory of defending the doctrine of justification against the Roman Catholic perversion of it.

- What is the heart of the message of Galatians?

At the heart of the message of Galatians is the question, What is the gospel? Justification by faith alone in Christ alone apart from the works of the law is the essence of the gospel. Paul's zeal reflected his commitment to the defense of the core gospel message.

- How does Dr. Thomas define the gospel in this lesson?

In this lesson, Dr. Thomas defined the gospel as "a message of grace." It is the message of "the giving of Jesus for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age, and all this is part of the sovereign will of our heavenly Father; it's a message of grace." Since sin is our great problem, the gospel is the message about how God has dealt with our sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Distorting the Gospel

- Who were the Judaizers? What was the essence of the false gospel that they were propagating among the members of the church of Galatia?

The Judaizers were teaching the members of the churches in Galatia that they needed to trust in Christ and keep the law of Moses in order to be justified before God. They were concerned about the place of the gentiles in the church. They insisted that in order to be real Christians, gentiles needed to observe the Jewish ceremonial laws. These false teachers were concerned that gentile converts weren't circumcised, didn't observe Jewish food laws, and didn't observe the ceremonial calendar, such as the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. These were the ceremonial boundary markers that set Jews apart from gentiles. The Judaizers were seeking to impose these Old Testament provisional laws on the gentiles.

- What important qualification did the Apostle Paul make after expressing surprise that many professing believers were turning to another gospel?

Immediately after expressing his shock that many in the church were turning away from the true gospel to another gospel, Paul explained that there is not actually another gospel. There is only one true gospel. There are not multiple gospels. The true gospel saves; all alternative messages lead to condemnation. There can be no substitute for the one message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Discerning the Gospel

- What pronouncement did Paul make against those who preach a false gospel?

The Apostle used the strongest possible language to denounce the false gospel that the Judaizers were propagating. He said that if anyone is preaching another gospel, he should be “accursed” (Gal. 1:8–9). The meaning of the word “accursed” here is “anathematized”—which means “driven away from the grace and presence of God.” Paul included even the Apostles and angels from heaven among those regarding whom the members of the church were to exercise discernment.

- What conclusion were the members of the church to come to about the nature of the Judaizers in order to stand against their false teaching?

The members of the church in Galatia were to recognize that the Judaizers were wolves in sheep's clothing. As those who had embraced the true gospel, they were to view the Judaizers for what they were in reality—wolves. Paul was calling believers to acknowledge that these wolves were in the church and in fellowship with them.

After the Video

- Which person of the Godhead initiated the plan of salvation?

In the lesson, Dr. Thomas made the important point that the Father takes the initiative in the plan of salvation. As the Apostle John explains in John 3:16, it is

God the Father who gave His only begotten Son. The Son of God did not make a reluctant Father willing to be gracious to us. We often mistakenly think that God the Father will have mercy on us because of Christ, when in reality the mercy and love of the Father are demonstrated in His giving His Son for us.

- Why is the insistence that one has to observe the Jewish law in order to be right with God destructive of the true gospel?

Adding anything to the finished work of Christ undermines the truth that salvation is through Christ alone. Insisting that the gospel is Jesus plus anything is, in the words of Dr. Thomas, “a damnable plus for Paul.” It is no longer good news if we add anything to Jesus for our justification. The gospel that Paul preached is the same as the message of the solas of the Reformation. It is a message of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone apart from works of the law.

- How can believers be zealous to maintain the truth of the gospel?

We first have to know the true gospel. Once we have come to know and believe the gospel, we have to preach the message of the gospel to ourselves every day. We can never meditate on the gospel too much. Every morning, we should call to mind the message of the gospel.

REVIEW QUIZ

Lesson 1

1. **C.**

Martin Luther wrote a commentary on Paul’s letter to the Galatians that became extremely influential in the Reformation. In this work, Luther sets out his own experience of coming to a biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This book continued to influence Reformed theologians after the Reformation too. For instance, in his autobiography, John Bunyan noted the significant role that Luther’s commentary had played in his own spiritual development.

2. **D.**

The gospel primarily deals with our problem of sin. The death and resurrection of Jesus does not, first and foremost, deal with our desire for happiness, contentment, or acceptance. Paul defines the central message of the gospel when he says that Jesus “gave himself for our sins” (Gal. 1:4). Jesus’ death was an atonement for sin—a substitutionary sacrifice to deal with our sin.

3. **B.**

When Paul speaks of Jesus’ delivering us from “the present evil age,” he has this fallen world—under the sway of the evil one—in view. He was drawing a contrast between this present fallen age and the world to come. The Apostle is anticipating the renewal of all things in the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness will dwell. Christ has died to secure for His people the future hope of the world to come.

4. B.

The Judaizers were wrongfully binding the consciences of gentile believers by insisting that they needed to keep the ceremonial law (i.e., food laws, ceremonial festivals, and circumcision) for their justification. These things had been given by God to Israel in the Old Testament and were no longer binding once Christ came and fulfilled the purpose of these ceremonial laws.

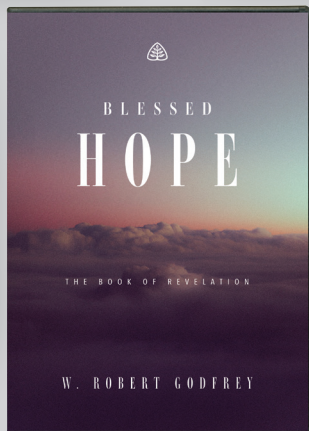
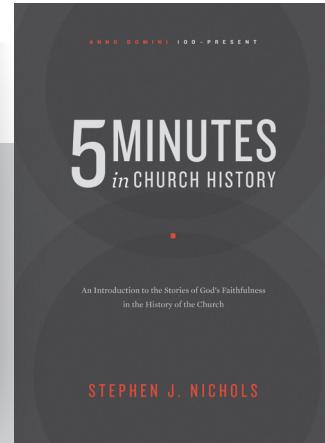
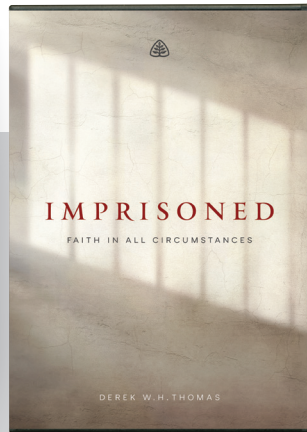
5. B.

Dr. Thomas used the phrase “a damnable plus” to explain the way in which the Apostle Paul viewed the essence of the false teaching of the Judaizers. They were telling the members of the church that they needed Jesus and also needed to observe circumcision, dietary laws, and the Jewish festival calendar in order to be justified. Anything we add to Jesus for a right standing before God is classified as “a damnable plus.” Adding anything to Jesus for our justification is a denial of solus Christus—Christ alone.

6. A.

The word anathematize means “to accurse.” It is the strongest possible denunciation that the Apostle Paul could have pronounced on those who propagate a false gospel. With this pronouncement, Paul was expressing his desire to see anyone who promotes a counterfeit gospel driven far away from the grace, love, and embrace of God.

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the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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