

Spirit-Filled Living Series

The Gospel Comes from Jesus (Gal. 1:11-12)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

The Gospel Comes from Jesus

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: The Questioning of Joseph Smith

1. As a young man living in the state of New York, Joseph Smith was praying to God and asking which Christian denomination (Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, etc.) he should join. This course of action came after reading James 1:5 (anyone lacking wisdom should pray and ask God for it).
2. Joseph went into the woods to pray. As Joseph prayed vocally for the first time in his life, two angelic beings appeared to him in the woods and gave him the following message recorded and described in *The Pearl of Great Price*:

¹⁸ My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

¹⁹ I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power therefore.”¹

²⁸ During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three—having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day,... (Pearl of Great Price 1:28)²

- B. According to Joseph Smith, all the doctrinal statements of the Christian churches were wrong and a misrepresentation of the true message of Jesus. This is the very same claim being made in the early church against the apostle Paul by the false teachers. How does Paul respond to this type of accusation? He draws the attention of the disciples back to the source of His message.
- C. In Galatians 1:11-12, we learn about the source of the true gospel of God and how we can determine which gospel is the true gospel from God. How should disciples think about and respond to alternative claims that communicate the message of God or Jesus such as those of the Mormons? Paul is going to teach us.

II. The Gospel is Grounded in Knowledge

- A. Paul started this letter by warning the disciples in the churches of Galatia to watch out for distortions of the gospel—the core central message of Christianity. Now, Paul is going to defend the divine source of the true gospel. After informing the disciples to watch out for distortions of

¹ *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), Kindle Location 71520

² *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), Kindle Location

the true message of Jesus, he encouraged the disciples to develop their understanding of Jesus and the Christian message in a specific way,

¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers *and sisters*, (Gal. 1:11)

- B. It is important to realize the way Paul begins this major point of emphasis in his letter to the Galatian churches: these disciples should develop their thinking and understanding of Christianity based on knowledge (“For I would have you know, brothers and sisters,” v. 11). Through this letter, Paul wants to cause these disciples to know the reality and facts connected to the message communicated to them.³ True and genuine knowledge is available regarding God and spiritual topics. Just as a person can know the existence of gravity, so, too, these disciples can know the truth about the gospel.
- C. If a person is misinformed or develops their views of God and their means of relating to God (spiritual practices) in ignorance or disinformation, they will not be interacting with God the way He wants. It is possible to believe in Jesus and yet live at odds with what Jesus teaches. If we build our understanding of Jesus on incorrect information instead of knowledge, we will get our lifestyle and our spiritual habits wrong. Paul says the proper way to develop a healthy and true relationship with Jesus is to have knowledge. Our views of God and our spiritual beliefs must be grounded in facts and truth. We must pursue Jesus in knowledge.
- D. There is a quote going around by Hollywood celebrity and actress Jennifer Aniston. She is most well known for her character in the hit TV show *Friends*. While on the Armchair Expert with Dax Shepard podcast, she makes several claims regarding religion. Here is what she said about religion:
- ...religions they all had the judgments who you were with or how and it just felt like if religion is something that divides people based on absolutely nothing factual about the human being in their heart...critical thinking, free thinking is doesn't isn't sort of allowed or it's condemned or told put fear of God that you're going to go to hell for something.⁴
- E. While the perspective of Aniston is very common and lots of people think along the same lines, this is obviously contrary to Biblical Christianity. Throughout the Bible, critical thinking is used to support the existence of God and the message of the Bible. That message provides evidence and reasons to think it is true. This will become very evident later.
- F. Too many people believe the lie that there is no knowledge in religion—only personal preference or experience. Religious studies programs are treated very differently than the hard sciences. Biology studies something real, while philosophy of religion studies people's ideas about God. One is fact, the other is fiction. This lie has led many people to be dismissive about the most impactful topic of human thought: God. Theology, the science of the study of God, is just as real as biology. One is physical, the other One is not. But they both have real existence that can be studied and known. Once you are aware of this pervasive lie, you will see it everywhere—especially in visual media such as TV and movies. Religion, whatever religion it is,

³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 1:11 “I would have you know”

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpgMda_4JDI

will be pictured as subjective wishful thinking contrary to science and facts. You won't have to go very far to encounter this lie from the mouth of Satan.

- G. As we learn from the Bible, we are learning about reality. God is real. The message of the Bible presents God as He is. The gospels accurately portray Jesus as He presented Himself in history. The events in the life of Jesus happened as described, and Jesus taught the way the gospel writers say He did. If we want to know how to relate to God and learn what God wants from us, the word of God gives us the knowledge we need. The message of Christianity is not some made up fairytale; it communicates the factual account of God.
- H. An important question must be asked: Is your view and approach to Christianity and religion in general compatible with what Paul says? Do you think Paul is wrong about religion? Does the Bible and Christianity deal with anything real? Or is Christianity simply an intellectual system that can be adopted if it helps us cope with life? The answers we give to these questions are deeply influential in the way we live our lives.
- I. All of us have a choice to make. We will either believe Jennifer Aniston and those who think like her, or we will believe the apostle Paul and Jesus. The Bible and Christianity will either deal with what is real and facts are relevant, or they only deal with fiction and facts are completely irrelevant. Who do you think is more credible?

III. The Gospel is Not a Human Invention

- A. One of the main points of this letter is to help the disciples in Galatia understand the true message of God—called the gospel—and know the type of lifestyle that naturally flows from accepting this message. If these disciples are going to be committed to the gospel and follow it wholeheartedly so their life is shaped by it, these disciples need to be convinced about the trustworthiness of the source of this message.
- B. Paul spends considerable time and space in this letter convincing these disciples of the following truth:
 - ¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers *and sisters*, that the gospel which was preached by me is not of human invention. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:11-12)
- C. Paul is setting the record straight about how he got the gospel message he preached to the churches. The main point being made is that the true gospel is not a human message. Paul didn't get his message from other people—not even the other apostles. The source of Paul's message isn't humanity or human thought ("the gospel which was preached by me is not of human invention", v. 11). The true gospel does not come from any human origin contrary to the supernatural.⁵ The message of Christianity does not come from human thoughts or ideas. The source of the gospel is God's thoughts and words spoken by Jesus to Paul.
- D. Paul further explains what He means in the next two statements. Paul did not first hear the gospel through a human messenger such as the apostles ("For I neither received it from man", v. 12). Paul did not hear his message from any human messenger. He didn't piece his message together based on other human teachings. Paul was not disciplined or taught by anyone about

⁵ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 1:11 "human invention"

the message He taught (“nor was I taught it”, v. 12). He wasn’t taught it during his extensive education within Judaism, and he wasn’t instructed in the gospel by those who were apostles before him. The only person who taught and disciplined Paul in his message was Jesus.

- E. Paul is using the same logical argument that Jesus used when determining the source of a message or spiritual activity. The gospel message communicated by Paul either came from God or it came from humanity (“from man...a revelation of Jesus Christ”, v. 12). In its reduced form, spiritual information or activities either come from God or from people. This is the exact same logic and form of argument Jesus used about John the Baptist:
- ²⁴ But Jesus responded and said to them, “I will also ask you one question, which, if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John was from what *source*: from heaven or from men?” And they *began* considering *the implications* among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’” (Mt. 21:24-25)
- F. The ultimate source of a message, messenger, or spiritual activity is either God or not God. Either people say things about God from themselves, or they say things about God that God Himself has told them to say. Either God told people to do a particular act of devotion, or He did not and someone is only claiming God said to do it. Both Paul and Jesus use the same logic to emphasize the divine authority of God-ordained messages and practices (“The baptism of John was from what source: from heaven or from men”, v. 25).
- G. Those who are disturbing the churches in Galatia and teaching a distorted gospel accuse Paul of making up his own message.⁶ They are claiming that the message of Paul is not from God but is only a human message. It may be that these false teachers were accusing Paul of corrupting the message of the other apostles by misapplying it. It seems likely that these false teachers were accusing Paul of corrupting the gospel by promoting an inappropriate application of the true message, since both sides agree that a person needed to believe in Jesus to be saved.
- H. When we hear a message from the word of God that we don’t like, it is easy to dismiss it as a human message and think of it as a faulty human interpretation of God’s word. These false teachers are being dismissive of the gospel communicated by Paul and are claiming it is only a human message without any divine authority. When someone disagrees with a teacher or preacher, the first step in rejecting what is heard is usually to bring their message down to a human level. A person shouldn’t disagree with God, but there is nothing wrong with disagreeing with other people. God’s divine message must be perceived as a human message if it is to be disagreed with. This is why Paul’s credibility and authority is being challenged. Have you ever claimed God’s word is merely a human message to disregard it?
- I. There are times when the word of God is difficult to understand and genuine disciples of Jesus may interpret the word of God differently. Legitimate differences in interpretation are not what we are referring to here. We are talking about instances where people dismiss the word of God in illegitimate ways simply because they do not like what they hear. They aren’t trying to understand the word of God, or convinced another interpretation is more plausible than what

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, [Galatians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 96.

they have heard. Instead, what is happening is a dismissal of the word of God with a hand wave simply because a person doesn't like or want to do what is being communicated.

- J. There is a true interpretation of every text of Scripture that has divine authority:
 - ²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation,* ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
- K. The word of God has one true intended interpretation and meaning ("for no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation", v. 20). When we get the interpretation of the word of God correct, it has divine authority, and through our proper interpretation God is speaking. The words on the pages of Scripture can't be dismissed as merely a human interpretation. There is a divine interpretation attached to every passage of Scripture that carries divine authority. Disobeying the word of God is disobeying God.
- L. Our goal when it comes to the word of God is to determine the best explanation for the words on the page of Scripture. The word of God, like all other forms of communication, have an intended meaning being communicated by the speaker (or writer). Not every understanding of what is being communicated is of equal value or quality. Words can be twisted, misunderstandings happen, ambiguity may be present, and people can hear through filters that distort what is being communicated. There is a limit to the possible interpretations of what is being communicated based on the language, vocabulary, grammar, context, and flow of thought of the person doing the communicating. Our personal preferences should not determine how we view the word of God. We may like what God says in some places, and we may dislike what He says in other places.
- M. Like the words and messages of other people, we can't stretch the meaning of their message beyond what is appropriate for what has been communicated. We can't make the word of God say whatever we want. Some messages found in the word of God are so crystal clear that they can't be taken any other way. Other messages from the word of God might have one or two possible ways of understanding them. The most ambiguous and unclear statements in the word of God may have a handful of different ways to interpret them, but even here, there are limits. It is simply not true that we can make the Bible say anything we want.
- N. If we think someone else's interpretation of the word of God is incorrect, we can't just dismiss it, we must demonstrate how our understanding is a better explanation of the passage in question. We need to provide a better explanation for the thoughts and words being communicated in the word of God. Simply dismissing what others say by waving our hand because we don't like a particular interpretation is not sufficient to determine the real intended meaning of the text. All interpretations of Scripture are not equal. We must study to rightly handle the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). Understanding the proper interpretation of Scripture is not a subjective exercise.

IV. The Gospel Comes from Jesus

- A. If the true gospel didn't come from humans, where did it come from? Paul answers the question from his experience. The source of where Paul received his gospel is the same source as the other apostles, but the way Paul received his gospel was a little different than the others.

All the apostles communicated the same truth: the gospel message they preach and communicate comes directly from Jesus. It is not their message; it is the divine message of Jesus. The apostles are repeating what they heard from Jesus.

B. Here is the source of Paul’s message:

¹² but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:12)

C. Paul encountered Jesus, and this gospel was learned directly from Jesus (“I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ”, v. 12). This message was given to Paul by Jesus either at his conversion (Ac. 9:1-14, 22:1-16, 26:9-20) or later when Jesus appeared to him while Paul spent time in the Arabian wilderness (Gal. 1:15-17). Right after Paul’s conversion, He did some early preaching (Ac. 9:19-22) before retreating into the wilderness in which he was personally discipled and taught by Jesus (Gal. 1:15-17, between Ac. 9:19, 9:21-22, or 9:22-23). Luke, writing in Acts, is silent about Paul’s time in Arabia.⁷ Following this time of instruction by Jesus, Paul returned and was eventually sent on His missionary journeys from Antioch (Ac. 13:1-4). Although, it is difficult to line up the autobiographical events in Galatians with the events of Paul’s life described in Acts.⁸ Paul was converted on the way to Damascus, stayed a few days, then left and went to Arabia, followed by a return to Damascus before moving on.⁹

D. The important truth of his gospel and ministry being given by Jesus was set out by Paul at the very beginning of this letter, and he re-emphasizes this significant point:

¹ Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), (Gal. 1:1)

E. Not only did Paul repeat himself for emphasis, but he also spent a significant amount of space defending this claim. To support the fact that Paul received his gospel directly from Jesus, he sets the record straight by explaining the order of events in his early Christian life immediately following his first experience with Jesus—called his conversion (Gal. 1:13-2:14). Paul didn’t get his gospel from the other apostles such as Peter, John, or James. At the same time, these apostles did confirm the accuracy of Paul’s gospel and affirmed his ministry.

F. The truth Paul communicates is that his gospel is divine in origin.¹⁰ Paul calls the source of his message a revelation (“through a revelation”, v. 12). A revelation is a direct communication of knowledge through divine or supernatural agency.¹¹ God Himself or a supernatural messenger (an angel) are the means through which revelation occurs. Prophets and apostles were typically the recipients of divine revelation so they could communicate the word of God to others. This divine message was given to Paul through Jesus appearing to him. It is inaccurate to claim Paul was merely communicating a human message. While these false teachers are trying to remove the authority of Paul’s message so that it can be dismissed as a human message, this

⁷ Robert Picirilli, [Paul the Apostle](#), (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1986).

⁸ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [The Epistle to the Galatians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 10–28.

⁹ Paul also took two trips to Jerusalem by the time he wrote Galatians. The first Jerusalem visit is pretty straightforward (Galatians 1:18-20, Ac. 9:26-29). The second Jerusalem visit is more challenging to determine (Gal. 2:1-10, Ac. 11:27-30, 12:25).

¹⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, [Galatians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 96.

¹¹ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 1:12 “revelation”

explanation of Paul's message does not align with the truth of what happened. Paul's gospel of grace is the word of God.

- G. The reliability of Paul's claim can also be supported by the testimony of others. While Paul claimed repeatedly that he had a direct encounter with Jesus and through these direct encounters he received his gospel, others testified to the same reality. In support of Paul's claim, we can take note of those who said Jesus appeared to Paul.
- H. The first person who confirms Paul's claim about having a direct experience of Jesus is Luke in his writing of Acts. While Luke recorded several instances of Paul's conversion experience, here is how the first account reads:
- ³ Now as he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and 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 get up and enter the city, and it will be told to you what you must do." ⁷ The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. (Ac. 9:3-7)
- I. A second person who affirms the fact that Jesus appeared to Paul is Ananias, the one who was sent to Paul right after his conversion to restore his eyesight:
- ¹⁴ And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear a message from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard. (Ac. 22:14-15)
- J. Far more importantly, Jesus Himself said He appeared to Paul and on multiple occasions:
- ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet; for this *purpose* I have appeared to you, to appoint you as a servant and a witness not only to the things in which you have seen Me, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. (Ac. 26:16-18)
- K. Just as significant as the testimony of Jesus is the confirmation of the Holy Spirit indirectly through the miracles He performed through Paul:
- ¹² The distinguishing marks of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs, wonders, and miracles. (2 Cor. 12:12)¹²
- L. Paul is not the only person to claim Jesus appeared to Him. We have good reason to believe Paul when he says this happened, because others also made the same claim. Jesus Himself said that He appeared to Paul and taught him. Paul's divine commission as an apostle who communicates the word of God is also confirmed through the Holy Spirit's miraculous involvement in Paul's ministry. All this points to the truthfulness of what Paul is claiming about his message being a divine message.

¹² See Galatians 3:5. There were miracles experienced by the Galatians at the instigation of the Holy Spirit confirming the divine message they had received from Paul.

- M. Even if we accept Paul’s gospel as the word of God, we are still left with a question. Paul says he didn’t receive his gospel from other people (it is not a human message), yet he also said that he did receive his message from others (1 Cor. 11:23-26, 15:3-11). What are we to make of this? Is Paul contradicting himself by saying he did and did not receive his message from other people? The simple and short answer is that Paul received his message directly from Jesus and that divine message aligned with the other apostles and the early traditions of the church taught. Paul is using the term “receive” with different meanings in each of these cases. Here in Galatians, he is talking about the source of his message being divine revelation, while in the other cases, he is talking about the doctrinal content accepted by the apostles and early church.¹³ Paul makes both points clear in Galatians. After Paul had received his message from Jesus, he went and tested his message with the other apostles to make sure he had his message correct (Gal. 2:1-2). Paul made sure he had the right message by comparing what he was teaching with those who had been trained directly by Jesus when Jesus was on earth.¹⁴
- N. As followers of Jesus, we can be confident and assured that the gospel message communicated by the apostle Paul (including all his letters which make up a large part of the New Testament) is the divine message of God. Paul is a true apostle, approved and appointed by Jesus, to speak and act as a witness and representative of Jesus. While Paul’s apostleship is unique and different from all the others, it is still valid. We can know the writings of Paul are Scripture and carry divine authority (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
- O. What Paul says here corrects what even some modern scholars do when they claim Paul and his message is contrary to the other apostles (and the gospels). Paul is communicating the same message as the rest of the apostles. Paul’s writings do not contradict the rest of the New Testament. Most famously, the gospel of Romans is not incompatible with the gospel found in James.

V. Conclusion

- A. A true and accurate understanding of God comes from knowledge learned from the word of God. The Christian life is grounded in and grows from knowledge. This knowledge of God does not come from a human perspective or source. Knowledge of God comes from a supernatural source.
- B. The message of the apostle Paul, which agrees with the message of the other apostles, came directly from the supernatural source of Jesus. All the writings of Paul found in the New Testament are the word of God that carry with them divine authority.

¹³ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 24.

¹⁴ This confirmation was never true of Joseph Smith, and his message is clearly contradictory to what the original apostles who lived with Jesus taught.