

# no other gospel

31 Reasons  
from Galatians  
Why Justification  
by Faith Alone Is  
the Only Gospel

josh moody

*No Other Gospel: 31 Reasons from Galatians Why Justification  
by Faith Alone Is the Only Gospel*

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# Introduction

This book is born of a passionate conviction that large swathes of the church have grown used to a gospel that is no gospel. This was the conviction that fueled Paul's famous letter to the Galatians, and the more I have studied it, the more I have felt its relevance as never before. Yes, commentaries on this book outweigh its contents at a rate far exceeding a book per word in the original manuscript. But this is not another commentary; it is the text preached first in the context of a congregation and then in the wider context of the community, now the readers of these written words.

I make no bones about them originating as sermons. Lloyd-Jones felt that his sermons should be printed fairly close to the original as preached. I feel somewhat the same. Certainly there are references to time and specifics of place that need to be removed, as well as peculiarities of the spoken word that suit ill with the written. But like much of our Christian literature, this began as a dynamic oral tradition, and it is passed on now with that same gleam of ardor.

What do I mean by the many gospels that are not gospels of which the contemporary church has grown accustomed? I mean any gospel that is essentially human in its taste. That seems to be the defining issue for Paul. When Paul distinguishes his gospel as "not by man," he is far from merely making an intellectual argument that he is an apostle of Christ and got his doctrine by revelation. That is part of his case—at an intellectual level it is fundamental to it—but he is saying something far more profound than that. Why does he begin this way with this epistle designed to be read by all the church down through history? He does so because that is always the first issue and the root cause of our going astray. We tend toward human gospels. Their taste suits our palate. We prefer things that are perhaps masked in novel formulations or interesting speculations but which at the bottom line are basically human. They have the similar feel to all other gospels that are really no gospel at all.

That feel is one of humanness. It is one of looking to please other humans. The gospel of God is by its nature not designed to please humans. It is designed to please God. That is one sign of a false gospel, that somehow it tastes as we should have expected. If the gospel that we are used to is something that we could have made up, then we can be sure that it is not a gospel from God. The gospel requires revelation, and it requires divine illumination for us to see. Every other aspect of gospels that are really not gospels stems from this one basic error. That is why Paul starts there. It is the drumbeat throughout the letter. He is most passionate—throughout this passionate letter!—at any point that seems to diverge from the “God-ness” of the gospel.

So there is that. But then there are many gospels that are God-centered which are not Christian. That of course is obvious to any student of world religions, but it seems necessary to state, for Christians can sometimes feel that they have cornered the market on divine properties. There are other monotheisms. But no, Paul does not stop there, and at the very heart of the letter he identifies the central issue: the cross of Jesus Christ.

All true proclamations of the gospel center on Christ. They do not *start* there. Christ is the answer to a deep, profound, human problem. Some gospels seem to get God right but miss entirely the cross. Well, actually that too is a human-pleasing gospel, not a gospel of true divine origin. God has designed things to exalt his Son at the cross, and any gospel that does not center on the cross of Jesus Christ is not truly God-centered in a real sense. It is a distortion of God-centeredness. Paul makes all of this very clear at the end of Galatians 2. We are crucified with Christ. Any gospel that has no room for that stark message is no gospel that Paul (or more importantly the Bible or God himself) would recognize.

This brings us to one of the great oddities about Galatians, rarely mentioned if at all, which is its comparative silence on the matter of sin for long portions of its discussion. Of course, Paul here, as in Romans, understands the essential need of humanity in terms of our “sin,” saying as much in verse 4 of the first chapter! Much of chapter 5 is also about living morally. Still, in the book of Romans (the best commentary on Galatians) sin is first declared as the universal sickness of humanity

before the solution of Christ crucified is presented. But not here. We have an extended argument about Paul's credentials as someone who did get this gospel by revelation, and a display of how Paul was right in what had become a well-known disagreement with Peter, and then these statements that center upon the cross. Why no extended theology of sin?

The answer of course is that Paul is dealing with people who were beyond thinking of themselves as sinners. At least in Romans the separation of man from God was a live problem to which Paul presented the solution, but in Galatians they had moved beyond all that. Nothing displays the profound seriousness of the problem in which the Galatians found themselves more than that they seemed to have made themselves immune to the category of being sinners in need of salvation. I suspect that nothing shows the great sickness of much of our Western society more than the same thing.

These were Christians in danger of losing their authentic orthodox Christianity, but at this point still Christians nonetheless. And for our churches today nothing, I think, shows the seriousness of the situation we are in more than that we have birthed a generation that is not used to feeling humbled by the grandeur of the holiness of God and therefore not living in the profound joy of thankfulness to Christ. I speak to myself as much as to anyone. Perhaps the Western church is, above all, a complaining church. We harp on about our difficulties and problems, but rarely do we play the harp in praise to Christ our redeemer in consciousness of our own innate sinfulness.

What do we do with such a situation? We do what Paul did. Within our own context, we claim the divinity of our gospel message, we point to the necessity of the centrality of Christ, and we show how what we have been told is superior is really far inferior, and it is a perversion of the Bible that we hold dear. This gospel that is no gospel is far from breaking down barriers; it raises them up again. It is what caused Peter to separate himself from fellow believers. Why? Because it is human. And humans are tribal. And tribalism is divisive, for it's a play on endless shifting ground about who is superior.

We must grasp the universal nature of what Paul is talking about. Perhaps that is the key at a technical level for understanding Galatians today. The book of Galatians is really neither about first-century

Judaism nor about sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism. It is actually about our common human tendency to think we no longer need Jesus. We have moved on from the cross. We now have a bigger, better gospel—a gospel that is no gospel—that will divide us from God’s people, and that is the common human tendency to self-righteousness.

Yes, sin is not expounded at great length in this letter but self-righteousness instead (even worse). That was the sin of the Galatians, and I suspect it is our sin too. So, as we survey all of Paul’s argument about the right interpretation of the Old Testament in the middle part of the letter, we come to his other great theme, which is the work of the Spirit. Arguments innumerable abound about justification, as if for Paul this was “merely” a dry doctrine, a legal doctrine, a doctrine about position and status and declaration. In reality, it was for Paul a spiritual doctrine. It was connected to regeneration. So, far from being a confusing addition, as so many have thought, Paul’s great treatise on the work of the Spirit in the Christian’s life is inextricably connected to his teaching on justification.

Those three subjects form the heart of what is, and therefore what is not, the gospel. It is God-ness—in origin, subject, feel, taste, and honor—all to him and from him. It is cross-centered understanding of justification by faith alone. The cross is at the heart of all this, and then the work of the Holy Spirit, who breathes through the book and is inextricably connected with the one true gospel.

I suppose we should not be surprised that Paul’s theology of the gospel is Trinitarian. Nor should we be surprised that his announced intention, the gospel of grace and peace, is what he provides through the atoning work of Christ on the cross—peace with God, according to the grace of Christ.

# The God-ness of the Gospel

*Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia.*

GALATIANS 1:1–2

In the heart of everyone lies an atheist. Not perhaps the kind that thinks in a strict literal sense that God does not exist. There may be some in church like that. When Christians gather, we are never to assume that all believe; rather, we are to hope that those who do not believe come so that we might present the truth of God in word and deed.

There may be some reading these words who struggle with the reality of God when difficult things are happening and times are tough. But the kind of atheist I am talking about, which lies in my heart and in yours, is the kind which believes not that God does not exist but that God is not able. We are practical, not theoretical, atheists. We come to church. We are busy in God's work. We serve. We talk the talk; we even walk the walk. But we tend to act as if God and the gospel are not sufficient to achieve what needs to be achieved. We are people who have the gospel but for whom the gospel has become a starting point rather than the reference point for all our efforts. We are religious; we may call ourselves evangelicals, but the *evangel* (that is, the gospel) does not impregnate every aspect of our theology nor every part of our lives.

In short, we are tempted to believe that what happens in church on Sunday morning is a human event. That is why Paul begins his letter with such a fierce denial—"not from men nor through man" (v. 1). As we notice that, we realize that straight away, unlike many of his letters, Paul seems to feel the need to begin by establishing his authority. Why does he do that? It is just one of the many puzzles that Galatians presents to the Bible student. But for all its complexity, and we will

gradually unravel some of those knots together, Galatians is a book of fire and ice. It reminds me of the story of the young man who was first being set aside for the ministry. He was asked whether he was zealous. He said that he was but that he was not the kind of person who set the Thames River on fire. The man interviewing him said, “I don’t want you to set the river on fire. What I want to know is, when I throw you in will there be steam?”

Despite all the complexities in which Galatians has been tied up throughout the years of human interpretation, it still sets up steam whenever it is read. It, of course, was the book that really kicked off the Reformation. Martin Luther called it the love of his life; it was “Katherina Von Bora,” his wife. He studied it repeatedly and found in it the release of the gospel to free him from his legalism. It has done that to many another since. It was John Wesley who, through the reading of Luther’s preface to the book of Galatians, found that “his heart was strangely warmed.”

In fact, I think we may take it as a rule that Galatians is one of those books of the Bible that the Devil loves to try to blunt. It is a sharp sword, and my suspicion is that today as never before it needs to be unleashed to our world and to our church, yet scholars know that there are many head-scratching moments that it produces and that people ponder over. Our task will not be to enjoy scratching our heads together over its difficult bits but to clarify and then unleash. Like any part of the Bible, it does not need defending. “Defend the Bible,” Spurgeon said once, when asked about his approach to answering difficult questions of Scripture, “I’d sooner defend a lion.” As no other, this is a lion, and together we simply need to study it carefully so that we can clearly listen to it roar.

In this chapter we are dealing with just two verses, so we don’t need to tackle all the questions at once; these two verses will be quite enough for now. What I want us to learn here is that it is absolutely essential that we have our religious authority in the right place.

I’m a parent of three young children. Before I was a parent, there were certain things I thought I would never do as a parent. One was lick the corner of a handkerchief and wipe the face of my child. I remember seeing someone do that and thinking, *I’ll never do that*. Another was resorting to the cop-out, “Because Daddy says so.” Why are we going to

do this, why that? “Because Daddy says so.” But there are times when that assertion of parental authority is not only necessary but essential. “Don’t cross the road. There’s a car coming. Stop!”

That’s what Paul is doing. *Not by man, but by God*. In fact, the whole first two chapters of this letter are really taken up with Paul’s asserting his authority as an apostle. He interweaves complex doctrine, especially at the end of chapter 2, a long story about how he became an apostle, and about when he confronted Peter, and it’s all saying, “Not by man but by God.” Then in chapters 3 and 4 he outlines in more detail the message of the gospel as against those who had agitated the Galatian Christians with their message of the necessity of law. The agitators were saying that Jesus was not enough; you also needed lots of rules. Paul denies it there and explains why that is nonsense theologically as well as experientially. Then in chapters 5 and 6 he gets very practical and explains how his gospel (God’s gospel) actually does what the agitators said the law could do. His gospel reconciles. His gospel produces moral fruit. His gospel has the power of the Spirit and frees people from the bondage of habits that self-destruct.

Paul is saying, “You’re asking why. I’ve heard you’re off on the wrong track. Okay, I’m going to explain, but you’ve got to get this first, partly *because the apostle says so*.” It’s a straightforward, bold authority claim.

I want you to understand from these first two verses, as we begin to get into Galatians together, that it’s very important that we have our religious authority in the right place. If we are crossing the road and about to get hit by a massive truck because we’re looking the wrong way, we need to have that voice say, “stop,” so he begins with this claim to his apostolic authority, “not.” What we need to learn at the outset is this: believe the message of God’s messenger. Paul gives us three reasons why we should do that.

## Believe God’s Messenger Because God Sent Him

First, *believe the message of God’s messenger because God sent him*. “Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father” (v. 1). This looks like a traditional ancient greeting, but, like all of Paul’s greetings, this is the summary of the mes-

sage of his letter. It's like an e-mail heading: From, To, RE. This is what this letter is about. There are three practical implications for us.

1) *If God can use Paul, he can use you.* There is a unique aspect to Paul's sending, which we will get to, but Paul's conversion is also constantly used in Scripture as a model for what God can do. He was Saul. He was the religious terrorist. He was converted. He became a church planter and preacher, an evangelist and missionary. We are practical atheists if we limit God's usefulness of us to our personality. God did not so greatly use Paul because he thought Paul had all the right credentials. It was not "Oh, Paul, he knows the Bible and has good connections; let's get him." No, it was the religious terrorist. How unlikely is that? God delights to take unlikely people and use them because then the focus is on God, not on the unlikely people.

I've heard Billy Graham preach live two or three times. I was never impressed with his rhetorical skills, but I was deeply impressed with the power of the Spirit. I've met powerful religious leaders, and then I've met the dear old lady with the faraway prayerful look in her eye. I know that "the friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him" (Ps. 25:14), and that the lady is moving heaven and earth for the Billy Grahams of the Lord. She will be at the front of the line to the throne of heaven. There are lots of talented people around church today, and I don't despise that. We used to joke when I pastored near Yale that we were probably the Baptist church with the highest average IQ in America, and at the church where I worked in Cambridge, one practically needed a PhD to run the overhead projector. Fine, God can use our talents. He's given them to us. But as soon as we think our talents are why God chose us, rather than that God delighted to use us, the chief of sinners, I suspect that God may begin looking for another weeping widow or broken man, for God raises up the humble, and pride comes before a fall. It is the Sauls that God makes Pauls. That is a statement of practical theism, not practical atheism.

2) *If Paul was an apostle, we are not.* There are two kinds of apostles in the New Testament. There are the apostles of the churches, those sent by the churches for various tasks, and then there are the apostles of Christ, those sent by Jesus himself. Of course, Paul is claiming here to be the latter sort of an apostle of Christ. But where does this word

*apostle* come from? Some have said that it was a Jewish term used of an official position. That is possible, but the evidence for it is later than this, and those positions were different in some ways from this anyway. Others have said the word was just taken from the Greek, but in Greek it was rarely used in this way; sometimes it was used of a naval expedition or of a boat. The answer is that the word comes as used by Christ, and he is picking up on the word from the Old Testament, all of which is fulfilled in him. So Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). He called them to himself and designated some apostles. That word *apostle* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament is used repeatedly of Moses and his sending by God and of Isaiah and his sending by God. “Here I am, send me. . . . Go, I am sending you.”

The apostles were God’s sent people, uniquely authorized, as were the prophets in the Old Testament, specifically following on Christ’s sending into the world by God the Father, carrying on that mission. This was a special sending, no longer in existence, that Paul had uniquely “as to one untimely born” (1 Cor. 15:8) through his Damascus road encounter with the risen Christ himself. Therefore, our authority must be, practically speaking, taken from Scripture, not from tradition or culture or what humans of any kind, dead or living, say. They can help, but they can never go toe-to-toe with Scripture, and when they do, the Bible must win. When preaching, I want people flicking through the pages, staring down at the Bible, believing the Word that comes through me, not just the human speech. When we plan, it is the Bible that must guide. Our worship must be Bible-centered in order to be God-centered.

3) *If Paul was not from man nor by man, we who minister God’s Word must at least be not from man if we are also necessarily by man.* Ministers of the gospel are called by churches. They are “by man” in that sense, but they are also to be from God ultimately, that sending which the church confirms. No one is to be in the pulpit—ordained as a missionary, church planter, pastor, elder, or otherwise set aside by God for Word ministry—unless he is in an ultimate sense put there by God, even though that calling must be confirmed by the church in a regular and proper fashion to keep the lunatics out, and because there are no apostles in Paul’s sense any more today.

No one in his right mind signs up for God's work for the fun of it. There are better ways to get beaten up. "Paul, you've got to go and do this, and let me show you how much you will suffer for my name."

"Moses, you want to go."

"Actually, no, I don't."

"Well, you've got to anyway."

"Isaiah, will you go?"

"Here I am, send me"

"Oh, and by the way, no one's going to listen."

"Jeremiah, you're on, but your ministry will have no impact, and the people will go into exile, and you'll be known as the weeping prophet."

"Thanks, God. *Sign me up.*"

First you'll be spit out, then you'll be beaten up. Some people will hate you. They'll twist your words. People like the Galatians, for whom you have given your heart and soul, will line up to get circumcised if you turn your back for five minutes. Sounds like fun. If God wants you, he'll get you, and you'll need this burden that you are there because God wants you there. Even Augustine was made a bishop against his initial desire. We should serve willingly but not willfully. God is real, and he gets his people where he wants them. That is practical theism.

## Believe God's Messenger Because God Raised Jesus from the Dead

Second, believe the message of God's messenger *because God raised Jesus from the dead*. "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, *who raised him* [that is, Jesus] *from the dead*" (v. 1). People wonder why Paul mentions the resurrection at this point. They think it's strange that it comes before the cross, which we find in verse 4. The resurrection is mentioned here because it's part of Paul's establishing his authority. God raised Jesus from the dead, and Paul received his commission as an apostle by seeing the risen Jesus on the Damascus road. So we may guess that the Galatian agitators—those who were in one way or another causing difficulty in the churches in Galatia—were saying that Paul's experience was just a mystical one, a personal conversion experience. Paul is going to show that he received it all from Jesus, not from man, as he goes on through-

out this first section of the letter. Right here at the beginning he includes that God raised Jesus from the dead. Paul is saying, “I did not have a personal mystical experience—I actually saw Jesus.”

Why does that matter for practical atheists like us? It matters because Jesus is alive. We don’t worship a dead hero; we worship a living Lord. Jesus rules the church, and he rules by his word. Prayer makes a difference. Private repentance is the bit of yeast that makes a difference to the whole batch of dough. So is the private sin. This is a spiritual reality. We are not playing at church. Heaven and hell stand on the brink, eternal decisions are being made in the secrets of all our hearts, and I want you to know that Jesus is alive. He has the power to rescue you. He breaks you that he might remake you. He has put you here reading for this very purpose, that your theft at work may stop, that your marriage may be healed, that your life may be turned around. The church is not a tomb for a dead Lord; it is a vehicle for a living Savior, vibrating with his Holy Spirit.

He is God. Notice how Paul just assumes Jesus’ divinity here. It’s not by men but by Jesus. Jesus is not just a man. He is God. He and God the Father are one. It’s important to notice the internal logic of Scripture, as John Stott is said to have called it. Jesus is alive. He is God. He is Lord. He knows the secrets of your heart. He knows your pain. He knows all. He is not distant and dead; he is present by his Spirit, and there is a unique moment now when Christ, as you receive him by faith, can come and do his renewing work in your heart.

It seems to me that the great difference between practical theism and practical atheism is the church of the living God. Jesus is alive, and we can’t keep that a secret. It is not okay to think, *When they get to know us, they’ll realize that Jesus is alive*. It has to be front and center in our worship, our smiles, our greetings, our interaction, our preaching—in everything we do, Jesus is alive. Church is not an evangelical golf club. It is the church of the living God, and we need to indicate that. We don’t want to give the impression that Jesus died and went to heaven in 1950. He’s still alive and doing things today. A church that decides it has “arrived” is a breath away from dying. Pride becomes a fall. We need practical theism, a resurrection theology, the power of the Spirit through the Word of God.

Christ's resurrection confirms and establishes Paul's authority and therefore the authority of the Bible. Christ's resurrection means that he is alive today and here by his Spirit, and his Word is a living word. It means that preaching is not merely lecturing. Preaching is teaching, but preaching is to be logic on fire, as it's been called. It is to have what I call a "prophetic edge." One time when Charles Spurgeon was preaching, he looked up into the gallery and said, "There is a man there with a pair of gloves in his pocket that are not his." It was true, and the man was converted. This is not weird enthusiasm; it is the working of Christ by his Spirit through his Word. Another time Spurgeon was sounding out the acoustics in a building and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The janitor was converted on the spot.

I don't know what sadnesses you carry with you, but God does. Jesus does. Not man, but Christ. He is risen. He is here for you to take him and embrace him anew, to break down that brick wall of defense between you and the power of the Spirit and to be renewed in his likeness.

### Believe the Messenger Because God's Family Agrees

Third, believe the message of God's messenger *because God's family agrees*. "And all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia . . ." (v. 2). First, notice that though Paul unashamedly asserts his authority, he is still humbly a part of the family. It is "all the brothers who are with me." He has a special calling as an apostle, but he is also one of the brothers. They are all mentioned here in general to indicate that they support this letter. Their support is not theologically required for Paul; all that's required is his authority as an apostle. But their support is noted. There may be times when, like Athanasius, we are to be against, it feels, the whole world in our support of the core message of the gospel, but, by and large, even the apostle, and especially servants such as we, are to be humbly aware of the support, the counsel, and the checks and balances of good brothers and sisters around us.

Notice also that Paul is not writing to the church of Galatia but to the *churches* of Galatia. There is a long, old debate about exactly which part of Galatia Paul means, and the answer to that debate doesn't matter as much as sometimes thought. (We will look at it when we get to those places in the text where it has some bearing on chronology.) But it is

interesting that he does not talk of the church but of the churches. There are places in the New Testament where the church is mentioned as the universal church, but that same church always has a local manifestation. It is the constant assumption of Scripture that, to be a member of the universal church, one must be a member of a local church. Here were several local churches all alike affected by the confusion that Paul seeks to counter with the clarion call to the centrality of the gospel. Each of these churches is important, and every Christian is assumed to be a part of one of the local fellowships or congregations or churches.

Common in the Western world is the feeling that as long as we are Christians, we don't really need to be a part of a local church. Obviously some of the mechanics of the local church today are just part and parcel of life in the twentieth-first century, things we can't find in the text of the New Testament itself, any more than we can find church architecture explicitly discussed. Having said that, the New Testament knows nothing of a Christian who is not a part of a local church. So, if you're a Christian but not a part of a local church, find a biblical church where you can get involved in order to be securely and confidently a member of the universal church.

We have only just begun. As you can see, the book of Galatians is very relevant. The message of Galatians as a whole is simply that a "Jesus-plus" gospel is really a "Jesus-minus" gospel; if you add to Jesus, you are really detracting from Jesus, from his centrality, from his sufficiency, from his glory. Galatians is a call back to the centrality of the gospel in all things. It is a challenge to us to realize that the gospel itself makes us grow holy, not the law but the Spirit of the risen Christ. Chapter by chapter we are going to soak in these things.

In these first two verses, we have seen Paul set out his subject by means of a bold claim to his authority. He is watching the young Christians in Galatia enthusiastically embracing an addition to the gospel in order to become more mature, but that addition will be a subtraction and supplant their trust in Christ alone. Paul is worried for them. He is up late at night caring for them. He loves them. They are his children. He has fought battles for them. He is writing this letter at a frenetic pace. It's possible that he wrote this letter personally, not using a secretary, and wrote at great pace. As he did so his letters got larger

and larger as he wrote faster and faster over page after page. He longs for them. He sees a sixteen-wheeler trailer truck bearing down the road, and they are crossing into its path while looking the other way, misled, smiling, but in real danger. He says, “Not by man but by God—by Jesus Christ and God the Father—stop! Don’t cross that road! Rest in Christ alone.” He is alive. He commissioned Paul. It is the Bible. It is the gospel. There is no other way, and to this centrality of Christ and the gospel, Paul is calling us.

This is what it’s got to be. At the very heart of it is the gospel. If you’ve come for anything else, you’ve come to the wrong book. Nothing else do I have to offer. There is nothing else. You’re going to read about Christ, about faith in him, about the gospel of Jesus, and that is it.

## The Gospel of Grace and Peace

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

G A L A T I A N S 1 : 3 – 5

When you write a letter, you begin a certain way. Typically, letters in English begin with “Dear so-and-so.” If you were instant-messaging on your Facebook page, it might just be “Hi.” Other languages have different traditions. In French, a formal letter typically begins simply, “Monsieur,” and the more intimate equivalent of “Dear” is reserved for someone one knows. We don’t think of how affectionate our traditional greeting is in English. We don’t normally go up to someone we hardly know and say, “My dear, let me talk to you about something.” But it is the form to begin letters with “dear.”

There was protocol in the ancient world too. Typically, letters in Greek began with “Greetings” or a wish for joy to the recipient. We find this traditional greeting at the beginning of James’s letter in the New Testament. A common form of well-wishing among the Hebrew speakers was “Peace,” or *shalom*. What we find in Paul’s letters, and a few other places in the New Testament, is that the traditional greeting has been infused with Christian doctrine and pastoral application. So here we have, “Grace to you and peace” (v. 3).

Grace is very close to the traditional greeting, but here it is slightly changed, and it carries the weight of the Christian doctrine of grace. Peace is there as what grace achieves. So, at the very start of his letters, Paul says, “This is the gospel,” grace and peace. Here, more than in any of his letters, Paul immediately feels the need to clarify that this greeting is not simply “Hi” on his instant-message Facebook, or

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**josh moody** (PhD, Cambridge University) is senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois. He is the author of several books, including *The God-Centered Life: Insights from Jonathan Edwards*.

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