6

Grace Inspires Service

Key References: Galatians 1; 2; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 36, pp. 383-388; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 76-78; 132-134; Our Beliefs nos. 22, 10, 11.



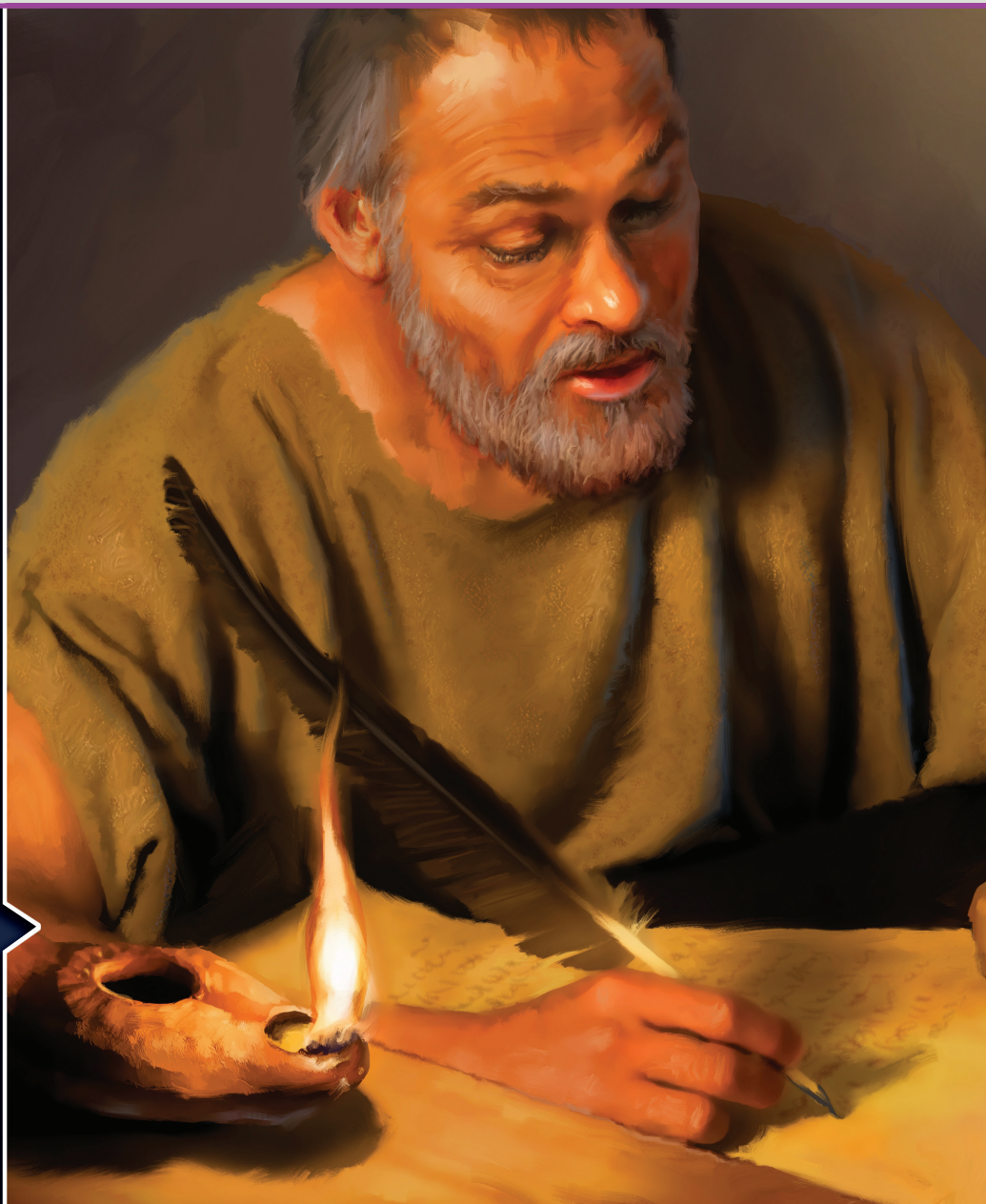












powertext

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 47.

powerpoint

Jesus empowers us to serve others in love.

Imagine having taught someone how to do something, only to come back later and find that someone else has been by and shown them a whole different way to do it. Trouble is, the new way is all wrong, and will only lead to costly problems down the road. Imagine how frustrated you would be. That's the situation in the first two chapters of the book of Galatians. Paul has spent a long time in Galatia establishing churches and teaching the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ—that we are saved by Christ's death, not by anything we do.

Now word has come that the Galatians have started believing a "different gospel." Jewish Christians coming to town have taught that believers must also keep old Jewish traditions. Paul wastes no time writing a letter to set things straight.

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ," he writes (Galatians 1:6, 7).



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Sunday

READ Read Galatians 1:6, 7 and this week's story, "Grace Inspires Service."

THINK What do you think Paul means by "the gospel of Christ" (verse 7)?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for His promise to change your life.

Monday

READ Read Galatians 1:8, 9.

THINK Have you ever heard something about God that was wrong? What did you say to correct the wrong view?

SERVE Think about what helps a person remain faithful to God. Help a person who doesn't believe in God to understand the truth and distinguish it from error.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you understand the meaning of the gospel.

Tuesday

READ Read or recite John 3:16.

ASK Ask a few adults to state in a single sentence what John 3:16 means to them. What does it mean to you?

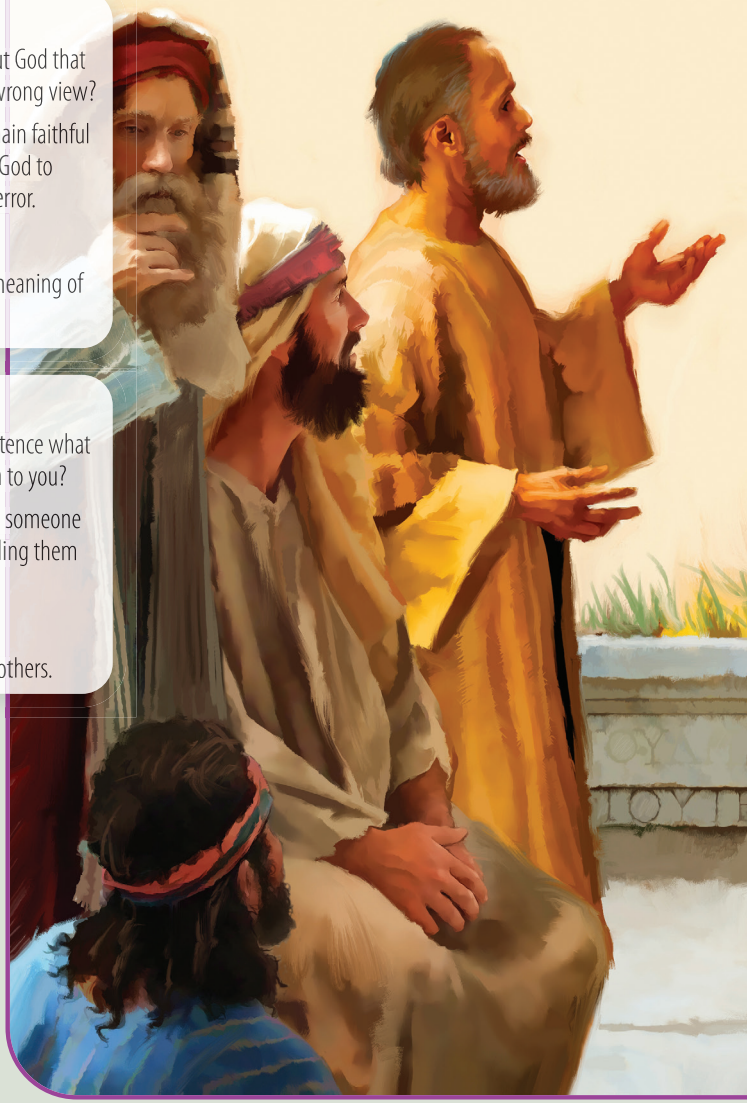
APPLY Share the message of John 3:16 with someone by helping them in a practical way and by telling them about God's great love for them.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for His work in the lives of others.

The word "gospel" means good news, and the good news is that Jesus' death saves us from our sins. Depending on old traditions, sacrifices, and circumcision is not good news at all in Paul's estimation. Rather authentic service to God and others comes from the renewed heart in response to God's love.

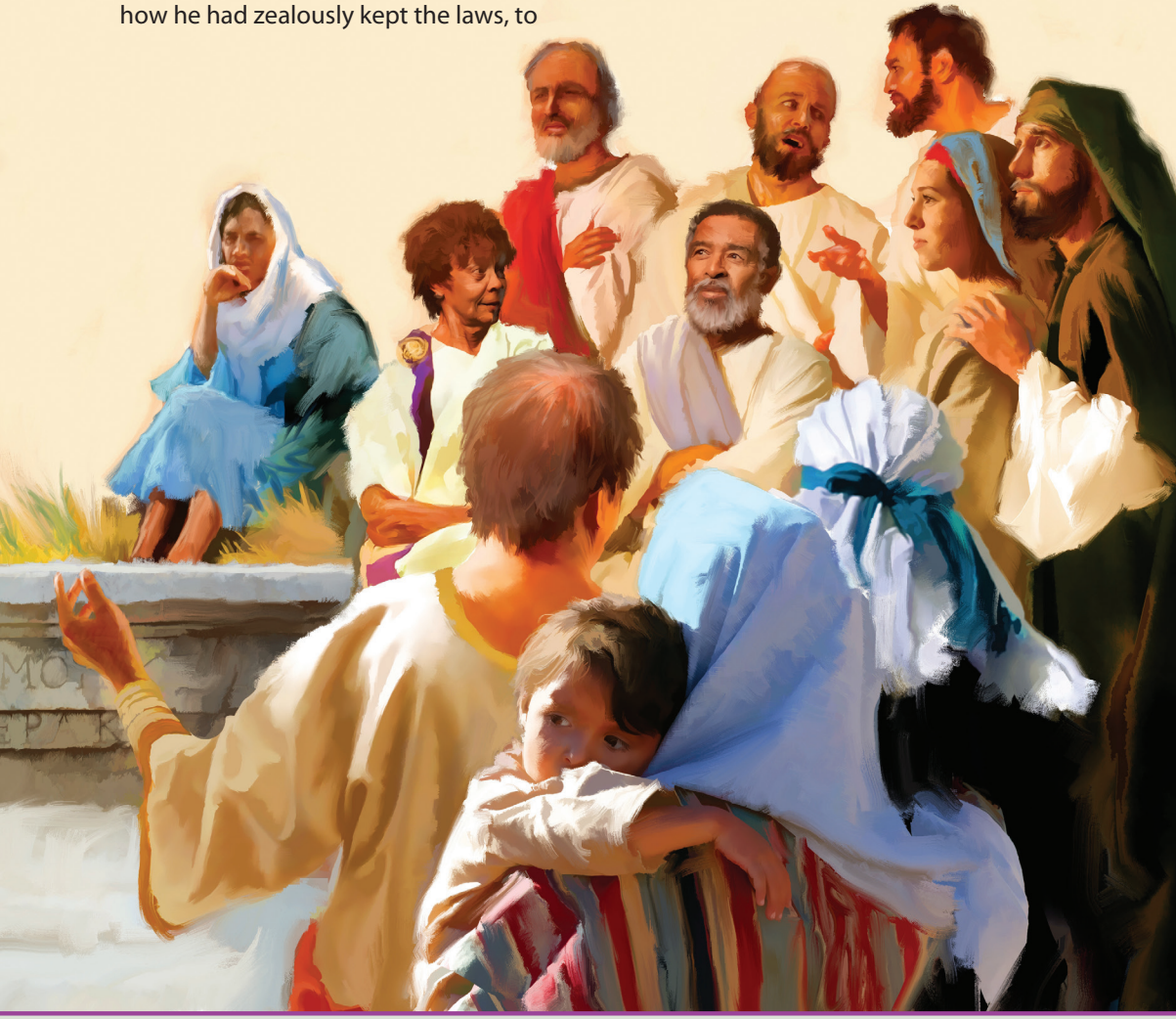
What's more, these new teachers



were also trying to discredit Paul, saying he was not one of Jesus' original disciples and was therefore inferior in his teaching to the other apostles. So Paul feels a need to defend himself.

"I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (verses 11, 12). Paul explains how he had zealously kept the laws, to the point of persecuting Christians in an effort to destroy the newly founded Christian church.

"But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being" (verses 15, 16). The other believers



6

Wednesday

READ Read Matthew 18:12-14.

SERVE God's love is shown in the shepherd's concern for even one lost lamb. How will you care for His people today?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for all His messages of love to you.

Thursday

READ Read Galatians 2:17-21.

THINK Think of the meaning of the text: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

SERVE Invite Jesus to live in you and help you serve others.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for new life in Him.

Friday

READ Read Ephesians 4:11-13.

SHARE Tell this week's story to your family at worship.

SING Sing with your family members a song about new life in Jesus and your desire to serve Him.

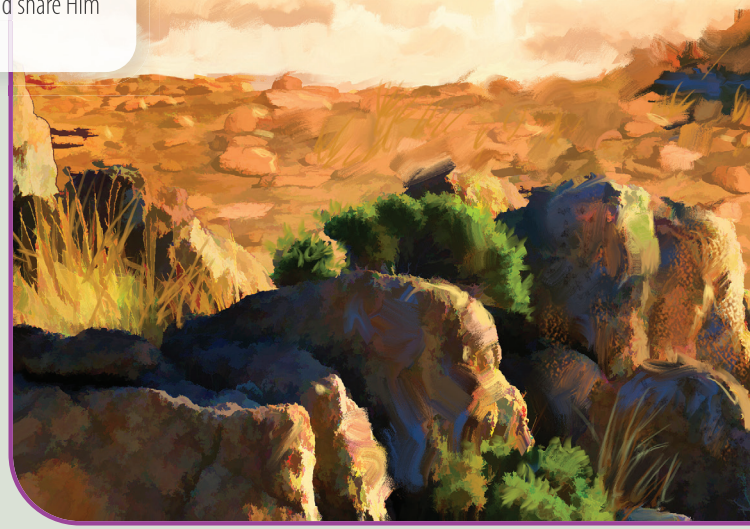
SAY Repeat the power text by memory.

PRAY Praise God for the life you now live by faith in Jesus. Thank Him for helping you to grow in Him and share Him with others.

"heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me" (verses 23, 24). Paul was a changed man.

Fourteen years later Paul was called to defend himself before the apostles. He went to Jerusalem and met with the leaders—"those esteemed as leaders" is the way he put it (Galatians 2:2). This meeting convinced the other leaders of the church that Paul was indeed a dedicated follower of Jesus.

"On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised" (verses 7-9).



Jesus saves and changes human lives. The other apostles recognized the difference Jesus made in Paul's life. They saw how His grace changed a hateful, murderous man into one of His most trusted messengers of the gospel.

How did God prepare Paul for a life of service? "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me," Paul writes. "The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (verse 20).

Paul recognized that Jesus' death on the cross gives us eternal life and empowers us to serve Him. Being crucified with Christ means we have asked Him to come and live in our hearts. When Jesus comes into our hearts, He changes us into Christlike people who are eager to serve Him and others unconditionally, out of love. Nothing Paul did could have changed him. Neither can our hard work change us. Genuine transformation comes with Jesus. Our service to God and to others is simply our heartfelt response of gratitude for His infinite grace and matchless love.

